PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

SIXTH SERIES—VOLUME 215

HOUSE OF COMMONS

OFFICIAL REPORT

FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN
AND NORTHERN IRELAND
FORTY-FIRST YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SESSION 1992-93

COMPRISING PERIOD
30 November—11 December 1992

[redacted]

328.42

REFERENCE LIBRARY

23 JUL 1993

ISBN 0 10 681215 7

HER MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT

MEMBERS OF THE CABINET

(FORMED BY THE RT. HON. JOHN MAJOR, MP, APRIL 1992)

PRIME MINISTER, FIRST LORD OF THE TREASURY AND MINISTER FOR THE CIVIL SERVICE—The Rt. Hon. John Major, MP
LORD CHANCELLOR—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Mackay of Clashfern
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS—The Rt. Hon. Douglas Hurd, CBE, MP
CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER—The Rt. Hon. Norman Lamont, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE HOME DEPARTMENT—The Rt. Hon. Kenneth Clarke, QC, MP
PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF TRADE (SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY)—The Rt. Hon. Michael Heseltine, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT—The Rt. Hon. John MacGregor, OBE, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DEFENCE—The Rt. Hon. Malcolm Rifkind, QC, MP
LORD PRIVY SEAL AND LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF LORDS—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Wakeham
LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL AND LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS—The Rt. Hon. Tony Newton, OBE, MP
MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD—The Rt. Hon. John Gummer, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NATIONAL HERITAGE—The Rt. Hon. Peter Brooke, CH, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT—The Rt. Hon. Michael Howard, QC, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WALES—The Rt. Hon. David Hunt, MBE, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SOCIAL SECURITY—The Rt. Hon. Peter Lilley, MP
CHANCELLOR OF THE DUCHY OF LANCASTER—The Rt. Hon. William Waldegrave, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SCOTLAND—The Rt. Hon. Ian Lang, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND—The Rt. Hon. Sir Patrick Mayhew, QC, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EDUCATION—The Rt. Hon. John Patten, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR HEALTH—The Rt. Hon. Virginia Bottomley, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EMPLOYMENT—The Rt. Hon. Gillian Shephard, MP
CHIEF SECRETARY TO THE TREASURY—The Rt. Hon. Michael Portillo, MP

LAW OFFICERS

ATTORNEY-GENERAL—The Rt. Hon. Sir Nicholas Lyell, QC, MP
LORD-ADVOCATE—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Rodger of Earlsferry, QC
SOLICITOR-GENERAL—Sir Derek Spencer, QC, MP
SOLICITOR-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND—Thomas Dawson, Esq, QC

MINISTERS NOT IN THE CABINET

PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY TO THE TREASURY—The Rt. Hon. Richard Ryder, OBE, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE, FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE—
Minister for Overseas Development—The Rt. Hon. The Baroness Chalker of Wallasey
The Rt. Hon. Alastair Goodlad, MP
The Rt. Hon. Douglas Hogg, QC, MP
The Rt. Hon. Tristan Garel-Jones, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE, HOME OFFICE—
The Rt. Hon. The Earl Ferrers
Peter Lloyd, Esq, MP
Michael Jack, Esq, MP
FINANCIAL SECRETARY TO THE TREASURY—Stephen Dorrell, Esq, MP
PAYMASTER GENERAL—The Rt. Hon. Sir John Cope, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE, DEPARTMENT OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY—
Minister for Energy—Tim Eggar, Esq, MP
Minister for Industry—The Rt. Hon. Tim Sainsbury, MP
Minister for Trade—Richard Needham, Esq, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE, DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT—
Minister for Public Transport—Roger Freeman, Esq, MP
Minister for Aviation and Shipping—The Rt. Hon. The Earl of Caithness
MINISTERS OF STATE, MINISTRY OF DEFENCE—
Minister of State for the Armed Forces—The Rt. Hon. Archibald Hamilton, MP
Minister of State for Defence Procurement—Jonathan Aitken, Esq, MP
MINISTER OF STATE, MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD—David Curry, Esq, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE, DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT—
Minister for Housing and Planning—Sir George Young, MP
Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities—John Redwood, Esq, MP
Minister for the Environment and Countryside—David Maclean, Esq, MP
MINISTER OF STATE, WELSH OFFICE—The Rt. Hon. Sir Wyn Roberts, MP
MINISTER OF STATE, DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SECURITY—
Minister for Social Security and Disabled People—The Rt. Hon. Nicholas Scott, MBE, MP
MINISTER OF STATE, SCOTTISH OFFICE—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Fraser of Carmyllie, QC

MINISTERS OF STATE, NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE—
Robert Atkins, Esq, MP
Michael Mates, Esq, MP

MINISTER OF STATE, DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION—The Baroness Blatch, CBE

MINISTER OF STATE, DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH—
Minister for Health—Dr. Brian Mawhinney, MP

MINISTER OF STATE, DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT—Michael Forsyth, Esq, MP

DEPARTMENTS OF STATE AND MINISTERS

Agriculture, Fisheries and Food—

MINISTER—The Rt. Hon. John Gummer, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—David Curry, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARIES—
The Earl Howe
The Hon. Nicholas Soames, MP

Defence—

SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. Malcolm Rifkind, QC, MP
MINISTER OF STATE FOR THE ARMED FORCES—The Rt. Hon. Archibald Hamilton, MP
MINISTER OF STATE FOR DEFENCE PROCUREMENT—Jonathan Aitken, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE—The Lord Cecil of Essenden

Education—

SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. John Patten, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—The Baroness Blatch, CBE
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SCHOOLS—Eric Forth, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FURTHER AND HIGHER EDUCATION—Nigel Forman, Esq, MP

Employment—

SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. Gillian Shephard, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—Michael Forsyth, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
Patrick McLoughlin, Esq, MP
The Viscount Ullswater

Environment—

SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. Michael Howard, QC, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE—
Minister for Housing and Planning—Sir George Young, MP
Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities—John Redwood, Esq, MP
Minister for the Environment and Countryside—David Maclean, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
The Lord Strathclyde
Tony Baldry, Esq, MP
Robin Squire, Esq, MP

Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs—

SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. Douglas Hurd, CBE, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE—
Minister for Overseas Development—The Rt. Hon. The Baroness Chalker of Wallasey
The Right Hon. Alastair Goodlad, MP
The Rt. Hon. Douglas Hogg, QC, MP
The Rt. Hon. Tristan Garel-Jones, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE—The Hon. Mark Lennox-Boyd, MP

Health—

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR HEALTH—The Rt. Hon. Virginia Bottomley, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—
Minister for Health—Dr. Brian Mawhinney, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
The Hon. Tom Sackville, MP
Tim Yeo, Esq, MP
The Baroness Cumberlege, CBE

Home Office—

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE HOME DEPARTMENT—The Rt. Hon. Kenneth Clarke, QC, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE—
The Rt. Hon. The Earl Ferrers
Peter Lloyd, Esq, MP
Michael Jack, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE—Charles Wardle, Esq, MP

Law Officers' Department—
ATTORNEY-GENERAL—The Rt. Hon. Sir Nicholas Lyell, QC, MP
SOLICITOR-GENERAL—Sir Derek Spencer, QC, MP

Lord Advocate's Department—
LORD-ADVOCATE—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Rodger of Earlsferry, QC
SOLICITOR-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND—Thomas Dawson, Esq, QC

Lord Chancellor's Department—
LORD CHANCELLOR—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Mackay of Clashfern
PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY—John M. Taylor, Esq, MP

National Heritage—
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NATIONAL HERITAGE—The Rt. Hon. Peter Brooke, CH, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE—Robert Key, Esq, MP

Northern Ireland Office—
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND—The Rt. Hon. Sir Patrick Mayhew, QC, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE—
Robert Atkins, Esq, MP
Michael Mates, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
The Earl of Arran
Jeremy Hanley, Esq, MP

Paymaster General's Office—
PAYMASTER GENERAL—The Rt. Hon. Sir John Cope, MP

Privy Council Office—
LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL AND LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS—The Rt. Hon. Tony Newton, OBE, MP
LORD PRIVY SEAL AND LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF LORDS—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Wakeham

Public Service and Science, Office of—
CHANCELLOR OF THE DUCHY OF LANCASTER—The Rt. Hon. William Waldegrave, MP
PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY—Robert Jackson, Esq, MP

Scottish Office—
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SCOTLAND—The Rt. Hon. Ian Lang, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Fraser of Carmyllie, QC
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
Lord James Douglas-Hamilton, MP
Allan Stewart, Esq, MP
Sir Hector Monro, MP

Social Security—
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SOCIAL SECURITY—The Rt. Hon. Peter Lilley, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—
Minister for Social Security and Disabled People—The Rt. Hon. Nicholas Scott, MBE, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
The Lord Henley
Miss Ann Widdecombe, MP
Alistair Burt, Esq, MP

Trade and Industry—
PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF TRADE (SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY)—The Rt. Hon. Michael Heseltine, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE—
Minister for Energy—Tim Eggar, Esq, MP
Minister for Industry—The Rt. Hon. Tim Sainsbury, MP
Minister for Trade—Richard Needham, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE FOR CORPORATE AFFAIRS—Neil Hamilton, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TECHNOLOGY—Edward Leigh, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE FOR CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND SMALL FIRMS—The Baroness Denton, CBE

Transport—
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT—The Rt. Hon. John MacGregor, OBE, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE—
Minister for Public Transport—Roger Freeman, Esq, MP
Minister for Aviation and Shipping—The Rt. Hon. The Earl of Caithness
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
Kenneth Carlisle, Esq, MP (Minister for Roads and Traffic)
Steve Norris, Esq, MP (Minister for Transport in London)

Treasury—
PRIME MINISTER, FIRST LORD OF THE TREASURY AND MINISTER FOR THE CIVIL SERVICE—The Rt. Hon. John Major, MP
CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER—The Rt. Hon. Norman Lamont, MP
CHIEF SECRETARY—The Rt. Hon. Michael Portillo, MP
FINANCIAL SECRETARY—Stephen Dorrell, Esq, MP
PAYMASTER GENERAL—The Rt. Hon. Sir John Cope, MP
ECONOMIC SECRETARY—Anthony Nelson, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY—The Rt. Hon. Richard Ryder, OBE, MP
LORDS COMMISSIONERS—
Greg Knight, Esq, MP
Irvine Patnick, Esq, OBE, MP
Nicholas Baker, Esq, MP
Timothy Wood, Esq, MP
Timothy Boswell, Esq, MP
ASSISTANT WHIPS—
Timothy Kirkhope, Esq, MP
David Davis, Esq, MP
Andrew Mackay, Esq, MP
Robert G. Hughes, Esq, MP
James Arbuthnot, Esq, MP

Welsh Office—
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WALES—The Rt. Hon. David Hunt, MBE, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. Sir Wyn Roberts, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE—Gwilym Jones, Esq, MP

Her Majesty's Household—
LORD CHAMBERLAIN—The Rt. Hon. The Earl of Airlie, KT, GCVO
LORD STEWARD—The Viscount Ridley, TD
MASTER OF THE HORSE—The Lord Somerleyton
TREASURER—David Heathcoat-Amory, Esq, MP
COMPTROLLER—David Lightbown, Esq, MP
VICE-CHAMBERLAIN—Sydney Chapman, Esq, MP
CAPTAIN OF THE HONOURABLE CORPS OF GENTLEMEN-AT-ARMS—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Hesketh
CAPTAIN OF THE QUEEN'S BODYGUARD OF THE YEOMEN OF THE GUARD—The Earl of Strathmore and Kinghorne
LORDS IN WAITING—The Viscount Long, The Viscount Astor, The Viscount St. Davids, The Viscount Goschen
BARONESS IN WAITING—The Rt. Hon. The Baroness Trumpington

SECOND CHURCH ESTATES COMMISSIONER, REPRESENTING CHURCH COMMISSIONERS—The Rt. Hon. Michael Alison, MP

HOUSE OF COMMONS

PRINCIPAL OFFICERS AND OFFICIALS

THE SPEAKER—The Rt. Hon. Betty Boothroyd, MP

CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS—Michael Morris, Esq, MP

FIRST DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS—Geoffrey Lofthouse, Esq, MP

SECOND DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS—Dame Janet Fookes, MP

CHAIRMEN'S PANEL—

Robert Adley, Esq, MP, Dr. John G. Blackburn, MP, James Callaghan, Esq, MP, Frank Cook, Esq, MP, Patrick Cormack, Esq, MP, Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody, MP, Alan Haselhurst, Esq, MP, Robert Hicks, Esq, MP, James Hill, Esq, MP, Norman Hogg, Esq, MP, Roy Hughes, Esq, MP, Sir John Hunt, MP, Sir James Kilfedder, MP, David Knox, Esq, MP, John McWilliam, Esq, MP, Michael J. Martin, Esq, MP, Iain Mills, Esq, MP, Sir Giles Shaw, MP, Michael Shersby, Esq, MP, Roger Sims, Esq, MP, Mrs. Ann Winterton, MP, Nicholas Winterton, Esq, MP

HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION—

The Rt. Hon. The Speaker (Chairman), Mrs. Margaret Beckett, MP, The Rt. Hon. Alan Beith, MP, The Rt. Hon. Paul Channon, MP, The Rt. Hon. Tony Newton, OBE, MP, The Rt. Hon. Peter Shore, MP

SECRETARY OF THE COMMISSION—R. W. G. Wilson

BOARD OF MANAGEMENT—

Sir Clifford Boulton, KCB (Chairman), Sir Alan Urwick, KCVO, CMG, D. J. T. Englefield, J. Rodda, FCA, I. D. Church, Mrs. S. J. Harrison

SECRETARY OF THE BOARD OF MANAGEMENT—B. A. Wilson

OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

SPEAKER'S SECRETARY—Sir Peter Kitcatt, CB

ASSISTANT SECRETARY TO THE SPEAKER—Mrs. M. E. Thomson

TRAINBEARER—D. J. Lord

DEPUTY TRAINBEARER—P. L. Warwick

DIARY SECRETARY—Mrs. S. Norvell

SPEAKER'S CHAPLAIN—Rev. Canon D. C. Gray, TD, PhD

SPEAKER'S COUNSEL—H. Knorpel, CB, QC, G. E. Gammie, CB, QC

ASSISTANT TO SPEAKER'S COUNSEL—P. Harvey, CB

OFFICE OF THE CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS

SECRETARY TO THE CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS—Ms. P. A. Helme

DEPARTMENT OF THE CLERK OF THE HOUSE

CLERK OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS—Sir Clifford Boulton, KCB

CLERK ASSISTANT—D. W. Limon

CLERK OF COMMITTEES—J. F. Sweetman, CB, TD

PRINCIPAL CLERKS—
W. R. McKay (Public Bills)
C. B. Winnifrith (Table Office)
R. B. Sands (Select Committees)
G. Cubie (Overseas Office)
A. J. Hastings (Journal Office)
R. J. Willoughby (Private Bills)
D. G. Millar (Select Committees)
M. R. Jack, PhD (Standing Committees)
R. W. G. Wilson (Domestic Committees)
W. A. Proctor (Financial Committees)

DEPUTY PRINCIPAL CLERKS—S. A. L. Panton, Mrs. J. Sharpe, Ms. A. Milner-Barry, F. A. Cranmer, R. J. Rogers, C. R. M. Ward, PhD, Ms. H. E. Irwin, D. W. N. Doig, A. Sandall, MLitt, D. L. Natzler, E. P. Silk, A. R. Kennon, D. W. Robson, L. C. Laurence Smyth, S. J. Patrick, D. J. Gerhold, C. J. Poyser, D. F. Harrison, S. J. Priestley, A. H. Doherty, P. A. Evans, R. I. S. Phillips, R. G. James

SENIOR CLERKS—Ms. P. A. Helme, D. R. Lloyd, R. A. Lambert, B. M. Hutton, J. S. Benger, DPhil, Miss E. C. Samson, N. P. Walker, M. D. Hamlyn, P. C. Seaward, DPhil, C. G. Lee, C. D. Stanton, J. M. Hope (acting), H. R. Neilson (acting), D. Steel (acting), D. J. Clarke (acting)

CLERKS OF DOMESTIC COMMITTEES—K. J. Brown, P. G. Moon

ASSISTANT CLERKS—A. Y. A. Azad, C. A. Shaw, P. M. Hensher, Ms. L. M. Gardner, F. J. Reid, M. Hennessy, G. R. Devine

SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—G. E. Clayton, Miss R. J. Challis, S. D. Barrett

HIGHER EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—L. L. Kaye, A. P. Hubner, Miss S. J. Fox, Mrs. P. Fisher, F. McShane, J. D. Whatley, M. Clark, Miss A. M. Loader, Miss F. L. Allingham, Mrs. L. M. Nugent, J. A. L. Dresner, M. P. Oxborough, N. P. Wright, Ms. C. M. Genis, Mrs. C. Oxborough, R. W. A. Barrand

SPECIALIST ASSISTANTS—E. Thompson, J. K. Wheatley, Miss S. Phipps, PhD, A. J. Wood, Miss C. M. French, Ms. C. L. Auchterlonie, Miss J. Towns

EDITORIAL SUPERVISOR OF THE VOTE—B. Tidball, DEPUTY—Miss L. Lewis, ASSISTANTS—Miss B. Balcomb, J. Puricelli, K. B. Wood, P. D. Howlett, Mrs. L. R. Shade, P. A. Jack, P. L. J. Sullivan

SECRETARIES—Mrs. G. E. C. Sclater (Clerk of the House), Mrs. S. D. Pamphlett, Miss S. P. Chubb, Mrs. D. Gent, Miss A. T. Power, Miss D. J. Somers, Mrs. K. J. Georgiou, Mrs. S. A. Carrino, Miss L. Young, Mrs. H. Agnew, Miss S. Littlebury, Mrs. J. Stott, Mrs. A. M. Douglas, Miss K. McClelland, Mrs. B. Hunter (temporary), Mrs. P. Anderson (temporary)

EXAMINERS OF PETITIONS FOR PRIVATE BILLS—R. J. Willoughby, B. P. Keith

REGISTRAR OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS—R. B. Sands

TAXING OFFICER—R. J. Willoughby

SUPERVISOR OF PARLIAMENTARY BROADCASTING—J. F. Grist (temporary)

TECHNICAL CO-ORDINATOR (BROADCASTING)—R. Longman, OBE (temporary)

SUPERINTENDING CLERK—R. A. Broomfield

CHIEF OFFICE CLERKS—Miss D. E. Symes, Miss A. Fuki, J. Hole, Miss E. Segal, A. Catinella, Mrs. D. B. Nelson, Miss C. A. Benger

DEPARTMENT OF THE SERJEANT AT ARMS

SERJEANT AT ARMS—Sir Alan Urwick, KCVO, CMG

DEPUTY SERJEANT AT ARMS—P. N. W. Jennings

ASSISTANT SERJEANT AT ARMS—M. J. A. Cummins

DEPUTY ASSISTANT SERJEANTS AT ARMS—P. A. J. Wright, J. F. Collins

CLERK IN CHARGE—Miss S. J. Scott Thomson

ADMISSION ORDER OFFICE—A. Chipperfield, BEM, Mrs. S. J. Warren, A. J. Spencer

PRINCIPAL DOORKEEPER—R. H. Usher

SECOND PRINCIPAL DOORKEEPER—C. E. Gray

THIRD PRINCIPAL DOORKEEPER—J. C. W. Cooper

SENIOR DOORKEEPERS—R. A. F. Chapman, J. D. Garnett, D. Shiels, J. Town, R. J. McClelland

HEAD OFFICE KEEPER—M. Bryant

SENIOR OFFICE KEEPERS—V. M. Roccia, C. R. Harris, BEM, K. R. Dickason

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH MANAGER—Mrs. M. Mainland

NURSING SISTER—Miss S. Todd

PARLIAMENTARY WORKS DIRECTORATE—

DIRECTOR OF WORKS—H. P. Webber

DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF WORKS—B. C. Sewell

PRINCIPAL WORKS OFFICERS—A. Makepeace, R. Bentley, G. Goode, B. R. Hall, C. Hillier, M. Moone, J.F. Moore, M. Trott

SENIOR PROFESSIONAL TECHNICAL OFFICERS—C. Brown, C. Cowell, J. Eaton, T. Fox, S. Howard, T. Jardine, B. O'Boyle, J. Stone

DEPARTMENT OF THE LIBRARY

LIBRARIAN—D. J. T. Englefield
DEPUTY LIBRARIAN—Miss J. B. Tanfield
LIBRARY AND RESEARCH—
ASSISTANT LIBRARIANS (Heads of Division)—S. Z. Young, Miss P. J. Baines, B.Litt
DEPUTY ASSISTANT LIBRARIANS (Heads of Section)—K. G. Cuninghame, Mrs. J. M. Wainwright, FIInfSc, C. C. Pond, PhD, Mrs. C. B. Andrews, R. C. Clements, Mrs. J. M. Lourie, R. J. Ware, DPhil, C. R. Barclay, Mrs. J. M. Fiddick
LIBRARY CLERKS, SENIOR—Mrs. H. R. Coates, Ms. F. Poole, Mrs. C. M. Gillie, Ms. C. E. Nield, R. J. Twigger, T. N. Edmonds, R. J. Cracknell, FSS, Miss O. M. Gay, Miss B. McInnes, Miss M. Baber, Ms. A. Walker, Mrs. H. V. Holden, ALA, Mrs. G. L. Allen, Mrs. P. Carling, Miss J. Seaton, FLA, A. J. L. Crompton, Mrs. K. Groener, Miss P. Strickland, S. A. Wise (period), K. N. H. Parry, ALA (acting)
ASSISTANT—Miss V. A. Miller, Ms. H. M. Jeffs, R. S. Dewdney, Ms. W. T. Wilson, Miss N. J. Chedgey, M. Nawaz, P. Bowers, PhD, M. P. Hillyard, T. E. Dodd, A. C. Seely, Ms. J. K. Dyson, Ms. F. M. Watson, G. Danby, PhD, Dr. A. Davies (period), E. Wood (temporary)
SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—Mrs. P. A. Ball, P. W. Skerratt (period)
SENIOR LIBRARY EXECUTIVES—Miss C. E. Fretten, ALA, Mrs. P. V. Wiles, Miss I. O. White, ALA, G. Haig (acting), Miss E. J. Jones, ALA (acting)
EDUCATION OFFICER—Mrs. C. Weeds; ASSISTANT—Mrs. C. C. O'Connor
HIGHER EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—E. L. V. MacGregor, Ms. B. A. Rowlands, ALA, J. P Brevitt
HIGHER LIBRARY EXECUTIVES—J. A. Prince, MLS, Mrs. D. W. Clark, Miss M. H. Fletcher, Mrs. P. E. Cook, ALA, Ms. H. Armstrong, Miss G. L. Cooper, Mrs. E. H. Riley, ALA, Mrs. F. M. Ward, Mrs. M. A. Azim, ALA, Ms. F. Whittle, T. C. Holmes, C. M. Sear, Ms. J. B. Hall, ALA, R. Freebury, ALA, A. D. Parker, ALA, Ms. Z. A. Smallwood (acting), Miss C. Chambers (acting)
EDITOR, WEEKLY BULLETIN—D. B. Inns
LIBRARY EXECUTIVES—P. E. M. Ward, Mrs. J. M. Smith, ALA, Miss J. Lyall, ALA, Miss C. Owens, Miss C. M. Blair, ALA, Miss D. J. Gillings, Miss L. K. Fleming, Mrs. J. Priestley, Miss P. Rix, Miss S. Pepin, ALA, P. C. Tomes, R. O. Steeden, G. G. Newell, Miss A. Hatton
EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—Miss N. Harland, Mrs. A. J. H. Mara, D. A. Brown, M. Greenhill (Head Library Attendant), B. Smith, Ms. J. Fessey, A. J. Fuller, Miss J. M. Perkes, Mrs. H. Onyskiw, A. Clark, Miss A. Gual, Mrs. S. P. Sinclair, Ms. M A. Moulton, Miss N. M. Sutherland, Miss K. E. Susilovic, Mrs. C. Millar, Miss D. Thomas (acting)

VOTE OFFICE—
DELIVERER OF THE VOTE—G. R. Russell
DEPUTY DELIVERER OF THE VOTE—H. C. Foster ASSISTANT DELIVERER OF THE VOTE—O. B. T. Sweeney
BOOKSHOP MANAGER—C. D. Lister
SUPERINTENDING CLERKS—Mrs. S. Fuzio, B. G. Underwood, A. J. Ashton (Sales Office)
VOTE OFFICE ASSISTANTS—T. S. Wilson, G. E. Howard, C. P. Williams, P. Hannett, J. Harrington

DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

DIRECTOR—J. Rodda, FCA
FEES OFFICE—
ACCOUNTANT—A. J. Lewis
DEPUTY ACCOUNTANT—A. R. Marskell
ASSISTANT ACCOUNTANTS—M. Fletcher, Mrs. G. Crowther
SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—Mrs. D. C. Hill, N. P. Crawley HIGHER EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—Mrs. J. Peach, Mrs. G. M. Baker, Miss R. Harrison, Ms. M. R. Morris, G. L. Turner EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—D. M. Allen, D. J. D. Woods, Ms. P. R. Mills, Miss S. V. A. Weaver, P. H. Olden, A. D. Rowlands, P. J. S. French, Miss T. D. Ruewell, Miss M. Oliver, Miss D. M. McGuire, Mrs. S. M. Chalmers, R. A. P. Edwards, Mrs. C. J. Stockton (temporary), Miss B. Parekh (temporary)
FINANCE OFFICE—
HEAD OF OFFICE—M. J. Barram, IPFA, MBCS,
ASSISTANT ACCOUNTANTS—Miss M. M. McColl, R. H. A. Russell, ACMA
SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—Mrs. N. Norman, Ms. S. Peterson (secondment) EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—Miss D. E. Johnson, P. F. Dawson, C. J. Bumstead, Miss V. E. Wilson, Miss D. O. McElderry, P. Barratt (temporary)
ESTABLISHMENTS OFFICE—
HEAD OF OFFICE—B. A. Wilson
DEPUTY HEAD OF OFFICE—J. A. Robb
SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICER—Miss P. J. Hurford HIGHER EXECUTIVE OFFICER—M. Page
PERSONNEL OFFICE MANAGER—Miss J. Bremner
PERSONNEL OFFICERS—Ms. C. L. Watson, Miss C. E. Jackson, Mrs. R. A. Baker, Mrs. A. McGuinn
COMPUTER OFFICE—
COMPUTER OFFICER—R. S. Morgan, FBCS, FIInfSc NETWORK PLANNING OFFICER—J. Fishenden NETWORK SUPPORT OFFICER—Mrs. J. M. Cleveland COMPUTER SUPPORT MANAGER—Miss M. Morrison
COMMON SERVICES UNIT—
HEAD OF UNIT—V. H. Stocker
HIGHER EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—R. Gunn, M. J. H. Caswell
INTERNAL AUDITOR—A. A. Cameron SENIOR AUDITOR—S. J. Lewis
STAFF INSPECTOR—R. C. Collins
WELFARE OFFICER—Mrs. A. Mossop

DEPARTMENT OF THE OFFICIAL REPORT

EDITOR—I. D. Church

DEPUTY EDITOR—P. Walker

PRINCIPAL ASSISTANT EDITORS—R. V. Hadlow, J. Gourley, W. G. Garland, Miss H. A. Hales

ASSISTANT EDITORS—Ms. C. V. Grainger, Miss V. A. A. Clarke, Miss L. Sutherland, S. M. Hutchinson, C. Fogarty

COMMITTEE SUB-EDITORS—D. Crosswell, Mrs. A. Roberts, Miss V. A. Widgery, Mrs. H. J. G. Natzler, Miss M. Babington, Mrs. A. Street, L. Gilmore, Ms. G. Hardgrave, P. Oglethorpe, P. Hadlow, Miss C. Hanly, M. Watson, Ms. K. Stewart, J. Ransley, Mrs. E. J. Gregory

REPORTERS—Miss E. Morris, Ms. J. Dall, Mrs. P. Pickford, Miss K. Myers, Ms. J. Warrington, J. Robinson, Ms. D. Jones, Mrs. J. Symons, Mrs. J. L. Davies, Miss E. A. Jarka

PRINCIPAL TRANSCRIBER—D. N. Harrington, MBE

DEPUTY PRINCIPAL TRANSCRIBERS—Mrs. M. J. Harding, Miss J. Beck (acting)

IT PROJECT MANAGER—Miss J. L. Brown (temporary)

PRINCIPAL HANSARD ASSISTANT—Miss R. Washington

SENIOR HANSARD ASSISTANT—J. Brake

ANNUNCIATOR SUPERINTENDENT—G. Carpenter

REFRESHMENT DEPARTMENT

DIRECTOR OF CATERING SERVICES—Mrs. S. J. Harrison

OPERATIONS MANAGER—N. M. Hutson

CATERING ACCOUNTANT—D. R. W. Wood, FCA

EXECUTIVE CHEF—I. Gabay, MBE

PERSONNEL ADMINISTRATOR—Mrs. S. M. Nicholls, FHCIMA, MIPM

CATERING MANAGER, HOUSE OF COMMONS—P. Gale, MHCIMA

CATERING MANAGER, BELLAMY'S—Ms. S. Hovells, LHCIMA

BANQUETING MANAGER—C. J. Griffiths

ASSISTANT BANQUETING MANAGER—P. D. Heywood

ASSISTANT CATERING MANAGER—M. W. E. Johnson

ASSISTANT CATERING ACCOUNTANT—Mrs. B. A. Langley

PERSONAL ASSISTANT TO THE DIRECTOR—Mrs. A. G. Lunn

DEPUTY EXECUTIVE CHEF—S. Norris

SHORTHAND WRITER TO THE HOUSE—Mrs. E. M. C. Holland

HEAD OF SECURITY—Chief Superintendent A. E. F. Longhurst, LVO

DEPUTY HEAD OF SECURITY—Superintendent R. J. Warne

COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER—A. Blake

DEPUTY COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER—Mrs. S. Morrison

POSTMASTER—J. Arnold

TRANSPORT MANAGER—J. W. Jones

THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

IN THE FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND
[WHICH OPENED 27 APRIL 1992]

FORTY-FIRST YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SIXTH SERIES VOLUME 215

NINTH VOLUME OF SESSION 1992-93

House of Commons

Monday 30 November 1992

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

SOCIAL SECURITY

Benefits Uprating

1. **Mr. Andrew Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has received about the recent uprating in benefits.

The Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Peter Lilley): The uprating of benefits in line with the annual increase in prices has been widely and warmly welcomed.

Mr. Mitchell: Is my right hon. Friend aware that, following a particularly tough public expenditure round in which public sector pay has been significantly constrained, his decision to uprate the pension in full has been greatly welcomed? Does he feel that that decision provides an eloquent contrast to that taken by the Labour party, on two separate occasions, to slash the annual Christmas bonus to pensioners? Which party is really the friend of the pensioner?

Mr. Lilley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for the welcome that he has given to the uprating statement. The day of the statement revealed graphically the answer to his question, because we saw the gloom on the faces of Labour Members as they welcomed the good news of the uprating and that contrasted with the warm welcome that the rest of the country gave it. The fact is that we try to help the poor and needy, whereas the Labour party tries to exploit them.

Mr. Norman Hogg: Can the Secretary of State tell us who exactly "warmly welcomed" the uprating, because I have not encountered anyone engaged in that warm welcome? Is not it the case that the Secretary of State just deludes himself and that what he did was minimalist—it was the least he could do and what he had to do under the statute—and that this afternoon he is engaged in empty cant?

Mr. Lilley: I think that the hon. Gentleman demonstrates that he moves in narrow and exclusively socialist circles. If he ventured forth, even so far as to read the columns of *The Guardian*, not a paper normally noted for its warmth of welcome towards me, he would know that it said that the decisions I had taken on that day deserved praise.

Mr. Kirkwood: Can the Secretary of State tell the House what chance he has had to study the recent Joseph Rowntree Trust report, which clearly showed that the level of benefits made available to recipients simply left them short, in some cases by between £30 and £40, of what they needed to live a decent, ordinary life?

Mr. Lilley: I always study documents from that quarter closely. I could not help noticing, however, that the trust thought that the amount of money required to maintain a modest standard of living was about the same as the point at which those on the Opposition Front Bench think that punitive taxation on the rich should start. Obviously that affected my understanding of the whole report.

Delayed Payments

2. **Mrs. Helen Jackson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will bring forward regulations to ensure that interest accrues on social security payments due to claimants that are delayed in the Benefits Agency.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Miss Ann Widdecombe): The Secretary of State has no power under existing legislation to bring forward such regulations.

Mrs. Jackson: As the customers charter states that all citizens have the right to expect that their benefits will be processed efficiently, accurately and promptly, does the Minister think it right that my constituents should receive just sweet, apologetic phrases from Mr. Bichard of the Benefits Agency when benefit payments of more than £2,000 are outstanding? Is it right that they should receive no compensation? February of next year is coming up very quickly, which means that it will be a year since the new benefits came into force, but many people will still be left waiting after that year for payment. Does the Minister agree that claimants should be entitled, automatically, to receive compensation or interest accruing after the 30-day period that the Secretary of State set in that customers charter?

Miss Widdecombe: The hon. Lady completely ignores the considerable measures that have been taken to speed up the payment of disability living allowance. I do not share her pessimistic view of the numbers that may be left at the end of the year. However, it is crucial not to presuppose that it is an ordinary standard, and therefore make arrangements for compensation, but to make all possible efforts to ensure that the system works. That is why we have drafted 800 additional staff and made 400 extra computer terminals available, which is a far better solution. I shall take no lectures from the Opposition, whose idea of speeding up claims was to phase in mobility allowance over four years.

Mr. Willetts: How long, on average, does it take from first applying for income support until the receipt of an income support payment, and how does that compare with past performances?

Miss Widdecombe: Against a current national target of five days, income support is often paid within 2·5 days and the overwhelming majority of local offices are well within target.

Mr. Alfred Morris: How many of the delayed payments were for people with life-threatening conditions, like my constituent, Mr. Ken Vince, for whom payment was made more than eight months after his claim and two months after he died? Is the Minister aware that bereaved families are not consoled by posthumously word-processed sympathy and that my late constituent's case came to me 13 weeks after all the distress and expense of phoning the Benefits Agency, sometimes 20 times a day, without response?

Miss Widdecombe: I entirely echo the words of my right hon. Friend the Minister of State four weeks ago in the House in saying that we deeply regret the problems that arose. They happened because of the policy's huge success and the large number of claims that it generated. We have now taken all possible measures to ensure that that does not recur. I am very sympathetic to the distress suffered by the right hon. Gentleman's constituent and his family.

Child Support Agency

3. **Lady Olga Maitland:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what long-term savings he expects to make as a result of the operation of the Child Support Agency.

7. **Mr. Milligan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what long-term savings he expects to make as a result of the operation of the Child Support Agency.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Alistair Burt): We expect that, in the long term, absent parents will contribute some £600 million to the maintenance of their children, a cost currently borne by taxpayers.

Lady Olga Maitland: I warmly welcome the establishment of the Child Support Agency. It is a relief to the average taxpayer—every father and mother in this country—who takes strong exception to paying to support other people's children. What estimate, for the average family, does the Child Support Agency make in asking absentee fathers to support their children?

Mr. Burt: Current information is that average maintenance awards for families are between £25 and £30 a week. We hope that that will rise to £45 a week. Maintenance is a helpful source of income, not just for the present but for the future. I recognise that many single mothers will want to go out to work, and the portable income that maintenance will provide should assist that.

Mr. Milligan: Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the effects of the Child Support Agency is not only to achieve the benefits that he mentioned but to target help effectively on lower-income families? Will he give the House an assessment of how much such families have benefited since the social security reforms of 1988?

Mr. Burt: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. Since 1988, we estimate that some £750 million extra has been provided to low-income families by way of the changes. In 1979, some £1·5 billion was spent at current prices on benefits for lone parents. That figure is now £4·3 billion.

Mr. Wicks: Notwithstanding the fact that two Conservative Members have had the creativity to ask the same question about savings, does the Minister agree that the purpose of the Child Support Act 1991 should be to support children, not to produce Exchequer savings? Does he agree that more than seven out of 10 families with children in that position will receive no extra money as a result of the child support legislation? Is not it appropriate that the Minister should change the policy so that a pound for a pound is not withdrawn, for child support, from income support and that we have a reform so that children and not just the Treasury are supported by that measure?

Mr. Burt: As so often with the Opposition, the hon. Gentleman misses the point completely. There is no saving to the Treasury. The saving is to the many millions of mothers and fathers who currently pay through their tax for other people's children. The point about the Child Support Agency is that the money goes to support the children. In future, many mothers will want to go out to work and the portable maintenance income will assist them to do that. I do not see any reason to change the current policy on income support.

Mr. Dewar: We shall carefully monitor the work of the Child Support Agency. Does the Minister accept that real fears have to be addressed in cases where there has been a record of violence or no continuing relationship between, probably, the father and the mother and child? The Minister almost managed to give the impression that the cash that would come in from the work of the Child Support Agency would be ring fenced specifically for child benefit or some other relevant benefit. That is not true. Is he prepared to look again at some form of disregard for those on income support so that a parent paying maintenance has the satisfaction of knowing that the family will benefit and so that the parent, very often the mother who has custody of the child, has a real and positive incentive to co-operate?

Mr. Burt: The hon. Gentleman will be well aware that there are maintenance disregards for in-work benefits such as family credit and housing benefit. Maintenance disregard will assist. As I explained to the hon. Member for Croydon, North-West (Mr. Wicks), there is no maintenance disregard for income support, which is not an in-work benefit. The availability of maintenance to the mother will help not just at present but in the future because that mother will not stay on income support for ever. For her, it is the acquisition of maintenace that is most important.

The hon. Gentleman said that the Opposition would monitor the work of the Child Support Agency. We shall also do that, to ensure that what we have said about special care and consideration for women who are worried about violence is well met. We shall do our best to reassure the voluntary agencies and those who advise them and who may be worried about approaching the Child Support Agency. We would not want such fears to put people off approaching the agency. There is buffer protection for them and assistance for those who are worried. We hope that our reassuring work currently being carried on around the country through presentations will ease many of the fears which, I appreciate, are quite justifiably held. Equally justifiably, we say that we can reassure people.

Mr. Dickens: Does my hon. Friend recall irresponsible demands a short time ago to withdraw the Child Support Act 1991? Will he join me in inviting Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen to condemn the resolution passed at the last Labour party conference that that legislation should be withdrawn? Now the Opposition seem to want to monitor it carefully. What a change!

Mr. Burt: As always, my hon. Friend is the champion of those who resist irresponsible demands. He is right to condemn the last Labour party conference on its callous attitude towards mothers who require proper maintenance from fathers. I invite the House to support my hon. Friend's attitude in this matter rather than the attitude adopted at the Labour party conference.

Blind People

4. Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the cost of the extension of the severe disability premium to those living with a blind person, as announced in his benefit uprating statement; and if he will make a statement.

Mr Lilley: We estimate that this improvement will cost £1 million a year.

Mr. Soley: Does the Secretary of State accept that in principle the premium ought to be available to everyone who qualifies medically? Will he undertake to deliver that principle over time? If he will not do that, will he at least adopt the shorter version, by accepting the recommendation of the Social Security Advisory Committee that the premium should be extended to those who are over the age of 75 and living with someone?

Mr. Lilley: I fully understand and sympathise with the feelings of those who recently lobbied the House. I met people from my constituency and elsewhere who would like to see the severe disability premium applied universally. In a tight financial settlement we obviously thought it right to take this small step which helps those who live with blind people. That has been warmly welcomed by the organisations for the blind who came to speak to me. To go as far as the hon. Gentleman wishes could cost several hundreds of millions of pounds.

I hope that the hon. Gentleman will recognise that help is channelled towards those with a disability through the disability living allowance and the attendance allowance, which are disregarded in calculating the other disability and pensioner premiums in income support. Therefore, we try to channel support to people who are not living alone as well as to those who, through this premium, get support because they are living alone.

Mr. Duncan: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that since 1979 Government spending on the long-term sick and disabled has gone up by 173 per cent. in real terms? Is not that an impressive record, of which the Government should be proud?

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend makes a good point. We have given priority to help for the sick and disabled, and the House recognises and welcomes that. The amount of help has grown far faster than that for other benefits, and it way outstrips that provided under the last Labour Government.

Mr. Bradley: May I press the Secretary of State about the care of the over-75s? Does he realise that the Social Security Advisory Committee recognises that where the carer is over 75, it is unreasonable to expect him to deliver that care, and that it has to be bought in, but that no extra financial support is given in those circumstances? The committee said that the cost of extending the severe disability premium to the over-75s was only £17 million and it had to compare that with the likelihood that the severely disabled person would have to go into residential care, at a much greater cost through income support than extending the severe disability premium. Will the Minister look at the real needs of families where the carer is over 75 and consider extending the severe disability premium, to ensure that those people do not suffer even greater hardships?

Mr. Lilley: I look closely at the recommendations from my committee. The proposal that the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) mentioned, for assistance for those living with blind people, came from that committee and we were able to adopt it. There is some uncertainty about the costings of the other proposal that the hon. Gentleman mentioned, but when one is talking of tens of millions of pounds, that is a significant sum.

Mr. Bradley: I talked of £17 million.

Mr. Lilley: That is still tens of millions of pounds. A significant cost is involved, and we should have to consider whether it would always be well targeted. Some over-75s are very fit—I am happy to say that my mother is—and others are not. We have tried to focus assistance more accurately, while continuing to give help to those living with other people through the method that I have suggested, which channels considerable sums to help them.

Disability Living Allowance

5. **Mr. John Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what review he has made of the adequacy of the administration of claims for disability living allowance; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister for Social Security and Disabled People (Mr. Nicholas Scott): I am, as the hon. Member will know, fully aware of, and concerned about, the problems that have complicated the introduction of DLA in its early stages and I continue to take a close personal interest in its administration and delivery.

I have had extensive meetings with the chief executive of the Benefits Agency, who is responsible for the administration of DLA, and have discussed the substantial progress that has been made through the programme of recovery, as well as any remaining problems.

I also recognise the immense dedication and effort that staff of the Benefits Agency and, in particular, those who deal with claims to the benefit, have contributed to achieving this progress.

Mr. Evans: Will the Minister acknowledge that there are thousands of unanswered claimants' application forms lying in the DLA office, and that it is virtually impossible for a desperate claimant to make any sort of telephone contact with the office? Is he aware that Mrs. Mullen of Clinkham Wood, St. Helens, in my constituency, rang the DLA office on 17 November in an attempt to find out what had happened to the application that she had made in July? At 2.30 she was told to wait because she was in a queue. At 3 pm, her phone went dead and she immediately rang back. Again, she was told to wait because she was in a queue. At 4.50, her phone went dead again. Is not this a disgraceful way to treat impoverished people? Is not the answer that the agency was deliberately underfunded when it was set up?

Mr. Scott: Clearly, it is impossible for me to respond on the Floor of the House to individual cases of the sort that the hon. Gentleman has mentioned. If he would like to write to me with details, I will certainly follow it up.

I shall be visiting the disability benefits centre at Fylde on Friday to check on present progress. I am told that the improvements that have been made to our central inquiry line, to the benefits inquiry line and to the dedicated line for Members of Parliament have produced excellent results in solving the problems to which the hon. Gentleman referred.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: Bearing in mind the difficulties with inquiries, can the Minister confirm that the awards will be backdated where necessary and, therefore, that applicants will not continue to lose out?

Mr. Scott: I can certainly given my hon. Friend that assurance. What is more, I can say that general rules on benefits provide that compensation is available when a benefit has not been paid for 12 months since the date of claim or when some delay has led to an interruption of the benefit for three months. Some 76 such claims have already been met.

Mrs. Golding: Can the Minister tell us why a constituent of mine received a letter about disability living allowance from the Benefits Agency on 1 November saying that if she wants her benefit to continue after 1 May next year—that is six months later—she should claim straight away, and that if she delays, the Benefits Agency may not have time to deal with the claim before it ends on 1 May? Why does the agency need six months to be certain of renewing a claim?

Mr. Scott: The present target for the Benefits Agency is to clear 60 per cent. of claims in 30 days. Half the disability benefit centres are meeting that target. *[Interruption.]* If I may say, the proper way for the hon. Lady to deal with the matter is for her to write to me, and I shall take it up with the chief executive.

Maxwell Pension Funds

6. **Mr. Lidington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what success his Department has had in tracing money owed to the Maxwell pension funds.

Miss Widdecombe: My Department's Maxwell pensions unit is actively assisting the trustees, liquidators and administrators of the Maxwell schemes who have responsibility for tracing and recovering the missing assets.

Mr. Lidington: Does my hon. Friend accept that many hundreds of my constituents in Aylesbury still live daily with uncertainty and fear for the future because of the robbery of their life savings by Mr. Maxwell? What assurance can she give those constituents today about the future payment of their pensions? When can we finally expect to see the distribution of the assets in the common investment fund which seem to have been held up in legal bureaucracy for far too long?

Miss Widdecombe: My hon. Friend has correctly identified the single biggest measure that could be taken to restore peace of mind to the Maxwell pensioners—the distribution of the £123 million which exists, unlike the money that has yet to be recovered, but has not yet been allocated. The trustees of those funds have now had almost a year of discussions on the allocation of the money. It is our earnest hope that they will be able to make rapid progress towards a solution.

Mr. Skinner: Will the Minister give an assurance that other firms such as British Coal which want to do a Maxwell—British Coal has pinched £735 million from the miners' pension fund—will not be allowed to do so in the future? In order to ensure that we get the money back for the Maxwell pensioners, perhaps the Minister will drop a line to Lord Walker who received £440,000 and a Mercedes car out of Maxwell just before he finished. The £440,000 came out of the pockets of the Maxwell pensioners, and Lord Walker should pay it back to those people.

Miss Widdecombe: I think that there are rather a lot of people in the other place to whom one could drop a line. Some of them sit on the same side as the hon. Gentleman. He has no good evidence that other firms are trying to do

what he describes as a Maxwell. Nevertheless, he will be aware of the existence of the Goode committee which I hope will address such outstanding concerns and on which we will take appropriate action.

Mr. Madel: I support what my hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Lidington) said. There is an equally serious problem in my constituency with Maxwell pensioners. Former Maxwell employees who were entitled to a deferred pension are extremely worried about whether they will get their pensions. Can the Minister say anything more today to reassure them?

Miss Widdecombe: Yes. Through the emergency measures that the Government have taken to secure funding for the Maxwell pensioners, deferred pensioners whose pensions are now falling due will receive their pension in the same way as other pensioners. For those deferred pensioners whose pensions are due not now, but in the longer term, the solution lies, initially, with the allocation of moneys from the common investment fund.

Disability Allowances

8. **Mr. Elletson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what steps he has taken to consult disabled people and their representatives on the design and promotion of the new disability living allowance and disability working allowance.

Mr. Scott: The design and promotion of DLA and DWA were developed in close consultation with disabled people and the organisations that represent them. Following the introduction of those new benefits, we continue to consult widely both formally and informally.

Mr. Elletson: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that, as a result of the increased resources that his Department has allotted to the handling of the disability living allowance, there has been a substantial improvement in the speed at which claims are processed? Will he confirm that the Department remains committed to increasing the speed at which claims are handled?

Mr. Scott: I can certainly assure my hon. Friend that that is so. The backlog of claims—in excess of what we would normally expect for in-hand claims—has now been removed. We are also ensuring that claim forms and letters associated with benefits are kept in a constant state of review and improved as necessary.

Mr. Rooney: From where have the 800 additional staff been brought, and what impact has that movement had on claimants in other sectors of the system?

Mr. Scott: Because of the relatively low take-up of the disability working allowance in its early days, we were able to move a number of people who were previously dealing with that benefit, and people from other parts of the Benefits Agency, on to clearing the backlog of DLA. A substantial amount of the work has also been achieved by the introduction of considerable amounts of overtime during the week and at weekends.

Low-Income Families

9. **Mr. Spring:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what estimate he has of the number of low-income families facing marginal deduction rates in excess of 100 per cent. *(a)* in 1978-79 and *(b)* the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Lilley: In 1985, the earliest year for which information is available, 70,000 families had marginal deduction rates of more than 100 per cent.

As a result of the reforms of social security, this year almost no families have marginal deduction rates of 100 per cent. or more.

Mr. Spring: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that his Department has organised successful campaigns since 1989 to increase public awareness about the take-up of family credit? Does he agree that those campaigns were most useful in spreading awareness and increasing the take-up of that vital benefit?

Mr. Lilley: I can, indeed, confirm my hon. Friend's point. Family credit is a unique benefit, with little or no counterpart elsewhere in Europe. It serves a valuable function in helping people back into work, when they have only a relatively low earning ability initially. We want the benefit to be widely known and recognised—it is in the interests of families, as well as taxpayers, for people to shift from full-time reliance on income support into work, with family credit.

Mr. Raynsford: Does the Secretary of State recognise that, for households in low-paid work, receiving assistance with housing costs and community charge costs, the marginal rate of withdrawal of benefit has risen from 62p in the pound in 1979 to a current rate of 87p in the pound? How can the Secretary of State justify the deep poverty trap into which he has plunged hundreds of thousands of households. Will he say how many have been affected by that totally unjust poverty trap?

Mr. Lilley: As the hon. Gentleman knows, we wish, as he does, to see any disincentive effects of the social security system diminish. That was the prime objective of my right hon. Friend's reforms in 1985-86. It was one reason why we moved from assessing income on a gross basis to a net-of-tax basis. The tax changes introduced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor, particularly the 20 per cent. band for the lowest paid—previously, the band was up to 33 per cent.—has resulted in a reduced disincentive effect on their earnings combined with benefit. All those factors have reduced the number of people facing the highest rates of effective tax when on low incomes. I hoped that the hon. Gentleman would welcome that, not wish us to go back to a system under which many people suffered withdrawal rates of more than 100 per cent.

Mr. Streeter: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that there have been more than 2·5 million successful claims for family credit since it was introduced in 1988? Is that not powerful evidence that that important benefit, which supports people in work, is supporting many thousands of low-paid workers in this country?

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend's facts are entirely correct. The recent figures from the Institute of Fiscal Studies suggests that the take-up rate has been improving, and

that those who do not take up the benefit are predominantly those who have the lowest entitlement to the money and, therefore, lose least by not taking it up.

Invalidity Benefit

10. **Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on his proposed new medical control procedures for invalidity benefit from April 1993.

Mr. Scott: The changes announced by my right hon. Friend on 12 November will streamline controls that already apply to all claims for incapacity benefits. Better use of our medical resources will help to ensure that invalidity benefit is properly paid.

Mr. Jones: Is not streamlining another way of saving money for the Treasury? What qualifications does the Minister have to entitle him to overrule doctors who have responsibility for judging the invalidity of claimants?

Mr. Scott: At present, the majority of claimants are dealt with on the basis of judgments made by general practitioners. I see no reason why that should not continue once we have streamlined the proceedings. About 50,000 claimants a year fail to appear for subsequent medical examinations by our medical services. Those people will be given more notice of the dates of their examinations. They will be expected to give reasons if they are not to attend. I believe that the improved reports by the examining doctors will reduce the number of people who have to attend for a second examination, as about 50,000 now have to do.

Pensioners Charter

11. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he will now meet pension associations to discuss the implementation of a pensioners charter.

Miss Widdecombe: Pensioners already have a charter, the citizens charter, which works towards making the service to pensioners more accessible, accountable and responsive to their needs and expectations.

Mr. Skinner: The pensioners whom I have met throughout Britain do not rate that charter. They take the view that it will not do them any good. They are concerned about their own charter during this winter. They want to ensure that those pensioners who might well die of hypothermia will be able to use some of the 46 million tonnes of coal that we have in stock to keep themselves warm. Similarly, they want to be sure that those who are at risk of hypothermia will have enough food to ensure that they do not starve during the winter. They want the £20 back that the Tory Government took off them when they broke the link with earnings and prices. They want all pensioners to have a television licence.

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman knows that he must ask a question, and he is well capable of doing so.

Mr. Skinner: They want included in the charter the abolition of standing charges for pensioners. Unlike——

Madam Speaker: Order. I am waiting for the hon. Gentleman to ask a question. I want a question, not comment.

Mr. Skinner: To follow up the charter, I hope that the Minister will introduce a Bill to abolish standing charges for pensioners. If she cannot find the money to enable that to happen, she should go to the Treasury, which has paid out £4,500 to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and say, "We want the money for the pensioners of Britain."

Miss Widdecombe: Indeed, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State wants the money and he has the money. That is what was said in the autumn statement not long ago. Pensioners do not want to see their savings eroded by inflation, which is what happened during the 1970s under the Labour Government. They want to be able to rely on their Christmas bonus and not miss it for two years because there is an incompetent Labour Government. They want to ensure that the value of their incomes rises by 34 per cent., as it has under this Administration, and not by the miserable 3 per cent. that it rose under the Labour Government.

Mr. Jenkin: Will my hon. Friend confirm that people in glass houses should not throw stones? Does she agree that the only real threat of means-testing the basic state pension came from the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith)?

Miss Widdecombe: All real threats to pensioners come from the Opposition. It is true that the only serious suggestion of means-testing state pension came from the Leader of the Opposition when he was setting up what he deemed to be the commission for social justice. I do not know what social justice is involved in means-testing the pension.

Mr. Winnick: Means-testing was in fact suggested by a Tory pressure group two years ago. Why is it that Britain's pensioners are among the poorest in the European Community? This winter, hundreds of thousands of pensioners in this country will be fearful of heating their homes properly because they know that they would be unable to pay their fuel bills. Would not money be better spent on pensioners, rather than paying the Chancellor of the Exchequer's bill in respect of what was essentially a private matter?

Miss Widdecombe: I am delighted that the hon. Gentleman appears to be saying that the Labour party draws its policy from Tory pressure groups. Far from Britain's pensioners being the worst-off in Europe, they are among the best-off. Is the hon. Gentleman aware that only Britain and Spain supply free prescriptions to pensioners; that in any study of pensioners on half-average earnings, Britain's pensioners come out first or second; and that, unlike some other countries in Europe, we do not take into account children's income when assessing pensioners' rights? Should not the hon. Gentleman be ashamed? I recommend that he reads the good article that appeared in yesterday's *Sunday Express*.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Women Priests

31. **Lady Olga Maitland:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners, what estimate has been made of the numbers of ordained clergy resigning posts within the Church of England in the next three years and of the consequential effects on payments of stipends.

Mr. Michael Alison (Second Church Estates Commissioner, representing the Church Commissioners): The possible cost of making financial provision for ministers of religion who resign in opposition to women being ordained as priests are set out in a report published by the General Synod, a copy of which has been placed in the Library. Ministers of religion are entitled to such provision only if they resign after the promulgation of the relevant canon, and that is unlikely to be before November next year, and will possibly be later.

The Commissioners have made no estimate of the numbers likely to resign, but the gross cost to the commissioners per 100 men are estimated to total £4·6 million of income, spread over a period of up to 20 years. That could be offset by savings to the Church of more than £2 million as a result of reduced stipend costs, re-employment, and so on. The statutory charge on the commissioners' general funds must be paid and will therefore reduce the sums available for other purposes.

Lady Olga Maitland: In view of the personal anguish suffered by priests who feel that they are being pushed out of their churches, will my right hon. Friend give an assurance that their pensions will not be affected—particularly bearing in mind the fact that the commissioners will find themselves in deep financial crisis trying to cope with the changes?

Mr. Alison: My hon. Friend may have heard of the substantial sums that have been notionally set aside. However, it is not a question of individual clergy being forced from their churches, but of their withdrawing or resigning voluntarily. Considerable sums will be made available in the form both of compensation and housing assistance. Pensions will not of course arise in the case of a number of younger men who retire before reaching pensionable age.

32. **Ms. Quin:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners, if he will make a statement on the financial implications for the commissioners of the proposal of the General Synod to open the priesthood to women.

Mr. Alison: I refer the hon. Lady to the answer that I have just given my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland).

Ms. Quin: Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that no consideration of costs should interfere with that welcome decision, and that it would be disgraceful if the House took an opposing view of the decision already agreed by the General Synod? Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that equal pay and equal opportunity legislation will fully apply in the case of women priests?

Mr. Alison: On the hon. Lady's last point, there is no question but that a woman priest would receive exactly the same stipend and allowances as a male incumbent at the same level and of the same status. There will be absolutely no discrimination in terms of sex. As to the vote that might be taken in the House, it would be rash of me to lay down how right hon. and hon. Members in any part of the House ought to vote when the expediency or otherwise of the motion in question is debated. Certainly it is traditional that the House does not attempt to overturn the majority, as appropriately reached, in the General Synod. The hon. Lady will have heard that no financial considerations will in any way be put in the path of the ordination of women. We are making good and reasonable compensation terms for those who want to retire.

33. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners, what assessment the commissioners have made of the financial effects of the proposals of the General Synod to approve the ordination of women to the priesthood.

Mr. Alison: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland) a few moments ago.

Mr. Hughes: Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that one of the financial implications of the measure—if it is passed by both Houses of Parliament—to enable women to be priests is that potentially a huge additional resource will be available to the Church of England in terms of qualified, ordained personnel and that once all the women who want to be ordained are in place the Church of England will be at a great advantage in reaching new congregations and bringing in new income?

Mr. Alison: I fully take the hon. Gentleman's point, though he went slightly wider than the financial implications of the question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam. He is right that the admission of women to the priesthood in the Church of England would very much increase the scope and outreach of the Church of England, but the hon. Gentleman will appreciate that many of those who might be ordained as women priests are already deacons and to that extent already receive quite substantial pay, so the net increase in cost to the Church of England is unlikely to be as great as it might at first sight appear.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Legal Aid

39. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what representations he has received on the new proposals concerning eligibility for legal aid; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Lord Chancellor's Department (Mr. John M. Taylor): I have received a number of such representations.

Mr. Hughes: Is there not something rotten in the state of Britain when, within one month, the Chancellor of the Exchequer can announce proposals that will make 10 million people ineligible for legal aid and yet can be allowed to spend £4,000—his own private legal aid scheme—on paying his own private bill for an entirely private

matter? What has Britain come to, and is there any integrity left in Cabinet Ministers and Officers of the Crown?

Mr. Taylor: I cannot comment on the hon. Gentleman's references to 10 million people. I do not know how the calculation was made. Last year, 250,000 people litigated with legal aid, which makes claims of about 10 million people look pretty silly. The hon. Gentleman wholly improperly seeks to make a connection between my right hon. Friend's legal expenses on the one hand and legal aid on the other. They are quite different issues.

Mr. Boateng: The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) is not alone in making that connection. Given the difficulty that increasing numbers of our fellow citizens, of modest means and with just causes, have in obtaining legal aid, can the Minister tell us what was the basis on which legal aid was granted to the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his own seemingly less than deserving case? Furthermore, will the Minister publish the guidelines upon which legal aid was granted? If there are no such guidelines and if the Lord Chancellor's Department has not been consulted upon them, why not? As the profession's friend in these matters, will the Minister also point out to the Chancellor of the Exchequer that if he must instruct a solicitor at public expense there are other solicitors to whom he might go who are considerably cheaper?

Mr. Taylor: Yes, I used to be one of those cheaper solicitors myself. The hon. Gentleman wrongly referred to resources placed at the disposal of the Chancellor of the Exchequer as legal aid. It was not legal aid of the kind that the hon. Gentleman and I refer to. The then Permanent Secretary to the Treasury decided at the time that it was reasonable to meet a small proportion of the Chancellor's legal fees, including covering the cost of putting out an initial statement and handling subsequent press inquiries. I invite the hon. Gentleman to join me in this conclusion: we ought to bear it in mind that the provision of legal aid and assistance at public expense is almost unique in this country. It is infinitely the best provision that is made anywhere in the world. The authority for that is Lord Williams of Mostyn, chairman of the Bar Council, who speaks for the Labour party in another place.

Magistrates Courts

40. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what measures he intends to take to ensure the efficient administration of justice in magistrates courts.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Government's plans for the future of the magistrates courts service were set out in the White Paper, "A New Framework for Local Justice". One of the objectives of the plans, which are in line with the guiding principles of the citizens charter, is to yield improvements in the efficiency and effectiveness of the service.

Mr. Griffiths: Has the Minister had the misfortune of attending a magistrates court as a witness, as I did in October, having had my car stolen in September? When I arrived at the due time, none of the three defendants were present. There were, however, four other witnesses besides myself, including three public-spirited men from the village where the alleged thieves came from. The case had to be postponed, which must have caused much expense. The Lord Chancellor's Department should be making effective proposals to ensure that such events do not happen. Does he know how much the non-appearance of defendants is costing?

Mr. Taylor: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman did not invite me to the Dispatch Box to discuss his case, but rather the kind of difficulties that it represents. The White Paper "A New Framework for Local Justice" tries, above all, to achieve not merely best practice between different magistrates benches but the co-operation of all the agencies involved in court cases. It is only fair to bear it in mind, however, that it is extremely difficult to sustain a case when the defendant does not turn up because he is involved in a simultaneous court case somewhere else and does not bother to tell the court. Little can be done about that until magistrates courts are linked by a computer network, and it is our intention that they should be.

Mr. Barry Porter: As an even cheaper solicitor than my hon. Friend and, I think I can say without fear of contradiction, an even better one, may I ask whether he has taken into account the views of the Bar Council that magistrates courts should sit at night, for some reason that is not entirely clear to me? Does he realise that if that suggestion were implemented, the solicitors' branch of the profession would have to work 12, 14 or 16 hours a day, unlike the more elevated and elegant members of the Bar? I hope that he will take that into account.

Mr. Taylor: I will not follow my hon. Friend in the terms and idiom that he put his question, but I am prepared to take a close interest in and look at the suggestion of evening sittings to see whether it would advantage the court user, whose needs should be first and foremost.

Mr. Cohen: The Parliamentary Secretary must be aware that the administration of justice in poll tax cases— *[Interruption]* is nothing short of a national scandal. Magistrates have the power to insist on means inquiries and to waive charges where hardship is proven but are not using either of them. Will the Minister look at this as a matter of urgency because many people are suffering?

Mr. Taylor: The hon. Gentleman is right to draw attention to the working of the Children Act 1989 in the courts. A provisional review of the Act's workings show that it is broadly satisfactorily, but I share the hon. Gentleman's suspicion that some magistrates courts are working better than others. That is why fewer things could be more urgent that the introduction of an inspectorate of magistrates courts to achieve best practice in all magistrates courts.

High Court (Commercial Division)

41. **Mr. Ottaway:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will make a statement on delays in the Commercial Division of the High Court.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Commercial Division has reached a relatively stable position and has been able to allocate trial times for parties who are ready for trial. Recent promotions to the Court of Appeal have, however,

had a temporary effect on waiting times, although I am confident that when new appointments are made, matters will improve rapidly.

Mr. Ottaway: My hon. Friend is aware of the reputation of the Commercial Division for the international resolution of disputes. Is he also aware that 90 per cent. of cases heard in the Commercial Division involve at least one foreign party, and that that generates an income running into hundreds of millions of pounds, which helps our balance of payments by way of invisible exports? Is not it short-sighted in the extreme to underman that court by a shortage of commercial judges which, I understand, will continue into next year?

Mr. Taylor: No. At the beginning of the current legal term, only five judges were available to sit in the Commercial Division although lists are planned on the basis that six judges are available to sit. A further nomination can be expected very soon.

York Crown Court

42. **Mr. Bayley:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what plans he has to hold additional Crown court sittings in York.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The work load of the Crown court at York is increasing. Some cases from York are currently being transferred to Leeds. Two court rooms at Hull will be utilised also to contain York's existing work load. The hon. Gentleman will be aware that exploratory discussions are taking place between my Department and York city council concerning the possibility of incorporating a new court building into a proposed development near the existing Crown court building in York.

Mr. Bayley: What reassurance can the Minister give a constituent about whom I have written to his Department? She was attacked by a man and had to spend 46 weeks living with him at large in the community, as he was remanded on bail between the date of committal and the date of the trial, at which he was found guilty. Will the Minister take action in the interim, before building a new court, to look for premises in York in which he could open a temporary third court to shorten the waiting time? After all, the courts charter published last week says that 16 weeks should be the maximum time between committal and trial.

Mr. Taylor: It is certainly true that there has been an unusual surge of case load in the York area which has been against the national trend. I cannot comment on the individual lady's case, but if the hon. Gentleman cares to write to me, I will ensure him a proper reply.

Legal Aid

43. **Mr. Raynsford:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will estimate the number of applicants who will be denied access to legal aid in consequence of the proposed changes to the legal aid scheme.

Mr. John M. Taylor: We estimate that around 2 per cent. of households will no longer be eligible for legal aid as a result of the measures announced recently. In addition, the decision not to uprate the income limit from next April will result in a further 8 per cent. of households not being restored to eligibility.

Mr. Raynsford: Does the Minister accept that access to justice is one of the fundamental principles of a free and democratic society? How can he justify steps that will deny that right to a substantial number of our fellow citizens who are on modest incomes, especially when the Chancellor of the Exchequer gets a handout for his legal action?

Mr. Taylor: It is very important to remember that our legal aid system is probably the most generous in the world. Its cost has doubled in the past four years, yet, even so, it is destined under the autumn statement to go up by 10 per cent. in each of the next three years. Even after the changes announced, it will still be available to 48 per cent. of households, and one fifth of households will receive legal aid without any contribution. It remains targeted at the poorest people, as it should be.

Mr. Dickens: Does my hon. Friend agree that if someone needs legal aid to defend a position, he is justly entitled to receive it if he qualifies? By the same token, there are people who are absolute scoundrels and who take on people through litigation. Some people have to put their hands in their pockets to pay for the case while the others get legal aid although they are not really entitled to it. We are the custodians of taxpayers' money.

Mr. Taylor: Once again, that is a powerfully expressed view on the subject, with not a little of which I agree. I am at pains to say while I am at the Dispatch Box that the effect of the recent changes on criminal legal aid is likely to be small, although some people will have to pay more in contributions; I think that they should.

Mr. Macleman: Has the Minister discussed the matter with the Law Society since the Chancellor of the Exchequer made the announcement? Why is there such an extraordinarily large discrepancy between what the Minister has said this afternoon and the estimate of the Law Society which claimed that 10 million more people are ineligible as a result of the Chancellor's announcement?

Mr. Taylor: I have noticed that the solicitors' estimate is similar to that of the Liberal party and I cannot account for either.

44. **Mrs. Helen Jackson:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what arrangements there are to ensure that legal aid is available to all those who need but cannot afford legal advice.

Mr. John M. Taylor: All people whose disposable income is below £6,800 and whose disposable capital is below £6,750 will still be eligible for civil legal aid. For personal injuries cases the limits are £7,500 and £8,560. Those whose disposable income does not exceed income support level will be eligible for legal aid without a contribution.

Mrs. Jackson: Is the Parliamentary Secretary aware that, in the opinion of Sheffield law centre for example, cuts in eligibility for legal aid will have a particularly serious effect on women who try to get support from the courts against violent men in their own homes or outside? Contrary to stereotype, the majority of such women are not on income support. What arrangements will the

Government make to ensure that women who are in that threatening situation are encouraged to take up the legal protection to which they are entitled?

Mr. Taylor: In addition to the services of the legal profession, valuable contributions are made by law centres and citizens advice bureaux. Women in the plight described by the hon. Lady are very much the concern of the Lord Chancellor's Department which is inquiring urgently into questions of domestic violence and how they affect women. Before long, it may be possible to legislate in that area to alleviate a very real grievance which is admittedly and very largely a women's issue and one that rightly claims the full attention and concern of society.

Market Power (Green Paper)

3.31 pm

The President of the Board of Trade and Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. Michael Heseltine): With permission, I should like to make a statement about possible options for strengthening the law to curb anti-competitive practices in the marketplace.

The Government are already committed to improving the law against price fixing, market sharing and other cartels. Following extensive consultation in 1988, the Government set out their proposals in the 1989 White Paper, "Opening Markets: New Policy on Restrictive Trade Practices". Our manifesto confirmed our intention to legislate on this basis.

I am today publishing a Green Paper which looks at whether changes to the law on monopolies and anti-competitive behaviour should be made at the same time as changes to the law on cartels. Copies of the Green Paper, and a summary of it, are available in the Vote Office.

The Green Paper addresses the behaviour of companies that abuse their power in the marketplace. This includes such practices as refusal to supply or driving out competitors through loss-making pricing. It also covers companies that use their market power to take unfair advantage of their customers, for example, by excessive prices or refusing to sell one product unless one buys several others.

The current law on monopolies and anti-competitive behaviour is largely effective and has served us well, but it has shortcomings. In particular, there is a lack of deterrence against anti-competitive conduct. There are no penalties for past misconduct and no scope for interim relief for injured parties. Competitors can—and do—go out of business before action can be taken.

The Green Paper sets out three possible ways in which the law might be improved. The first option is to strengthen the existing legislation. That would involve strengthening the monopoly provisions of the Fair Trading Act 1973 and the anti-competitive provisions of the Competition Act 1980.

The second option in the Green Paper would be to replace the current legislation with a prohibition system. That would be consistent with our proposals for dealing with cartels. By making abuse of market power unlawful, such a system would permit penalties for past misconduct. That would strengthen deterrence and encourage vigorous, but fair, competition. The third option would be to introduce a prohibition, while at the same time retaining key elements of the current legislation.

Most companies compete fairly and should benefit from these possible changes. Small firms in particular, should welcome more effective powers to prevent suppliers and others from abusing their market dominance.

The regulated utilities and nationalised industries operate in a somewhat different environment from the rest of industry, with their own statutory and regulatory framework. The Green Paper therefore proposes arrangements under which they should be as fully subject to competition legislation as is consistent with this framework.

The Government are looking for a wide-ranging and genuine consultation on the three options in the Green Paper between now and mid-February. We are particularly inviting industry's views on the likely compliance costs and benefits of the legislative options, in line with our commitment to keeping regulatory burdens to a minimum.

Competition policy is good for industry, good for commerce, good for small firms and good for consumers. It stimulates enterprise and innovation. It promotes efficiency and encourages wider choice and lower prices. Our proposals are designed to meet those objectives and do so in a more responsive way than the present regime. My announcement today concerns the publication of the Green Paper on the abuse of market power. This is an important consultation document. We await the views of industry, consumers and others and I commend the Green Paper to the House.

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): There will be a broad welcome for the document, which, on the basis of the statement, appears to fill a gap in the Government's original proposals on restrictive practices which were identified in many of the responses to the 1988 Green Paper. There will be a particular welcome from small businesses if the proposed measures oblige suppliers to treat them on the same footing as major outlets and end practices that end up with small businesses having to pay higher prices than enterprises that have larger economies of scale.

On the options as outlined today, the President of the Board of Trade would not want the House to anticipate consultation by closing down those options. Our present preference would be for a prohibition system. So that we may establish whether that preference is misplaced, will the President of the Board of Trade clarify what deterrence will be provided by the first option, which involves strenthening existing legislation, particularly as he himself rightly identified a major criticism of present competition policy as the absence of suitable deterrence?

The House will be impressed that the President of the Board of Trade attaches such priority to competition policy that he felt moved to make an oral statement on it. As he has volunteered the statement on competition policy, may I press him to express a view on one issue that has caused considerable controversy on competition policy, particularly as I can tell him that an exhaustive three-hour research has failed to produce previous guidance on the point?

The President of the Board of Trade will be aware that the Tebbit guidelines for referrals to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission have attracted considerable criticism. He will be aware that they have attracted widespread criticism that they are too narrow, that they have prevented referrals to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission of takeovers that were against the public interest, and that they have permitted takeovers that were destructive in their impact on both the industry that was taken over and the broader economy. The President of the Board of Trade will be aware also that, in December, the Trade and Industry Select Committee recommended that the public interest should be considered in referrals to the MMC.

As we have not detected any previous statement on the issue from the President of the Board of Trade, before we lose the opportunity provided by this statement, may we press him to tell us whether he intends to accept and abide by those quidelines, or whether, in keeping with his many statements about the need for a partnership with industry,

[Mr. Robin Cook]

he accepts that that would require a broader view to protect from takeovers by creditors industries that are vital to national technology and vital also to regional employment?

Mr. Heseltine: I am very grateful to the hon. Gentleman for the welcome that he has given the Green Paper. He is absolutely right in reflecting the mood that generally will attend upon our announcement. It is the case, as the hon. Gentleman suggested, that the need to address the abuse of market power flowed from the discussions that were associated with the White Paper which dealt with cartels. "Abuse of Market Power" deals, of course, with individual companies. I am sure that that is a logical step forward.

As for preferences, I agree with the hon. Gentleman that it would be quite wrong now to anticipate the consultation that we are launching today, but a number of things could be done in pursuit of option 1. One could strengthen powers in respect of penalties, and one could introduce powers to deal with interim relief, for example. There are things that could be done, but they do not go as far as the introduction of a general prohibition.

On the hon. Gentleman's point about the Tebbit guidelines, of course I have not made any suggestion that they should be changed. They are not as restrictive as has sometimes been suggested. Significant powers are in the hands of the Secretary of State, but they are procedures through which matters must progress before they can be exercised.

Sir Michael Grylls (Surrey, North-West): Does my right hon. Friend accept that there will be a wide welcome for strengthening the Government's competition policy? Does he agree that one of the prime aims of that policy is, or should be, to strengthen the formation and growth of private businesses? The British economy, which has been over-concentrated, will benefit from such changes. The abuse of market power within the United Kingdom can be dealt with effectively by the United Kingdom authorities if the changes are made, as the powers are similar to those of the European Commission within Europe. Will he comment on that?

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend is right. Articles 85 and 86 put powers in the hands of the European Commission to deal with restrictive practices and the abuse of market powers. Among the proposals that we are considering is the option to move domestic practices into line with those that are open to the Community, where there is intra-national trading. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for welcoming the proposals. I have no doubt that they represent a climate of opportunity for small companies to innovate, to come into the marketplace and to be able to resist, with a certain degree of confidence, pressures to drive them out again.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): Are we not entitled to treat the welcome statement as a plea of guilty for all the private monopolies that the Government have created, and for all those cases in which they have failed to act on behalf of the consumer? Will the Green Paper deal with the position of regional electricity distribution companies, which have a monopoly and can charge consumers what they like for electricity that is generated by more expensive means than coal? Will it address the issues raised by the failure to refer the British Airways-Dan-Air takeover to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission? Is it not the case that too many of the Government's best friends are monopolists and that some of them owe their licence to print money to the Government?

Mr. Heseltine: That is a rather mean intervention by the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith), and out of keeping with the broad welcome that the proposals I announced have attracted. On the right hon. Gentleman's latter point, I agree with the view of the Director General of Fair Trading that the merger of British Airways and Dan-Air raised concerns about competition. However, taking into account all the circumstances—in particular the likely consequence for services at Gatwick if the merger were not allowed to proceed—I agree that the public interest would be better served by not referring it to the MMC. I do not agree with the right hon. Gentleman's dismissive view of the transfer of large public organisations to the private marketplace. That has proved to be attractive to customers and to the British economy and we shall continue with that policy.

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): Can my right hon. Friend be more specific about how the Green Paper proposals might help small businesses? Would he care to say whether the excessive discounts given by some suppliers to supermarkets—to the detriment of small traders—will be within the scope of his review, as well as the practice of some supermarkets to delay payments to their suppliers, especially to farmers? Will the measures cover banks' charges to small companies, which many of us regard as unfair practices?

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend has drawn attention to the reasons why the proposals could be extremely interesting in the wider context of competition policy. Excessive discounts are exactly the sort of issue that can make it extremely difficult for small businesses to compete and they could be considered if they were improperly applied. Delays in payment and bank charges are matters to consider in the light of the consultation and the final proposals.

Mr. Ken Purchase (Wolverhampton, North-East): I welcome the statement because it is important that we attack monopolies wherever we find them. It would have been interesting to hear from the right hon. Gentleman whether banks are to be included in the review, because, as the hon. Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) said, small companies are frequently the innovators in manufacturing, but they face considerable difficulties in obtaining from the banks the long-term finance that helps that innovative process.

It would also have been helpful if the President of the Board of Trade had referred to last week's statement from the Engineering Employers Federation, which called on the Government and, in particular, the right hon. Gentleman to be a better champion of industry. The west midlands knows a great deal about the problems caused by not having a proper champion for industry, because, for 13 long years, we have suffered from redundancies and the slimming down of industries. The Engineering Employers Federation said that without a proper industrial strategy, strategic thinking and basic information, market forces——

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is at last coming to market forces, so perhaps he would also come to the question, which I have not yet heard.

Mr. Purchase: The question of market forces is central to the debate. The Engineering Employers Federation stated categorically that market forces cannot be expected to function as intended without the broader view that an industrial strategy would provide. Would the President of the Board of Trade please come to the House, post haste, with an industrial strategy for the recovery of manufacturing in this country?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman, along with other hon. Members who I could mention, might have failed to notice that the Chancellor reduced interest rates to save industry about £10 billion a year. We have also seen the introduction of extra capital allowances, increases in capital expenditure and more flexible public sector rules governing how to deal with private money in the public sector. All those changes are part of the industrial strategy of the Government.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on both the matter and the manner of his statement. May I ask him specifically whether he is aware that the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) and I—I should declare an interest in this matter—have tried and failed to persuade Yorkshire Water to honour the original quotation given by its predecessor, Yorkshire water authority, relating to connection charges to an hotel in Leeds? That quotation has increased from £3,000 to £208,000. Does my right hon. Friend agree that that matter is entirely within his remit and that it would be an appropriate example for the imposition of penalties for past misconduct, as suggested in the Green Paper?

I also commend the statement by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for National Heritage last week, who also produced a Green Paper. Does the President of the Board of Trade accept that many of his hon. Friends welcome the proposition of producing Green Papers for genuine consultation? Will he commend that practice to his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport in relation to the future of railways?

Mr. Heseltine: I will ensure that the views of my hon. Friend are made available to those of my right hon. Friends to whom he has drawn my attention. Long experience of my hon. Friend, however, has meant that I have discovered that he is rather good at making sure that his views are known without any intervention by myself, but he has my assurance that I will use my intervention.

As to how the public utilities will be affected by the Green Paper proposals on the abuse of market power, broadly speaking, they are not caught if they are carrying out their responsibilities as required either by statute or by licence. The sectoral regulators, however, will, under certain of the proposals, be given concurrent powers with those of the Director General of Fair Trading. It will be possible for private actions to be brought against the public utilities in the event that it is felt that an abuse has taken place. If such an action is brought by a private individual or a private company, the sectoral regulator will have the right to be heard in any proceedings.

Mr. Geoffrey Hoon (Ashfield): In strengthening competition policy, will the President of the Board of Trade ensure that an investigation is held into the geographical cartels that currently control the wholesale distribution of newspapers? As part of that investigation, will he guarantee that all small businesses that want a regular supply of newspapers can receive them?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman may be aware that the Monopolies and Mergers Commission is already examining that issue. It would therefore be inappropriate for me to comment on it.

Mr. Ian Bruce (South Dorset): I welcome my right hon. Friend's Green Paper—*Hansard* readers may like to know that it is fluorescent green. How does he see monopoly policies being developed in a European context? On 1 January, we shall have a completely free market, and the way in which we legislate on monopolies needs to be brought into line with our European partners' proposals. Do we intend to proceed in a communautaire way with those proposals?

Mr. Heseltine: I am delighted that my hon. Friend confirms that the Green Paper is in the Vote Office. One of the nightmares of Ministers making a statement to the House is to say that the document is there, only to discover that it is not. I am reassured to discover that the document is there.

On the relationship between domestic and European Community practices for monopoly legislation, one of the arguments for moving in the direction of either option 2 or option 3 of the Green Paper is that they bring the practices for domestic purposes closer to those of articles 85 and 86 of the treaty of Rome. Many in industry perceive that as a useful streamlining.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): When the President of the Board of Trade responded to the hon. Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris), he said that the issue of late payment by large organisations to small companies could come within the scope of the consultation. Does he envisage the possibility of a legalistic framework ensuing from the consultation period, whereby payments by those large organisations can be enforced? Late payments have been very much to the detriment of small companies and are surely one of the biggest abuses of power in the marketplace.

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Lady touches on the essence of the issue: those matters are now subject to consultation as a result of our Green Paper. However, it would be necessary to put such a process under way to establish the fact that it was an abuse of market power and an exercise of a dominant position, with the purpose of restricting competition. The announcement that I made today is not without constraints, although they are clear constraints.

Mr. Gary Streeter (Plymouth, Sutton): Is my right hon. Friend aware that his statement will be warmly welcomed by many of my small business constituents in Plymouth, many of whom have suffered the burden of anti-competitive practices by large companies? Is he further aware that they will be heartened to learn that the review's scope will include the practice of high street banks, many of which have now become less popular than estate agents? Will he say a little more about the sanctions that he has in mind? He will be aware that the current deterrents and sanctions set out by the Fair Trading Act 1973 are

[Mr. Gary Streeter]

toothless and that often, by the time an anti-competitive practice is spotted, it is far too late for the small business that has already gone to the wall.

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend is absolutely right, but I must make a qualification to his first point. I have not said that the arrangements will enable the banks' practices to be examined. That matter will flow from the consultation and the ultimate decisions. However, I note what he said in the context of a wider message.

The sanctions are set out for consultation in the Green Paper and the possibility of fines in certain circumstances is envisaged, ranging from up to 10 per cent. of turnover with a ceiling of £1 million; it is possible to go beyond that provided that certain circumstances are fulfilled. So there is an escalating set of procedures through which fines can be imposed in the event of conviction.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): I should like to ask about anti-competitive practices, especially the practice of refusing to supply, about which the Director General of Fair Trading has not been too good in recent years. Will the review look specifically at the refusal to supply to shopkeepers hi-fi equipment, white goods, furniture, textiles and clothing, and chemists' supplies? Anti-competitive practices are clearly being exercised in relation to those goods and too often in the past the Office of Fair Trading has taken no action.

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman enables me to clarify that under a prohibition system, if we choose that option, everybody, including Government, local government, industry and commerce, is covered. With certain exceptions that I have mentioned in terms of the nationalised industries and the regulated industries, which would not be excluded but subjected to certain disciplines, that prohibition will give comprehensive cover. Therefore, the proposals are comprehensive.

Mr. John Speller (Warley, West): Will the Minister say something stronger about the disgraceful failure of the banks cartel to pass on the reduction in interest rates to small business? Will he amplify his statement about loss-making pricing?

Will compulsory competitive tendering be covered, because there is a suspicion that some companies are pricing themselves into work in order to put the direct labour organisations out of business so that later profits can be made?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman will be aware that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer recently met the Governor of the Bank of England to make sure that the anxieties to which the hon. Gentleman draws the attention of the House were clearly expressed. I have no doubt that that message from my right hon. Friend and from many other quarters was clearly heard.

The hon. Gentleman asked about the effect on direct labour organisations of the competitive environment in which they now trade. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman shares my satisfaction at the considerable improvement in efficiency that has been achieved by the new competitive pressures.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Does the President accept that there is no greater abuse of power than that which is exercised by the regional electricity companies, which have shares in gas and are using it to provide electricity which will undoubtedly be much dearer in a few years than electricity generated by coal? Will he answer the question that has been put to him about this matter? Will he ensure that in future the regional electricity companies will not be able to abuse their power? The Government and the Minister himself hold 40 per cent. of the shares in the electricity companies and could stop that abuse of power if they decided to exercise their tremendous strength.

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Member will look forward as keenly as I do to the findings of the inquiry that is now under way and, of course, to the coal review about which I shall report to the House in the new year.

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): Does the President recognise that small firms will be at a considerable disadvantage if they have to have recourse to the civil courts on matters arising from an abuse of power or an anti-competitive practice? Will he confirm that the arbiter of whether there has been an anti-competitive practice or an abuse of power will continue to be, initially, the Office of Fair Trading and, ultimately, the Monopolies and Mergers Commission?

Mr. Heseltine: When the hon. Gentleman has a chance to look at the document, he will see that in many instances there is a concurrent power. However, it is considered likely that in many cases small firms will go to the director general because he provides a free service, whereas court actions are likely to cost such firms a significant amount. The hon. Gentleman will wish to make his own representations when he has read the Green Paper.

Mr. Bill Olner (Nuneaton): Will the Secretary of State reinforce his intention to ensure that the current malpractice of the banks cartel against large, medium and small manufacturers will cease as a result of the Green Paper? Will he also assure the House that local authorities will operate on a level playing field so that they are able to compete more fairly with private companies for the supply of services needed by consumers?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman may feel that the concerns that have been expressed about the banks should be addressed a great deal more speedily than they would be by the flow of any legislation arising out of the consultation process that we are unleashing today. That does not in any way query the purpose that he put to the House, but the timing would be too delayed for the urgency with which some people have raised that matter. As to level playing fields in local authority provision of services, my experience is that the level playing fields are denied to the private sector, and not to the public sector.

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): Does the President of the Board of Trade recognise that many members of the public are taken for a ride, particularly with regard to the repair of electrical goods, by having to pay excessive call-out charges and because, in many cases, small independent repairers are not able to get parts? Will he ensure that, as a result of the consultation, that monopoly is broken down so that the consumer is able to get the best possible repair at the cheapest possible price?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman will want to consider carefully whether that is an abuse of market

power, and therefore would come within a regulatory system of the sort that we are talking about. As I have said, the prohibition proposals would cover the entire spectrum of services and we shall explore the extent of that as the Committee examines any legislation that we introduce.

Bosnian Refugees

4 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Charles Wardle): With permission, I should like to make a statement about further arrangements that the Government are making to accept in the country ex-detainees from former Yugoslavia.

In his statement on 5 November, my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary confirmed the willingness of the Government to receive from Bosnia and other parts of former Yugoslavia people with special humanitarian needs whom the international organisations judge should be evacuated. We had already advised the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees that we are prepared initially to accept 150 former detainees from camps in Bosnia and in due course their dependants.

In the light of the plans made to receive the first group of 150, we have now informed UNHCR that we are willing to receive over the next few months additional groups of former detainees to a total of 1,000, together with their dependants, totalling perhaps 4,000 in all.

Arrangements have already been made to receive the first group of 150 ex-detainees as soon as UNHCR confirms that they are ready to depart. The size of further groups and the timing of their arrival has still to be discussed with UNHCR. That will be dependent in part on the speed with which the international organisations are able to bring the detainees out of detention to transit camps in Croatia or elsewhere, and to complete such screening and documentation as UNHCR and the International Committee of the Red Cross consider necessary.

We have asked the Refugee Council and the British Red Cross to provide initial reception support and accommodation for the former detainees, both the initial group and subsequent groups. The first group will be taken to three locations, a former mental hospital in Surrey, an existing Refugee Council hostel in London, and a former residential care home owned by the British Red Cross in Cambridge. Arrangements for accommodating subsequent groups of arrivals are being developed. After an initial period in reception accommodation, the evacuees will be rehoused in more permanent accommodation in the community arranged by the Refugee Council.

The British Red Cross will liaise with the ICRC to trace the dependants of the former detainees, and arrangements will be made in consultation with the Foreign and Commonwealth Department and voluntary organisations to bring them here.

Once rehoused in the community, the evacuees, and their dependants when they arrive, will be entitled to receive the range of statutory benefits and services which are available to the rest of the population.

I am sure that we all hope that these evacuees will be able to return in due course to their own country. They will be admitted to this country exceptionally outside the immigration rules for six months initially. We shall obviously wish to review the position in the light of individual circumstances and the on-going situation in the former Yugoslavia.

The Government will be meeting the cost of transport of the former detainees and of their dependants to this country. They will reimburse the costs incurred by the Refugee Council and the British Red Cross in providing

[Mr. Charles Wardle]

initial reception support and accommodation, and they will fund the Refugee Council to provide the necessary on-going support.

Mr. Tony Blair (Sedgefield): I welcome the greater generosity shown to Bosnian refugees. It has rightly been forced on the Government by the strength of feeling in the country about the need for Britain to do more.

Let us be clear about the rules that will govern entry by refugees into Britain. Is the Minister accepting, as we have pressed, that there is a category of refugees who may not fall within the strict definition of the United Nations convention because they are not individually the subject of persecution but whose lives are nevertheless in serious danger because of ethnic cleansing and civil war in Yugoslavia? Therefore, is it not time that we properly defined that group, so that they can be distinguished from mere economic migrants? Once the group has been properly defined, would it not then be right to agree with the United Nations and the International Committee of the Red Cross on a proper process of certification for those who are, in the broadest sense, refugees, and publish the terms of the agreement so that we may debate them?

On the broader issue that the Minister raised, is it not more important that Europe keeps its nerve at present? Although we can all unite against bogus refugee claims, we must not be stampeded into a fortress Europe policy which will not simply shut the door on genuine refugees who fear for their lives but be a serious betrayal of Europe's long-term future? Does the Minister agree that it is better for policy in Europe and Britain to be determined by balancing calmly practical reality with humanitarian causes, not by bending in the wind of racially motivated attacks, whether in Germany or elsewhere?

We know that there is a meeting of immigration Ministers today and a meeting of the so-called Trevi group tomorrow. Is the Minister aware that in many other countries the agenda for such meetings is published and debated before their Parliaments? Is it not high time that the secrecy surrounding such meetings ended and we were given the same opportunity to discuss such vital matters in the open as our other European partners are?

Mr. Wardle: The additional number of ex-detainees will be received on precisely the same basis as the 150 to whom my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State previously referred in answering a private notice question. They will be received outside the immigration rules and given exceptional leave to enter. The selection of the ex-detainees to come here will be a matter for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, together with the International Committee of the Red Cross.

There is no such thing as a fortress Europe. Some half a million people a year seek to enter western Europe. Immigration Ministers are meeting today, as the hon. Gentleman said, against a background of increased ethnic tension in Germany. There is nothing illiberal in seeking to establish firm but fair controls. There is certainly no hidden agenda. The agenda for today's meeting was made available to the press days ago, and has been available. My right hon. and learned Friend will ensure that a detailed account of the meeting is made available to the House in the usual way—in the form of a written answer.

Up to 2·5 million people have been displaced by the terrible conflict in the former Yugoslavia. The hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) ducks any sense of responsibility by refusing to say whether he would turn anyone away. We must ensure that an effort is made among the international community, working with the UNHCR, to establish that the most needy humanitarian cases are brought outside the former Yugoslavia.

Sir John Wheeler (Westminster, North): My hon. Friend is right to exemplify the arrangements that have been made with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and to define how the temporary admission procedure will enable the entry of 4,000 more people from Bosnia or the associated areas of the former Yugoslavia. Does my. hon. Friend agree that the entry of those people imposes a substantial burden on some local authorities, notably in central London and in other parts of southern England? Will he ensure that there are proper arrangements to share the burden of the increasing number of people whom we welcome into the United Kingdom, and that accommodation is available for them outside the inner-city areas?

Mr. Wardle: My hon. Friend's description of the self-selected groups that arrived here until recently—until the visa regime was imposed—is absolutely right. On the arrangements for ex-detainees selected by UNHCR, I have already outlined the initial accommodation for the first group of 150, and plans are in train to make arrangements for following groups. The Refugee Council will be asked to seek accommodation after the initial reception period, in districts where there is less pressure on local services and where support can be given by voluntary organisations. What my hon. Friend has said about the pressure on some local authorities will be carefully taken into account.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): Does not the Minister realise that it is unacceptable to be told that statements were made to the press days ago and that the House of Commons will be informed by means of a written answer? What are the determinations of the Ministers in the councils that are meeting today and tomorrow in London? Why has the Secretary of State not tabled in the House a proposal to share the burden of refugees from former Yugoslavia which he is prepared to place before his colleagues in the councils and which are being tabled before the Dutch Parliament, and debated there? What proposals is the Secretary of State putting forward on behalf of hon. Members and of many people in this country who are more concerned about the plight of the refugees than the Government appear to be?

Mr. Wardle: I have already made it clear to hon. Members that there is no hidden agenda. The draft agenda for the immigration Ministers' meeting was made available to the press some time ago, and is a matter for general publication. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State made it clear before, and has done so at the immigration Ministers meeting today, that he favours as open treatment as possible of the matters considered by the immigration Ministers. Any text agreed at today's meeting will be published, and my right hon. and learned Friend will take the earliest opportunity to make available to the House in the normal fashion a detailed account of what was agreed at the meeting, as has been the practice in the past

Mrs. Angela Browning (Tiverton): I know that my hon. Friend's statement will be welcomed by many of my constituents. Will he outline the response that we can make to constituents such as those from whom I have recently received letters, who have accommodation in their homes and are asking if there is any way in which they can help when people arrive here, complete the counselling process and have been seen by the authorities?

Mr. Wardle: My hon. Friend is right to say that many members of the public are willing to help in a most thoughtful and responsible fashion. However, the British Red Cross and the Refugee Council have advised the Government against the idea of dispersal into family units. They think that it is much more important to provide mutual support by placing people in larger groups in rented accommodation, whether from the private sector or from local authorities. I am sure that there will always be a role for voluntary organisations to play in supporting refugee groups when they have been so placed.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): As all four of my grandparents found refuge in this country, and as the rest of my family who remained in Europe were wiped out by a previous ethnic cleansing process, I welcome the modest increase in national humanity shown by the Government. Will the Minister give the House and the country an assurance that, in addition to those who are to be admitted now, genuine refugees—people who are escaping from death and persecution—will continue to be admitted to this country in that great tradition of which so many of us are so proud?

Mr. Wardle: The hon. and learned Gentleman will be aware that there have already been 20,000 applications for asylum this year. The Government stand, as previous Governments have consistently done, by the terms of the Geneva convention—there is absolutely no question about that. The hon. and learned Gentleman talked about a modest increase. I hope that he will bear in mind the all-round humanitarian effort made by the Government to assist in the terrible problems of the conflict in former Yugoslavia, and will recognise that, by making an increased offer to the UNHCR, the Government hope that other members of the international community will do likewise.

Mrs. Judith Chaplin (Newbury): I am sure that many will welcome the additional numbers coming into the country, but is my hon. Friend concerned that the provision of housing and other benefits for the group with which we are concerned may seem unfair to the refugees who are already here and who are not able to obtain such benefits, such as those in my constituency?

Mr. Wardle: My hon. Friend points precisely to the reason why it is important to turn to UNHCR and to obtain the assistance in this country of the Refugee Council and British Red Cross, and properly to organise the placement of the ex-detainees and their dependants. As I have already said, the Refugee Council will be encouraged not to seek rented accommodation to which ex-detainees will move after the initial phase in parts of the country where there is already undue pressure on local services.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Does not the United Kingdom carry a special responsibility for the situation that exists in Yugoslavia, in that it was the European Community, with the support of this country, that recognised the break-up initially? In those circumstances, we should be desperately concerned about the plight of refugees. We should not continue to adhere to a policy that essentially means that refugees must return and be dealt with almost entirely inside Yugoslavia, when we have recognised the disappearance of that country.

Mr. Wardle: I understand the concern that the hon. Gentleman expresses. I hope that he will not forget the efforts that are already being made by the British Government within Yugoslavia in terms of 2,300 troops, 200 airlift flights to Sarajevo, medical assistance, trucks and drivers and technical assistance. I hope that he will bear all that in mind. I hope also that he will remember that the United Kingdom is playing a significant part in the pressing cases which UNHCR says should be evacuated from the former Yugoslavia.

I understand that the total number of detainees in camps who have been recognised and identified so far by UNHCR is about 5,000 to 7,000. That will give the hon. Gentleman an idea of the scale of the contribution that has been made by the United Kingdom. I hope that he appreciates that it is important to take that lead but to understand that 2 million to 2·5 million remain displaced in former Yugoslavia—they face considerable problems—and to attempt to move them in significant numbers would be impracticable and would give way to the evil goal of ethnic cleansing, which I am sure he will agree we must all resist.

Mr. David Lidington (Aylesbury): I warmly welcome my hon. Friend's statement, but will he acknowledge that, for schools that have to teach the children of Bosnian refugees, there are additional burdens? Will he confirm that it remains the Government's policy to seek to reform section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966 so that schools will be able to apply for additional funds to support the teaching of children whose first language is not English, irrespective of whether those children come from Commonwealth countries or elsewhere?

Mr. Wardle: My hon. Friend makes a clear case for his views about the need for revision of section 11. I am sure that his concern has been heard.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Is the Minister aware that we can understand why he appears to be extremely embarrassed about making such a pitiful statement on behalf of the Home Secretary? Is it not shameful that even today he cannot name a date when the 150 refugees will be received here? If the 1,000 are received on the same basis, it will be well into 1993 before they arrive. Was the gesture of receiving 1,150 refugees accepted by the EC immigration Ministers today? Am I right in thinking that the Home Secretary will be making a full statement on that meeting tomorrow or, at the latest, on Wednesday?

Mr. Wardle: I have said already that my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary will be providing a detailed account of today's meeting and tomorrow's meeting of the Trevi group in the normal fashion.

As for the 1,000 ex-detainees that are to be selected by UNHCR, the hon. Gentleman should understand that the Government have stood ready to accept the first 150 since 5 November. We wait upon the UNHCR to select those

[Mr. Wardle]

ex-detainees and to make arrangements to transport them, and stand ready, with the assistance of the British Red Cross and of the Refugee Council, for their reception. The date of the departure of each group is a matter for the UNHCR.

Mr. Alan Haselhurst (Saffron Walden): Does my hon. Friend agree that the measured and reasonable nature of his announcement makes the Opposition's initial accusations look—in the light of the announcement by my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary—like institutionalised idiocy? Will my hon. Friend confirm that, under the arrangements that he outlined, the burden of caring for refugees coming to this country will not fall, as before, on any one housing authority but will be shared on a reasonable basis?

Mr. Wardle: My hon. Friend expresses himself in colourful fashion, in referring to the views held by Labour Members. He is right to point out that, with the help of the Refugee Council and of the British Red Cross, dispersal plans for ex-detainees will be such that undue pressure will not be imposed on any one local authority.

Mr. Cynog Dafis (Ceredigion and Pembroke, North): Is the Minister aware of the large quantity of mail that all right hon. and hon. Members have received expressing the public's horror at the limit placed on the number of refugees from the former Yugoslavia allowed to enter this country? Why was the Minister's statement confined to former detainees? Although one recognises that they are a most deserving category, there are others whose lives are genuinely in danger because of their political views, ethnic origin, and so on. Does not the limit to which I referred illustrate the Government's illiberal attitude?

Mr. Wardle: The hon. Gentleman should bear in mind the fact that the British Government, in common with other members of the international community, turned to the experts—and it is the UNHCR and the ICRC that point to the need to bring ex-detainees, as the most urgent humanitarian cases, out of the country. It is still open to other individuals to apply for a visa. If they refer to an interest in asylum, their cases will be considered outside the immigration rules. If there is a direct family link with this country, this country will consider their asylum applications.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): Does my hon. Friend accept that it is prudent and necessary to take account of the rising tide of hostility to incomers to the European Community, but that making the argument of it the cause of restricting immigration can fuel that horrible habit? Does he agree that the European Community must make much greater efforts in terms of education, legislation and law enforcement to stamp out the growing tide of xenophobia and racism?

Mr. Wardle: I accept entirely my hon. Friend's observations, and I am sure that he joins me in wishing well all those brave Germans who made it absolutely clear in their national protests that they find utterly unacceptable any expression of racism or ethnic hostility in their country. At the same time, I hope that my hon. Friend will bear in mind the fact that, with some half a million people seeking to enter western Europe every year, there must be an organised basis for firm but fair immigration controls.

Mr. Joseph Ashton (Bassetlaw): Further to that statement, what advice does the Minister have for the family in my constituency whose relatives are stranded in Germany and probably at risk of racism attacks, and who have even been refused a visa to visit this country? Will he be more sympathetic and allow a long-term visit of perhaps three or six months until things settle down, and see what happens then?

Mr. Wardle: I do not know the circumstances of the family to which the hon. Gentleman refers, but if he will bring them to my attention, no doubt we can discuss the matter. It should be absolutely clear to the House that it would be wrong to suggest that every asylum applicant or ex-detainee in Germany is under some form of threat. I am sure that is not the case, and that the German Government have made that entirely clear.

Mr. Alan Howarth (Stratford-on-Avon): Can I suggest to my hon. Friend that the generosity of approach in his statement will be greatly welcomed by many of my constituents, who have been much moved by the suffering in the former Yugoslavia and who are anxious that our Government should do all that they realistically can to help, both here and in the Balkans?

Mr. Wardle: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his support. I hope that he and his constituents will bear in mind the fact that the most caring and effective way to offer help to ex-detainees is to do it through the offices of the UNHCR and the ICRC in order to make sure that we identify the most pressing humanitarian cases and then arrange a well-organised reception in this country so that continuing support and care is provided in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Does the Minister recognise that his statement is inadequate in a number of ways? He has not yet conceded that it was wholly wrong and inhuman to introduce the visa regime for people coming to this country from the former Yugoslavia. The imposition of a specific numerical limit on the number of people seeking political asylum from the former Yugoslavia seems to suggest that others will be denied access unless they can obtain visas, although the Government know full well that it is impossible to apply for a visa to visit this country from any part of the former Yugoslavia, because of the travelling difficulties.

Mr. Wardle: The hon. Gentleman will be aware that visa issuing is now possible in our offices in Zagreb, so every effort is being made to make visas available to those who make individual applications. The hon. Gentleman will also bear in mind, I am sure, the fact that it would have been impractical and irresponsible simply to countenance the uncontrolled flow of arrivals. He will note that Britain was among the last of the European countries to apply a visa regime. Having done so, the Government have turned to the UNHCR to provide a properly caring and organised programme to make sure that the most urgent humanitarian cases are received and treated in this country.

Mr. Robert Banks (Harrogate): I believe that there is great sympathy in this country for, in particular, the plight

of families who have fled from Bosnia. A mother and her three young children are, happily, living in my constituency and are well supported by local people, but her husband, the father of her children, is living in Crete. Will my hon. Friend give priority to reuniting that family?

Mr. Wardle: My hon. Friend will be aware that applications from people with direct and close family ties are given priority. If he will give me the details of that case, I shall give the matter the closest attention. I hope that my hon. Friend will agree that his constituents, and others, feel strongly that to put our reception of ex-detainees on a properly organised basis is the responsible way of going about helping, at this end, with the humanitarian effort that is so badly needed because of the terrible conflict in the former Yugoslavia.

Mr. Bryan Davies (Oldham, Central and Royton): Will the Minister accept my gratitude for the efforts by his private office to trace the head of a family, which I visited in Slovenia, who is believed to be in this country? Does he recognise that there is a sharp contrast between the limited response of the British Government and the generous response of the British people? Does he not acknowledge that the people in my constituency, for example, are already organising lorryloads of goods to go to Slovenia to aid the refugees there, that that poor benighted country, small though it is, is overwhelmed with refugees, and that the British Government's response has been extremely limited?

Mr. Wardle: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his kind words about the efforts of my private office. I hope that he will bear in mind the fact that the Government's widespread efforts in the former Yugoslavia to provide both aid and technical assistance and to put in hand a programme that, as I have described, is earmarked to receive about 1,000 of the between 5,000 and 7,000 ex-detainees already identified by the UNHCR is a significant contribution, by any standards, by the British Government.

Lady Olga Maitland (Sutton and Cheam): As I come from a family of Yugoslav refugees, may I give a warm welcome to the announcement, which follows in the finest of British traditions? The Government have already accepted 35,000 Yugoslav visitors to the United Kingdom. Would my hon. Friend be willing to repeat his guidelines to charities such as Leeds European Refugee Trust to ensure that refugees go through the proper authorities and thereby prevent queue barging? Will he say when he will review the next intake?

Mr. Wardle: My hon. Friend is absolutely right to talk about the need for a properly organised basis for receptions. I am sure that that is well understood and appreciated by the many well-intentioned voluntary organisations that have done so much already to help with the problems in Yugoslavia. I am sure that their efforts are much appreciated by the House. My hon. Friend is aware that some 40,000 people from former Yugoslavia have entered this country in the first 10 months, some of whom have undoubtedly already returned, but, by the end of October, 4,500 had applied for asylum. If she adds that to the 4,000 ex-detainees and their dependants who are likely to be included in this programme, she will appreciate that the Government are making a considerable effort.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Is the Minister aware that, however limited his announcement is, it is certainly welcome? Although Opposition Members were bitterly attacked by the Home Secretary and his supporters at the time, is it not clear that they reflected the generous spirit of the British people—who, as they have in the past, recognised that, although we cannot do all we would like, we can help those who are fleeing from persecution and terror?

When the Minister meets his German counterpart, will he tell him that many British people do not believe that the German authorities are taking enough action against the fascists, racists and hate-mongers? To some extent, that is not surprising, because in the past 50 years German authorities have been reluctant to bring many Nazis to justice. Perhaps their reluctance explains their continued ambiguity towards the extreme ultra-right in Germany.

Mr. Wardle: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman's words will have been heard and noted in the House. I hope that he will agree with what I said a few moments ago about the commitment and integrity of the many members of the German public who demonstrated in the past few days to make it absolutely clear that there is no public appetite for racism or the kind of ethnic tension that seems to have surfaced. I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's words of welcome to the expansion in the programme of the reception of ex-detainees. He spoke of the attitudes of Opposition Members, but I hope that he will bear in mind the fact that it is equally important to make it clear that it is impossible and wrong to seek the removal of between 2 million and 2·5 million people, because that would be succumbing to ethnic cleansing. We must operate on a carefully organised basis, working with UNHCR.

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): Will my hon. Friend take this opportunity to ensure that the voluntary organisations and charities, particularly in my part of the world, such as the Tertia trust and the Leeds-based trust, ALERT, are given clear guidelines on the role he sees for them to ensure that we avoid a repetition of the unfortunate situation that developed just a few weeks ago? Will he ensure that a press release or statement is released detailing governmental responsibilities and the charities' responsibilities so that those who want to play a part in voluntary organisations can assist with this project?

Mr. Wardle: I am sure that my hon. Friend agrees that many of those organisations have made considerable efforts. I agree that it is most important to have clear-cut guidelines for co-ordination. I suggest to my hon. Friend that he advises the voluntary groups with which he is in touch to approach the Refugee Council to talk about that form of co-ordination.

Several hon. Members: On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order. I must hear first an application under Standing Order No. 20.

Solicitors (Payments from Public Funds)

4.35 pm

Mr. Gordon Brown (Dunfermline, East): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

the questionable circumstances surrounding the payments to Carter-Ruck, solicitors, from public funds.

The matter is specific because the Chancellor of the Exchequer must be brought to the House to answer the public concern over the use of public funds for a private legal bill. He should specifically explain why the British taxpayer should pay at all when he hired his own libel lawyer to protect his own personal reputation in respect of a commercial tenancy of his own private home in what was ultimately a private matter, which in no way arose from his duties as Chancellor of the Exchequer.

The matter is specific because the rules make it absolutely clear that public funds can be justified only in the conduct of public duties that involve official responsibilities. The press handling of a private eviction is not such a case.

The matter is important because, when talking about the rules governing payments from public funds, it has become clear from the National Audit Office this afternoon, not only that the payments were not to be announced to the public, but that the expenditure was never separately itemised in Treasury accounts. It was included only under the broadest of headings entitled "Treasury running costs", was never drawn to the attention of the National Audit Office as a special feature and has never been investigated by the National Audit Office, which should now happen. The Chancellor must come to the House to explain why the secret arrangements were such that the public were never to know that the payment had ever been made.

The matter is important because the Treasury now suggests that the reason for incurring the expenditure was to retain full confidence not only in the office of Chancellor, but in the person holding that office—in other words, guidelines that could permit public funds to be used to resist legally almost any attack on any Minister. That interpretation of the rules is so wide and so liable to abuse that it cannot be allowed to continue.

The matter is also important because there is no published precedent for the payments. There is a huge difference between the Treasury covering the legal expenses of a Chancellor sued because of actions taken in the direct exercise of his public duties, as in the case of Johnson Matthey, and a Chancellor who is simply involved in legal action because of his own private dealings.

The matter requires urgent consideration because members of the public will not understand the use of public money in that way, making the Chancellor the only man in Britain to escape legal aid cuts. The guidelines must be fundamentally rewritten. The credibility of Government is once again the issue, unless Ministers are prepared to come to the House to explain themselves.

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): On a point of order, Madam Speaker!

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. Hon. Members must resume their seats until I have given a decision on the matter.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): We are worried about Michael Brown.

Madam Speaker: There is no need to worry about anything but hearing the Speaker at the moment.

I have listened very carefully to what the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) has said. As the House knows, I have to give my decision without stating any reasons. I am afraid that I do not consider—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"] Order. I do not consider that the matter raised by the hon. Gentleman is appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 20. I therefore cannot submit the application to the House. I have no doubt that there are points of order. I call Mr. Rowe, who was first on his feet.

Points of Order

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I realise that this is a subjective matter. It was not only during the excitable indignation of the shadow Chancellor that I felt that the volume in the House this afternoon was very high—almost uncomfortably so. Could you, Madam Speaker, regulate it so that it is a little less noisy?

Madam Speaker: I will look into that matter.

Several hon. Members: On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order. I will take one from each side. I call Mr. Skinner.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. You are not allowed to tell us why you have turned down the application under Standing Order No. 20. You will appreciate that I made an application earlier today. I am wondering about the role of the Official Solicitor. I would like you, Madam Speaker, to tell me why he is not being used in a case like this. You will recall that 20 years ago the Official Solicitor had to be used in an individual case which arose out of a civil action. His intervention, which was used by the Government because it was a public matter, enabled the matter to be resolved.

The fact that the Official Solicitor was not used suggests to me that this was a private concern and a private investment by the Chancellor. He wanted to line his pockets. He got the highest bidder—Miss Whiplash—and he wants the public to pay the bill.

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman has made his submission. His knows very well that the Speaker does not indulge in such exchanges across the Floor of the House.

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): This is the first time that you, Madam Speaker, have been in the Chair since the general election that I have felt it necessary to raise a point of order with you. Do you not agree that there has been an abuse of proceedings in so far as Back Benchers are concerned? The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) sought leave for an emergency debate under a procedure which we Back Benchers value very much. I suspect that he did that having already submitted a private notice question to you. I am not sure whether he did that, but I once sought, after having submitted a private notice question which the Speaker did not accept, to raise the matter in the way that the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East raised the matter. For very correct reasons, I was not allowed to do that.

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East has been muck-racking and making much of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when the matter has nothing to do with the Chancellor. It was a decision of the permanent secretary to the Treasury to make the minute available to the general public in the way he did. The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East has been muck-raking, and we will do that if that is what he wants.

Hon. Members: Oh.

Madam Speaker: Order. It is for the Speaker of this House to determine whether a private notice question is heard or whether an application under Standing Order No. 20 is heard. The House might leave that decision to me.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): On a separate point of order, Madam Speaker. During the exchanges on the statement on refugees made by the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department, you will have heard that European Community immigration Ministers are meeting today and tomorrow to discuss policies, including those concerning refugees. You will have heard during those exchanges that there was dissatisfaction about the fact that we are to be told about the outcome of those important meetings only by way of a reply to a written question.

Will you permit me, under Standing Order No. 20, arising from the exchanges made on the statement, to apply for an emergency debate on a matter that is important, urgent and specific—namely,

"the policy of Her Majesty's Government concerning refugees"?

That would allow us to call the Home Secretary to account for the meetings held today and tomorrow, to explain the Government's refugee policy and to say whether we support the establishment of safe havens in Bosnia. For all those reasons, I should very much like to submit such an application, and I hope that you would grant a debate.

Madam Speaker: I have heard no basis on which the hon. Gentleman may submit an application under Standing Order No. 20 today. However, of course, every hon. Member—and certainly the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden)—is perfectly entitled to make an application to me under Standing Order No. 20. I will consider such applications most carefully, as I always do.

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. You will be aware that I am not, and never have been, one to indulge in the points of order racket. However, I seek your guidance. You will recall as I do, because we were in the House at the time, that when Lord Wilson of Rievaulx was Prime Minister he sought to sue a pop group called The Move over a song called "Flowers in the Rain". Can you confirm whether, quite properly, he received public funds in that connection and whether Mr. Speaker at the time allowed a debate on the subject?

Madam Speaker: I can neither confirm nor deny what the hon. Gentleman has asked: my memory is not as good as that. Even if it were, I doubt whether I would do so across the Floor of the House.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I wonder whether you can clarify the standing of the House. We have had an explanation from the Treasury about the sum in question which was the subject of the Standing Order application by my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown). Officials of the Treasury have given their explanation. As Speaker of the House, can you tell me what opportunity exists for hon. Members to question Ministers? If we table written questions, presumably a Minister will answer them.

While we have had an explanation from Treasury officials, surely at the end of the day Treasury official take their instructions from Ministers. Any payment that was

[Mr. David Winnick]

authorised was authorised by Ministers. What opportunity is there for the Chancellor to come here and explain and justify his conduct and be subject to questioning? We are not interested in questioning officials. We want to ask the Chancellor whether he was justified in receiving the money. We want to hear his explanation.

Madam Speaker: The hon. Member knows that I cannot require any Minister to come to the Dispatch Box. The Speaker of the House does not have such authority. The hon. Gentleman is a very long-standing Member of the House. If he puts on his thinking cap, he will know full well that there are various methods by which he might pursue what he is seeking to do through normal parliamentary procedures.

Sir John Wheeler (Westminster, North): Further to the point of order, Madam Speaker. Is it not a fact that the then permanent secretary to the Treasury authorised the payment of £4,700 without any application to him for that funding from the Chancellor of the Exchequer?

Hon. Members: How do you know that?

Madam Speaker: Order. These are barely points of order for the Speaker. This is not within my remit. I have answered the points of order and the Standing Order No. 20 application. I will take no further points of order on that matter.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West) *rose*——

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North) *rose*——

Madam Speaker: If there are points of order that do not relate to that matter, I am willing to hear them.

Mr. Tony Banks: I need your protection, Madam Speaker. *[Laughter.]* Conservative Members may think that my point is flippant, but it is not. A very unfortunate rumour is going around the press lobby at the moment that I know somewhat more than I have so far said about the appearance of a small Hitler moustache on the portrait of Baroness Thatcher that was hanging at 1, Derby gate. As you have responsibility for works of art—although it is rather difficult to describe said portrait as a work of art—I want you to know, Madam Speaker, that I know nothing whatsoever about the incident. I did not put the Hitler moustache on the portrait—nor, as someone else has said, were I the chairman of the Greater London arts committee would I have considered the artist for a grant.

Madam Speaker: I know about the vandalism that has taken place, and I deprecate it. I have asked for very thorough investigations to be carried out. Does the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) wish to raise a point of order, or are points of order finished? I am not prompting one.

Mr. Corbyn: I am obliged to you, Madam Speaker. My point of order is this: will you ensure that guidelines are issued to all hon. Members about what they can claim in the way of legal expenses from any problems they get into in future because of their membership of the House?

Madam Speaker: That was a very back-door method of trying to get at me.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c

Madam Speaker: With permission, I shall put together the motions relating to statutory instruments.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order. No. 101(3) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

BUILDING SOCIETIES (EFTA STATES)

That the draft Building Societies (EFTA States) Order 1992 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

COMPANIES (DISCLOSURE)

That the draft Oversea Companies and Credit and Financial Institutions (Branch Disclosure) Regulations 1992 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

COPYRIGHT (COMPUTER PROGRAMS)

That the draft Copyright (Computer Programs) Regulations 1992 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Boswell.]*

Question agreed to.

Orders of the Day

Social Security Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

4.48pm

The Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Peter Lilley): It gives me no pleasure to follow the little debate that was initiated by my old sparring partner, the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), for whom I used to have some respect until he demeaned himself and the Opposition Front Bench by descending into the gutter with the gutter journalists from whom he gained his material. He and they will be judged by the company that they keep.

I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The Bill has two main purposes: first, it introduces a 1 per cent. additional rebate for personal pension holders aged 30 and over, as promised in our manifesto; secondly, it provides for a Treasury grant into the national insurance fund.

Before explaining the detailed provisions in the Bill, it may help if I recall the background on personal pensions. The present arrangements were established by my right hon. Friend the Member for Sutton Coldfield (Sir N. Fowler) in the Social Security Act 1986, which came into force in 1988.

Critics, not least on the Opposition Benches, predicted that the personal pension scheme would be a flop and that, to the extent that personal pensions caught on, it would be largely at the expense of occupational pensions. In fact, personal pensions have been an enormous success. Nearly 5 million people have taken them out since their introduction in 1988. That is 10 times as many as was originally projected. The 5 million personal pension holders are largely additional to the 11 million members of occupational pensions schemes. Indeed, the number of people covered by occupational schemes has actually risen over the same period. The success of personal pensions has generated a committed flow of funds for investment amounting to £8 billion over the period.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Lilley: No.

That is one of the great strengths of private pensions. They are invariably fully funded, setting savings aside to be invested in industry to build up assets which will pay the pensions in the future.

Mr. Corbyn: Will the Secretary of State now give way?

Mr. Lilley: Not to the hon. Gentleman, if that is the correct epithet—*[Interruption.]*—which I trust it is.

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. The right hon. Gentleman should make a rather more graceful withdrawal than merely to say that he hopes that it is the right epithet. I thought that we were all hon. Members, whatever we may think of each others' opinions.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): I hope that the House will settle down and that we will extend courtesies to each other. That applies, of course, to both sides.

Mr. Lilley: Absolutely. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Personal pensions, as I have said, are invariably fully funded.

Mr. Dewar *rose*——

Mr. Lilley: Are you disputing the Chair again?

Mr. Dewar: I am not disputing the Chair, as the Secretary of State is suggesting. It is quite an important point. There are proprieties in the House. Sometimes people see them as a little artificial, but most of us see them as important safeguards. In respect of a specific innuendo, if it is said that an hon. Member will never get in on a point of information, because, by implication—indeed, it is explicitly suggested—he is not an honourable Member, that is quite a serious charge and it should be withdrawn.

Madam Deputy Speaker: That was not my understanding of the situation that arose. I make it plain to the House that we should observe the highest standards of courtesy, not how much we can get away with.

Mr. Lilley: I entirely agree, Madam Deputy Speaker. I assumed that the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) was criticising his hon. Friends for their use of innuendo.

By contrast, state schemes——

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. The Chamber heard the Secretary of State refer to an hon. Member as a gentleman, not an hon. Gentleman. He followed that with a comment about whether that was the correct term to use. That is the thrust of what he said. On two counts he has violated the proper standards of conduct in the Chamber and is yet to accept your advice on how to put right that conduct. He does not have the decent grace to do it. I insist that he be brought to order. It is not proper.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I have already explained that I do not regard the exchange that has taken place to be of such a kind that it requires an apology. The observation that I have made is that I hope that both sides will observe the highest standards of courtesy. I suggest that we get on with the substance of the Bill.

Mr. Lilley: I will adhere to the spirit of that remark, Madam Deputy Speaker.

By contrast, state schemes are pay-as-you-go. This year's contributions are used to pay this year's pensions. Nothing is saved and invested in industry to create assets to pay for future pensions. The success of personal pensions also means that a substantial future burden is lifted from the Exchequer.

Personal pension funds have taken off so well because, for the first time, they give many people, especially those with no access to occupational schemes, an alternative to the state earnings-related pension scheme, and because they offer complete portability when people change jobs, with no loss of pension rights. That is particularly attractive to young people and mobile employees. Personal pension funds give people the chance to make additional provision above the level of the state earnings-related

[Mr. Lilley]

pension scheme. About one and a half million investors have already done just that. Finally, of course, the 2 per cent. incentive of those contracting out of SERPS has succeeded, as was its aim, in getting the new concept off to a flying start.

In 1986, when my right hon. Friend the present Prime Minister was taking the Social Security Bill through the House, he said that the Government wished to extend personal pensions as widely as possible. In Committee my right hon. Friend said:

"We expect that people of 40 and under will be most attracted to personal pensions".—[*Official Report, Standing Committee B;* 6 February 1986; c. 44.]

His intentions have been amply fulfilled.

It is especially encouraging that so many young people have personal pensions. More than half of personal pension holders are under 30. More than 80 per cent. are under 40. The flat-rate nature of the current rebate arrangements means that the advantages of personal pensions are greater for younger people than for older ones—although I must admit that it is disappointing to discover that the older generation now begins at 30—because the benefits from a personal pension depend, among other things, on the return on investment, accumulating compound. By contrast, entitlements from SERPS are increased in relation to the growth of average earnings, as there is no investment fund.

Historically, the return on investment has outstripped earnings growth. As long as it continues to do so, personal pensions will have an advantage over SERPS for younger people. At the same time, with a flat-rate rebate for contracting out, it becomes advisable for personal pensioners to consider contracting back into SERPS as they get older. Therefore, people in their 20s are more likely to be well advised to contract out of SERPS than people in their 50s. If older personal pension holders decided to contract back into SERPS, that would not merely undermine the healthy development of personal pensions but would increase the financial burden on SERPS and on the Exchequer. That is why we propose to introduce a 1 per cent. addition to the contracting-out rebate for those over 30. It will apply to those who are 30 or over next April, and of course to those who are over 30 before the beginning of any future tax year.

We estimate that about 2 million personal pension holders will benefit. The cost for the first year is estimated to be £165 million. However, the incentive is paid out a year in arrears, so 1994-95 will be the first year in which that cost falls on the national insurance fund. The 1 per cent. additional rebate will ensure that the majority of personal pension holders continue to find it worth while to maintain their pensions in the immediate future. But that is only a temporary measure. In the longer term, as we promised in our manifesto, we will be considering proposals for an age-related rebate structure to replace the temporary 1 per cent. additional rebate from April 1996. I intend to consult fully with all interested parties on the way in which that might be achieved.

The ending of the 2 per cent. incentive will make it all the more important that people are sold only pension arrangements that are appropriate to their circumstances, and at a competitive cost. That requires that full and clear information should be available to potential customers and that pension providers should be firmly and effectively regulated. To improve the availability of information, we will be working closely with interested parties, including the relevant consumer bodies. We would hope to bring out new material that explains the range of pension choice in as simple language as possible. It could highlight the questions to ask and the points to watch.

The Securities and Investments Board has made proposals to improve the transparency of information relating to costs. Those proposals are being considered by the Office of Fair Trading, whose task is to ensure that such rules are not anti-competitive. The office is expected to report to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor shortly, and we look forward to its report. We are also working closely with the regulators to ensure that the regulatory system works effectively for personal pensions, especially in the changed environment from next April.

Officials and Ministers have held a series of meetings with their counterparts in the SIB, the Life Assurance and Unit Trust Regulatory Organisation, the Investment Management Regulatory Organisation, and the Financial Intermediaries, Managers and Brokers Regulatory Association to discuss issues and to share information.

The regulators intend to issue further guidance to pension providers and advisers before next April, which will highlight the categories of people for whom pensions are likely to be suitable and unsuitable. I welcome evidence of the regulators' determination to use disciplinary powers when firms are not giving the best advice, tailored to investors' circumstances.

Our aim, with Parliament's consent, is that the Bill should receive Royal Assent by February. To ensure that the details are considered fully in the time available, we propose to take the Bill in a Committee of the whole House, which will allow time for the Department to explain fully the changes to all involved, and for it to make the necessary adjustments to systems, so that personal pension holders will receive their rebates promptly.

The national insurance fund is the second aspect of the Bill. The balance in the fund depends on the state of the economic cycle. An economic slow-down adversely affects incomings and outgoings. The detailed position is set out in the Government Actuary's report, which was published and placed in the Library last Thursday and—I hope—received by Opposition Members.

In 1993-94, the expenditure from the fund is likely to exceed its income by about £4·8 billion. After taking account of the balance carried forward from 1992-93, the fund is likely to be about £1·2 billion short of its commitments. There is also likely to be a shortfall in future years. Legislation makes no provision for the fund to go into deficit. Without legislation of the sort proposed, it would, therefore, have been necessary to curb entitlement to benefit or to increase contributions.

The House will know that, despite the tight financial position, I announced on 12 November that all benefits are to be uprated in line with inflation. I also announced that we had decided to make no change in employers' or employees' national insurance contributions, except the normal adjustments for inflation. That was warmly welcomed by everyone, except Opposition Members. However, it means that we have to draw on the Exchequer to keep the national insurance fund in balance.

We therefore propose to help the fund by a new grant, to be paid from the Consolidated Fund into the national insurance fund in 1993-94, which will be available—if needed—in future years. It is not a new idea to support the

fund through a transfer from the Consolidated Fund. The national insurance fund was originally set up with income from employers, employees and the state.

The former Treasury supplement, which we abolished in 1989, was inflexible. We had to pay it whether or not we needed to, even when the fund was in surplus. The proposed grant is a more sensible mechanism, allowing more prudent management of the fund: it is flexible; it is not automatic; and it will be called on only when it is needed. In that way, we can be more responsive to the cyclical nature of the economy.

Let me turn to the amounts involved. The grant will vary according to the need at the time. The payment that we intend to make in 1993-94 will be up to 20 per cent. of benefit expenditure from the fund—up to £8 billion. That is a high initial amount because of the need to recover ground lost by the fund in 1992-93. For subsequent years, the payment will be made only if the Secretary of State decides that it is needed. We plan to keep a balance of two months' benefit expenditure, using expenditure estimates made by the Government Actuary and published in his report.

The Bill also sets a maximum for subsequent years—17 per cent. of benefit expenditure, or about £7 billion on current forecasts. On each occasion, an order will be made after consultation with the Treasury and with its consent. The order will be subject to the affirmative procedure. The House will be able to debate the issue fully. That gives us maximum flexibility with maximum accountability. The measure represents a transfer of money within the public sector. Therefore, it has no effect on overall public spending. The House will have an opportunity to debate the re-rating proposals when we place the draft order before it in due course.

The measures in the Bill raise questions about what the Opposition would do when faced with similar issues. They have criticised the proposal to introduce the national insurance fund grant. I want to know whether they are still critical of it, or whether they accept the need for it. At the last election they proposed a major increase in national insurance revenues. Indeed, a major plank of their policy was to increase the national insurance burden on a large number of people. That would reduce the need for a grant, but the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East appears to have renounced that policy. We wish to know whether the Opposition will repudiate his renunciation.

The Labour party appears simultaneously to be proposing to consider means-testing pensions and discouraging private pensions. Will the hon. Member for Garscadden therefore confirm that the promise of his right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith), that none of the universal benefits would be excluded from his review, still stands? Will he also repudiate the remarks of his predecessor, who said just before the election:

> "The election of a Labour Government will turn the pensions market on its head. The traffic in transfers will be all one way—back into SERPS"?

Do they still propose to discourage people from taking out personal pensions, while threatening to means-test state pensions? The House has a reason to seek answers to those questions and this is an excellent occasion for them to be given.

As hon. Members will be aware, today is the eve of the 50th anniversary of the Beveridge report. I believe that the Bill is in keeping with the spirit of that report. Beveridge considered that the state should, in establishing a national minimum, provide room and encouragement

> "for voluntary action by each individual to provide more than that minimum for himself and his family."

Our measures on personal pensions are designed to help to do just that. Our new grant maintains the national insurance fund on a sound basis and is more flexible than previous arrangements. I therefore commend the Bill to the House.

5.7 pm

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): I regret the Secretary of State's petulant opening. I can only assume that he is extremely defensive about the issue raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown). If the Secretary of State is worried about bad manners in the House, perhaps he will read the opening of his speech tomorrow and reflect upon it.

I must comment briefly on the Secretary of State's repeated remarks on the means-testing of the state retirement pension. He knows that he is inventing, and that there is no justification for that charge. I wrote to the right hon. Gentleman on the matter, so he knows where I and the Labour party stand. Of course, we said that the commission on social justice would be open-minded and that it would be prepared to consider all the options. That is different from immediately assuming that one possibility, which is in his mind but no one else's, is about to become reality. It is scaremongering of the cheapest sort and the right hon. Gentleman—I use the words "right hon." because I realise that it is the proper means of approach—knows that.

Mr. Lilley: I shall read what the hon. Gentleman said in *Hansard* tomorrow and consider whether it meets the high standards that he has set for others.

I remind the hon. Gentleman that, in a debate at the Oxford Union, I made remarks similar to those in my speech today. I challenged him to repudiate the suggestion about means-tested pensions. I sat down and waited for him to do so, but he refused and let it stand. If he thinks that I have made a cheap suggestion, why did he not take the even cheaper option of saying then that he would not consider the means-testing of pensions?

Mr. Dewar: I have given the right hon. Gentleman that assurance. I am not interested in cheap options. I remember the debate at Oxford extremely well, which was held only a week after the Conservative party conference. Quite properly, I repeatedly asked for the statistical base for the right hon. Gentleman's charge about women who became pregnant to avoid the housing queue. If I remember rightly, the right hon. Gentleman refused to answer that question, and said that that was all sanctimonious rubbish. I must confess that I think that the rubbish came from him, and it does still. I regret that.

Mr. David Willetts (Havant): I must remind the hon. Gentleman that the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) referred to the fact that the Labour party commission struck the right balance between universal and selective benefits. In the light of that statement, how can the hon. Gentleman rule out the option of means-testing the pension?

Mr. Dewar: All that my right hon. and learned Friend said was that there would be an open-minded approach to

[Mr. Dewar]

the evident problems of the current benefits system. How that claim to such an approach could then be translated into the type of charges made by the Secretary of State—except through malice—passes my imagination. The right hon. Gentleman is guilty of stirring of the lowest and stupidest kind, and I like to think that it will be counter-productive—[HON. MEMBERS: "Rule out means-testing, then."] I have already made it clear that we have no plans to means-test the state pension, and I shall not be shifted from the common sense expressed in previous remarks.

The Bill is significant because it raises a number of important matters about the future of the pensions system. I was interested in the proposal to reinstate tripartite funding of the national insurance fund. The Secretary of State will remember that, when the Government abolished it back in 1989, they did so with considerable pride. They were the Government who believed in good housekeeping; they were the Government who could balance the books. There was no need any longer for any sort of balancing payment from the Exchequer. Of course, that balanced budget approach is now a dream and a mirage.

I was interested by what the Secretary of State said when he referred to the economic cycle. One would have expected a confident Cabinet Minister, who believed what the Chancellor told him, to say that we needed the funding for the national insurance fund this year because of particular difficulties posed by the recession, but that, within three years, those difficulties would represent a bad patch in the past. The right hon. Gentleman was very careful—I can understand why—to say that a continuing subsidy would be required. He said that that subsidy might fluctuate and that at some future date it might not be necessary, but he was quite specific that it would be necessary for some years to come. The right hon. Gentleman's thinking provides an interesting insight into his confidence in the financial management of the Chancellor and the Government.

In 1993-94, the Exchequer grant will represent nearly 20 per cent. of the national insurance fund payments. That is a remarkable figure. In 1988-89, there was a surplus in the national insurance fund of about £3 billion, but in 1993-94 there will be a deficit of nearly £5 billion. That deficit will occur despite the fact that there has been a transfer of responsibility for industrial injury benefits and statutory sick pay and maternity pay, worth about £1·7 billion per year, to the Treasury. The deterioration in the fund has been sharp and significant, and the Government cannot escape the fact that that is a comment on the financial difficulties faced by the country.

I notice that the Government Actuary said in his report of December 1991—not the one that appeared last week, for which we are grateful—that the balance of the fund in 1992-93 would be estimated at 17 per cent. He said that that would be just above the minimum, and that it was obviously a cause for some concern.

From the Government Actuary's most recent report—no doubt the Secretary of State is very familiar with it—the right hon. Gentleman will note that, in paragraph 24, the figure for 1992-93 is not 17 per cent., as estimated, but 10 per cent. It has fallen well below the recommended minimum. That fall reveals a sad tale; and it is awesome evidence of the way in which the recession has bitten.

We all know that unemployment is the ABC of the debate. If 100,000 people are added to the unemployment total, that costs the Department of Social Security about £330 million. If unemployment increases, contributions fall and benefit liabilities increase. I am interested to discover what will happen in the next three years. Perhaps the Minister who will reply to the debate can help us on that matter.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Miss Ann Widdecombe) *indicated assent.*

Mr. Dewar: I take it that the hon. Lady will be replying to the debate, given that she is gesturing at me with her head.

Miss Widdecombe: I was nodding.

Mr. Dewar: The Under-Secretary assures me that she was merely nodding, but she sometimes has a somewhat aggressive manner. I am relieved to have that assurance.

The Under-Secretary will be aware that the Government Actuary, when making forward projections, works on a number of assumptions. They are not assumptions that he picks, because the House will be familiar with paragraph 10 of his report, in which he said:

"The assumptions I have been instructed to use for the purpose of the above estimates were set out in the following terms . . . the number of unemployed (Great Britain) averages 2·74 million in 1992-93 and 2·8 million in 1993-94 . . . the increase in average earnings on a year earlier is . . . 5 per cent. in 1993-94."

Those assumptions are interesting, because it is on that basis that the Government Actuary calculates the balance in the fund, as expressed as a percentage of the pay-out of the national insurance fund in a given year.

We are on common ground, however, because if he is wrong about the unemployment projections, his figures may be in trouble. If he is also wrong about his assumptions on earnings, his figures may be blown out of the water. Perhaps the Under-Secretary can tell us whether the DSS, which has an interest in this matter, expects unemployment in Great Britain to average at 2·8 million people in 1993-94. If she and her Secretary of State do, they are the only people in this country who now expect unemployment to remain at about 2·8 million people.

I do not believe that the Chancellor imagines that that will happen, because, although the autumn statement was noted for the right hon. Gentleman's bullish presentation, if anyone in the House or outside had bothered to read the actual figures, he would see that the Chancellor is suggesting that growth will be 1 per cent. in the coming financial year, or 0·75 per cent. if one excludes activity in the North sea. Certainly, if growth is as low as that, unemployment will rise markedly. I notice that the Society of Business Economists, which was reported extensively on the front page of the *Financial Times* recently, has suggested that the growth rate may be only half of even the modest figure predicted by the Treasury.

Even if the Chancellor is right—I suppose, by the laws of average and the laws of chance, he is likely to be right sometimes—unemployment will rise. In today's edition of *The Guardian*—I use it because it provides the latest estimate available to me—the Employment Policy Institute has suggested that, by April 1994, the seasonally adjusted unemployment figure will stand at 3·32 million. If we take the figures in the Government Actuary's report, which suggest that an extra 100,000 people will be in the

unemployment queue in 1993-94, that contributory income will be £150 million lower and that expenditure for benefits will increase by £100 million, and apply that to the estimate made by the Employment Policy Institute—having removed Northern Ireland from that estimate—the result is a £450 million-plus drop in expected income to the fund, and an increase in expenditure of £300 million.

I paint that picture because I want the Under-Secretary to give me an assurance—I am sure that she will be glad to do it—that she takes those projections seriously. Mr. Daykin, the Government Actuary, is already estimating that, in 1993-94, there will have to be a £7·5 billion subvention to the fund—the Secretary of State has already mentioned that. He reckons that the Exchequer subvention will be 19·6 per cent. of benefit expenditure. He must keep within 20 per cent. under the Bill, so there is little room to play with between 19·6 per cent. and 20 per cent.

The Under-Secretary argues for considerably less than a 5 per cent. increase in earnings—that is the whole point of the Government's policy—which will also have an adverse effect on the figures and calculation. Given the likely course of events relating to unemployment and pay, is she saying that she can hold to that 19·6 per cent. and, if not, what will happen?

The Secretary of State showed a remarkable interest in whether we would vote against the Bill. One of the reasons why we shall not vote against it is that we do not dispute the necessity for a Treasury payment to the national insurance fund. It would be silly if we did, because a substantial gap would then have to be met by cutting benefits, which would be unacceptable to us, or raising national insurance contributions.

Given the sad state of the economy and the depth of the recession, as my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East has made clear, we could not advocate such a course. Clearly, there must be a subvention, but let us leave room for doubt: it is a defeat for the Government and a monument to the failure of their economic policies in the past two or three years.

I am not sure whether I appreciate the full significance of clause 1(3), which is composed somewhat obscurely. I make no complaint, because it is highly technical, but it deals with the reimbursement from the national insurance fund to the Treasury of the small sum of some £6 million—small compared to the right hon. Gentleman's total budget. I am not clear why that is necessary. The Under-Secretary will no doubt make it clear when she sums up the debate.

I tried to take advice on the matter, and found that the detail has passed many people by. Perhaps unauthorised payments that should have been made over a period were not made, and this is therefore a wiping-the-slate-clean exercise because someone has nodded or slept. The Secretary of State will say that such things never happen in a well-run Department and certainly did not happen in his, but we should have an explanation. We may be able to return to the matter later in the proceedings.

The main part of the Bill deals with the incentive and the new 1 per cent. provision. In 1988, a 2 per cent. incentive over and above the contracting-out payment was introduced in an attempt—the Secretary of State makes no bones about it—to encourage people to leave SERPS and take up personal pensions. The Government are in a good position to discuss prejudice and rigid political views, because, from the very beginning, the Secretary of State's intention has been to sink SERPS, and ultimately to see it off the map altogether.

The contracting-out mechanism is familiar to all hon. Members. National Insurance contributions were reduced this year by 5·8 per cent. and will be reduced by 4·8 per cent. in 1993-94, which is 3 per cent. for the employer and 1·8 per cent. for the employee. The money is then gathered and that percentage is paid to the pension provider. In addition, we get the 2 per cent. incentive to personal pensions and to contract-out money purchase schemes in the occupational sector.

Anyone who has looked even superficially at the matter will recognise that it has been an expensive exercise. According to the National Audit Office, at April 1988 prices cumulatively until the end of 1993—the end of the 2 per cent. period—the cost is some £9·3 billion. That is probably an underestimate. In cash terms, it would clearly be considerably higher—I am advised, more than £12 billion.

The theory is that, when people contract out, SERPS will not need to be paid some 20 or 30 years later. However, the best estimate, endorsed by the National Audit Office, is that savings will be about £3·4 billion, so there is a gap of about £6 billion. It is an expensvie way to encourage private pensions.

It may be worth reminding people who sometimes complain about the amount of money that goes on benefits of other kinds, such as those for people who are in trouble, suffering from illness, unemployment or disability, that there is another form of benefit, of which this is one example, and mortgage interest relief at source—MIRAS—is another. One would not necessarily oppose those, but they should at least be taken into the balance when considering how we run our affairs.

Ultimately, whatever the savings—far short of the cost—in a pay-as-you-go scheme, which we now run in the public sector, revenue forgone is a considerable burden.

Mr. Willetts: Having studied the National Audit Office report on the cost of the incentive for people to contract out from SERPS, the hon. Gentleman will recognise that the savings figure of £3·4 billion—which, as he rightly points out, is considerably below the cost of the rebating incentive—is so small only because it assumes that everyone who takes out a personal pension will go back into SERPS in 1993. Does he not recognise that that is an absurd basis on which to cost the incentive for people to take out personal pensions?

Mr. Dewar: I appreciate that argument. I shall come, in a different context, to the question when, how and whether people should be encouraged to return to SERPS—the hon. Gentleman raises an issue of real significance. But even if he would wish to quarrel with the National Audit Office, he will agree that the overwhelming professional view is that there is a significant gap. I repeat my last point: that the gap is extremely substantial in terms of revenue forgone and the immediate problems of managing the national insurance fund.

In any event, the hon. Gentleman will recognise that we now have a different situation—an incentive of 1 per cent. for people over 30. I should not complain, because it is in the area of propaganda, but the issue was oddly presented in the Tory party manifesto as a major improvement. It was given star billing; but if one read the print carefully,

[Mr. Dewar]

one noticed a coy qualification at the end about the 1 per cent. when existing incentives end. However, most people will have seen it as an important advance for those interested in the private pensions sector.

Will the Under-Secretary say a word or two about whether we are to have another review on that matter? It is important, because it concerns age-related principles applied to the contracting-out sector, which is a matter of acute interest to many people. She will remember that the 2 per cent. was available not only to personal pension funds but also to COMP schemes in the occupational pensions sector. The 1 per cent. scheme is available only for the private personal plan and not for COMP schemes, which are excluded.

That has been a matter of concern to the occupational pension scheme's joint working group, which has been in correspondence with the Secretary of State. I carefully read the bits of that correspondence available to me, and I must confess that I was none the wiser about why that change had been made—*[Interruption.]* No, I am not even better informed. I recognise that the Secretary of State sees himself as a latter day F. E. Smith, and I shall look out for F. E. Smith jokes later in our exchanges.

I was neither better informed nor wiser, because no obvious or adequate explanation was offered. Perhaps the Secretary of State does not like occupational pension schemes either. I understand the ideological drive to downgrade SERPS, and I think that in a sense it is motivated by malice, but I do not understand why that approach is being extended to occupational pensions—which is clearly happening, given the decision to exclude COMP schemes. There is great anxiety about that among professional bodies.

There must be clarification of the age-related principle. The Leader of the House, when he was Secretary of State for Social Security, said:

"We intend to examine the scope for the age-related rebates".—[*Official Report*, 27 February 1992; Vol. 204, c. 1132.]

I do not know how much further we have gone down that road, but perhaps the Under-Secretary of State can tell us. She will have seen the front-page story in the *Financial Times* of 25 November under the byline of Norma Cohen:

"The Government has announced plans to encourage personal pension holders to stay out of the state pension plan."

That is an extremely interesting sentence. I understand that that report is not accurate, and I accept that there has not been a formal announcement. However, given the speculation and the fact that the Government are examining the age-related principle, perhaps the Minister will tell us when there will be a decision. If the Government have plans in that direction, how will the scheme operate?

Am I safe in assuming—it is probably dangerous to assume anything with this Government and this Department—that, within a contracting-out percentage, which has been fixed by the Government Actuary on the current balance of calculation, the distribution to the pension providers would be weighted according to the age of the person in whose name the pension has been taken out? Is it the intention that there should be an increase in the contracting-out percentage or will it remain the same if there is a move towards an age-related scheme? That is probably a misleading term, because the percentage will fall as the scheme matures. Will that be allowed to continue, or will the process be distorted to help with the scheme's introduction? The principle is worth exploring.

My questions are detailed, but I am sure that the Minister will accept that they are important and it would be helpful if he were to answer them. The incentive as presently drawn favours the young. There is cash in the scheme for many years. It has not been anything like as advantageous for those over 40, and I suspect that the 1 per cent. has been dragged out of the Treasury simply to stop people following the self-evident good advice to opt back into SERPS. We need to know more about the Government's intentions.

Mr. Corbyn: Is my hon. Friend concerned about the security and viability of any of the personal portable pension schemes? Examinations in the Select Committee of the viability of pension schemes, as opposed to portable pension schemes, showed grounds for concern about their viability to pay out in the long run. Is my hon. Friend concerned about portable schemes? I should have liked to put those questions to the Minister.

Mr. Dewar: I should not like anyone to think that I was talking to the Secretary of State. I understand my hon. Friend's frustration. He raises a key issue, which I shall deal with later.

Pensions have been in the news recently, often for the wrong reasons. On Second Reading, I cannot go into detail about occupational pensions. We all await the Goode committee report, and I am sure that the Secretary of State recognises the enormous pressure to move speedily when those recommendations are available.

There is a strong case for saying that pensions are a form of deferred pay, and that there must be a substantial shift in the balance of power among trustees of occupational pension funds. There must be control of surpluses and contribution holidays. As I understand the law, there must be provision for limited price indexing before surpluses can be raided, but contribution holidays do not have even that protection. That underlines the need for early action.

At Question Time, the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe), spoke about the common investment fund and an unallocated £123 million. I hope that she does not think I am being difficult when I say that earnest hopes that the matter will soon be resolved are cold comfort for Maxwell pensioners who are living with anxiety. The Government could play a more forward part in trying to push through a satisfactory ending to this financial labyrinth.

As far as they go, I welcome the Under-Secretary's assurances about deferred pensions, and hope that they implied that the temporary fund set up to allow the continuing payment of pensions while the investigation and gathering of funds continued will be extended for as long as is necessary. I understand from those who are involved with the Maxwell pensioners that they fear that the fund will be exhausted in the spring. The hon. Lady clearly implied that it would be extended if necessary, but perhaps she will put the matter beyond doubt.

I shall now deal with the balance between SERPS and private pension provision. We must not underestimate what SERPS has achieved. It has been responsible for a

significant growth in pensioners' incomes. Paragraph 17 of the Government Actuary's report shows that SERPS added about £300 million to benefit expenditure this year compared with last. We should all welcome that, because many of the people who benefit are in low-paid jobs and, for a variety of reasons, would be unable to make private provision and unlikely to be working in an industry with a good occupational scheme. SERPS is a remarkable social measure, and I am sorry that Ministers constantly understate its achievements.

The debate is dominated by the fact that, despite the raid in 1986 when SERPS was damaged by the decision to downgrade the percentage from 25 to 20 and to apply not just the best 20 years' earnings but lifetime earnings, for almost everyone over 30, SERPS is still the best buy. I suspect that the 1 per cent. incentive is an attempt to hide that fact.

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): The hon. Gentleman spoke about surpluses. No doubt he shares the general concern among hon. Members about the way in which surpluses are used. However, how can he reconcile saying that employers cannot utilise surpluses with the problem of what would happen with deficits? If employers have surpluses removed from their control, should they also lose responsibility for deficits? Who would be responsible for deficits in pension funds?

Mr. Dewar: I accept that a balance must be found. Not long ago, the hon. Gentleman and I shared a platform on related matters. We were on the same side on that occasion. I hope that, in the technical debate on the Goode report, we shall continue to argue a common cause, even if that separates the hon. Gentleman from some of his right hon. and hon. Friends.

Whatever his view, there is a clear case for getting away from the present system under which contributions holidays can be declared for an employer at his instance and surpluses used, not necessarily for dishonest purposes but certainly in ways which had little to do with the interests of those who at that time or in the future would depend on the pension fund. That must be put right, and that is why the balance of control must be radically altered.

At the moment, there is a good deal of evidence and financial opinion showing that it is sensible to stay in SERPS and not to opt out, despite the 1 per cent. incentive. Hon. Members may have seen an article in *The Guardian* by Teresa Hunter on 28 November, headed:

"Beware opting out of state pension scheme".

In an interesting article in the *Financial Times* in July 1992, Mr. Barry Riley pointed out the dangers of assuming that personal pension plans would continue in the 1990s with the same high returns that were achieved during the 1980s. He concluded by saying:

"Most people who are in good occupational schemes or in Serps should stay there."

The danger is that they may be tempted by the blandishment of the 1 per cent. to act in a way that is not in their best interests.

I know that the Secretary of State is always happy to have information, so I shall help him by saying that the only criterion is how we produce the best practical pension system that secures a comprehensive provision that has previously been available only to those who are better off. I believe—this relates to the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn)—that safeguards and standards are the responsibility of Government and are important in that respect.

Independent advice and adequate regulation are also important, and I am glad to hear that there are positive proposals before the Office of Fair Trading. We shall look at them in an open-minded way. I am sorry, Madam Deputy Speaker, I should not have used the phrase "open-minded", because it is viewed with great suspicion. I presume that my use of it will convince the Secretary of State that I shall oppose those proposals. However, I assure him that by "open-minded", I mean what I say; we shall view them on their merits.

Mr. Lilley: I assume that, for the first time, "open-minded" means that the Opposition are in favour of competition. That is a great step forward, which we welcome unreservedly.

Mr. Dewar: That is a clever point—I use the word "clever" in a pejorative way. The Secretary of State is fond of clever points. We shall see what we shall see when the proposals appear. There must be more effective regulation, if only because while professional ethics are a fine and important thing, if one lives on commission, it is undoubedly sometimes difficult to give advice that one knows is against one's own best interest. Many people do so, but there are cases in which it does not happen and an enforceable code of practice and an explicit statement of the commission that is being charged are important safeguards.

I notice—again because it is so current—that, on "Your Money" page of the *The Independent on Sunday* of 29 November, there was a feature under the byline of Maria Scott. The paper asked three companies to quote transfer values three years from now on their standard personal pensions contracts. They assumed that the policy was taken out by a 29-year-old man, paying £50 a month and planning to retire at the age of 65. The quotes assumed an investment growth of 10·75 per cent.—rather generous.

All the policies were on the same terms, and the total premiums paid over three years would, in each case, be £1,800. Allied Dunbar quoted a value of £1,140, Norwich Union quoted £1,490 and Friends Provident £1,270. I use this as an example of the remarkably different end product from the same amount paid, and apparently on the same terms and conditions. That rather underlines the need for safeguards. Competition is a useful economic tool in many circumstances, but, as the Secretary of State must realise, there are cases in which it is necessary to have safeguards.

I have taken my due time, but I should not finish without mentioning a couple of points to which we shall return in Committee. We have another day to look at these matters. A guaranteed minimum pension is demanded in certain parts of the occupational sector. There must also be a guarantee of the SERPS equivalent in the COMP schemes—the contracted-out money purchase schemes. We should be considering whether that should be extended into the private sector.

I know that it will run into considerable difficulty with the pension providers, but there are a number of ways to achieve it—for example, by target benefits or by recognising that, if there is high inflation, a ceiling must be imposed on the revaluation of the guaranteed minimum

[Mr. Dewar]

pension. There is a strong case for looking at those matters, and I hope that we shall find ways, perhaps ingenious ways, of doing so during the progress of the Bill.

We said that we would give the Bill a fair passage. I recognise that there are time constraints if the new scheme is to get into place, and we are prepared to co-operate. There is no great room for positive amendment in a spare technical measure. I give the Secretary of State fair warning—I am sure that he will accept it—that there will be a major debate over many months about every sector of the pension world. We intend to pursue the issues that matter, whether in the occupational pension, the private pension or state pension sectors, because there is demonstratably a great deal to be done if there is to be security and peace of mind for those at work and those who have reached retirement age.

5.45 pm

Mr. Charles Hendry (High Peak): I listened with interest to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar). It was the first occasion in my brief time in the House that I have seen an Opposition Front-Bench spokesman empty half the Opposition Benches. There were only four Labour Members here at the beginning to hear him, and now there are only two, so that puts his speech in context.

I welcome the transfer from the Treasury into the national insurance fund. A few years ago, many of us welcomed the abolition of the transfer from the Treasury into the national insurance fund, but we now recognise that we are operating in different circumstances. I see two advantages in the transfer. First, it is a fluctuating grant —this year 20 per cent. is the maximum and, after that, it will be pegged to 17 per cent., so there will not be the overpayments and surpluses that have congregated in the past. Secondly, and most importantly, it avoids, at this time of recession, putting additional pressure on employers and employees when they are least able to afford it.

Conservative Members are most able to appreciate that point because we are aware of the commitment made by the two major Opposition parties during the general election campaign that they would be raising national insurance contributions. It is not now clear where the Labour party stands on this issue. Shortly after the election, the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) said:

> "I am prepared to defend . . . the principle . . . that National Insurance should be taken from everyone on the same basis."

He seemed, not unreasonably, to be defending the platform on which the Labour party had fought the election. However, within six months, the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) was saying:

> "The situation has so deteriorated . . . that we are not prepared to raise NIC or income tax at this stage."

Perhaps the Labour party would do the House the honour of telling us where it now stands. Does it believe that national insurance contributions should be raised to help us out of recession—Conservative Members would consider that to be barking mad—or would it raise national insurance contributions only when we have come out of the recession, thereby penalising people for dedication, hard work and eventual success?

I agree with the three objectives that lie behind the Bill. First, we must support those who have been hit most by the recession. Secondly, we should be targeting additional support on those most in need. Thirdly, we should be keeping our election pledges, and the pledges made before the election, to the elderly, the families and others most in need.

In common with my colleagues, I shall never forget the faces of Labour Members during the autumn statement and the uprating statement. They had been sitting there, willing the announcement of cuts. There was ever-greater dismay on their faces and an ever-growing sense of frustration when those cuts did not materialise and they gradually realised that the scare stories that they had used so brutally to worry the elderly, the sick, the disabled and others were being put into a well-deserved political grave.

Mr. Corbyn: Before the hon. Gentleman completes his litany of alleged misdemeanours by Opposition Members, can he confirm that, since the Conservative Government came to power in 1979, all pensioners have been robbed of £15 per week by the break of the link with earnings that was made in 1980, and the substitution, instead, of the link with the retail prices index?

Mr. Hendry: Of course, that is the greatest fraud of all perpetrated by the Labour party. The reason why the Labour Government increased pensions in line not with the retail prices index but with incomes was that prices were increasing faster than incomes. Therefore, the Labour Government were cheating pensioners when they were in office.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): Does my hon. Friend recall that the former Secretary of State for Social Security, Lord Ennals, when asked why his Government had passed legislation and then promptly broken it, said that it is the Government's responsibility to take such matters into consideration, but it is not their responsibility to get it right.

Mr. Hendry: My hon. Friend has reminded the House of an important contribution—one which the Labour party would do well to remember.

Mr. Corbyn *rose*——

Mr. Hendry: I shall not give way—the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) tried to make his point, but failed, as did many of the Labour Government's policies.

Mr. Corbyn: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. The hon. Gentleman referred to the policies of the last Labour Government. He was incorrect; the Social Security Pensions Act 1975 arranged that pensions should be increased each year in line with either the increase in earnings or the retail prices index.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The accuracy of observations made in debates are not a matter for the Chair—thank goodness!

Mr. Hendry: When we hear such scare stories it is hard to realise the sheer magnitude of the social security budget. Next year the social security budget will go through the £80 billion barrier, the £83 billion barrier the year after and the £87 billion barrier the year after that. When I was a special adviser in the Department of Social Security, £1 billion a week was spent on benefits. We now spend £1·5 billion a week on the most needy in our society. That is the

clearest possible demonstration of the Government's determination to look after those who are in need. We are right to increase all those benefits, which should be uprated in line with inflation by the retail prices index figure of 3·6 per cent.

In recession it is only right that those in work should make some sacrifices for those who are not in work. Those who have lost their jobs, often through no fault of their own, those who are unable to work and those who are retired need to be protected during the hard times. It is only reasonable that those of us who at least have a secure income and some job security should make our contribution towards that protection.

I recognise that life is not easy for many of those who are employed, but in difficult times we must recognise our responsibilities. In that context, I still cannot believe that more than 100 Labour Members trooped into the Division Lobby last week, suggesting that, with incomes of £31,000, they constituted a special case and were in special need.

I remember a Labour party conference about 10 years ago. I was not at the conference, but I well remember its coverage. At that conference one of the trade union leaders, Clive Jenkins, made a speech.

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): Which clause is that in?

Mr. Hendry: It is relevant to the debate and the attitude that the Labour party has taken. If the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) had been present a few minutes ago, he would have heard me talking about the importance, under the Bill, of people who are in work making their sacrifice for those who are out of work. It relates directly to the transfer of money into the national insurance fund from the Treasury. Had the hon. Gentleman been present at the outset, he would have understood that.

During his speech at the Labour party conference 10 years ago, Clive Jenkins referred to people in the union movement having their snouts in the trough. Ten years later, it seems that the snouts of Opposition Members are snorting around after truffles as eagerly as they were all those years ago. I hope that that is a lesson that the people outside will take to heart.

Mr. Corbyn: How much moonlighting is done by Conservative Members?

Mr. Hendry: If the hon. Member for Islington, North would like me to forward his curriculum vitae to any companies, I shall gladly pass it on so that they will be aware of his credentials.

Mr. Corbyn: I shall not forward my curriculum vitae to the hon. Gentleman. I am not looking for alternative employment; neither do I think that any other hon. Members should do so. Being a Member of Parliament should be a full-time job and hon. Members should not receive private income from any other source—unlike the vast majority of Conservative Members.

Mr. Hendry: I hope that that also applies to research assistants.

Mr. Corbyn: Will the hon. Gentleman explain——

Mr. Hendry: I have not given way; I am still on my feet.

The Bill and the Treasury transfer mean that we can do much more to help those who have been hit by the recession. It means that we can focus more help on those who are in need. We can target an extra £300 million to the least well-off pensioners, as was done recently. The measure accurately reflects and recognises the difficulties that many older pensioners face. Although nine out of 10 pensioners have income from savings, occupational pensions or personal pensions, that is not the case for all of them. Indeed, 78 per cent. of recently retired pensioners have income from savings; 69 per cent. have income from occupational pensions; and 71 per cent. of current employees have occupational pensions or personal pensions.

We need to target help—the Government have rightly done so—at older pensioners who never had the opportunity to build up resources while they were in employment. Perhaps occupational pensions did not exist when they were in employment, or savings were eroded during the probationary period. That makes it so much harder to understand why some political parties have a continual hatred of personal pensions, which make such a vital contribution to the living standards of so many older people. When the Government cut interest rates, which obviously helps the economy, the Opposition say that that is never enough. Perhaps Opposition Members will also spare a thought for pensioners who say that their savings, and the income from savings, are important contributions to their living standards. Although we want interest rates to be lowered, it is important to recognise the income that people derive from savings.

Through the Bill we will be able to give another boost of £700 million to people who live on income support, when the council tax comes into play next year. Those who currently pay 20 per cent. of their poll tax will not pay any contribution to the council tax. It would have been possible to claw back from them the money that they had been given to pay the poll tax. I welcome the fact that the Government have chosen not to do that but have allowed people to keep the income so that they could have a better standard of living.

Contrary to the scare stories that we have heard so often in the Chamber and outside, the Government have a uniquely impressive record on social security. Pensioners' incomes, which went up by a measly 3 per cent. in the five years of the last Labour Government, have increased by a third—34 per cent. Over the past 13 years social security spending on families, which fell by 8 per cent. under the Labour Government, has increased by 65 per cent. under this Government. Spending on the long-term sick and disabled has gone up by 173 per cent. in real terms or an extra £14 billion.

In this Bill and through our other work in social security, we are giving people more control over their lives and the opportunity to take responsibility for their lives and the issues which affect them most. I believe that 13 years ago we started by setting free those people who were itching for an opportunity. We simply lifted off the lid and people went out and took advantage of that. It was not a small proportion of the population. For a small incentive such as that given on personal pensions and share incentives, a more important group was also willing to take the step and become part of the opportunity society.

That leaves a large number of people who have never taken a risk in their lives because they are frightened of taking such risks. I refer to people who cling, understandably, to the benefits that they receive. It has been suggested that, if the tree of benefits is shaken, people will fall off like ripe apples. However, they will not fall off

[Mr. Hendry]

trees like ripe apples—the benefit system is the only thing which those people know, and they cling more tightly to the tree to preserve their security.

We are trying to lead people gradually to a position in which they have more confidence and in which they find it easier to make their own decisions. I welcome the Bill as an important contribution to that process.

6 pm

Mr. Malcolm Wicks (Croydon, North-West): An important part of the Bill relates to the national insurance fund, about which I shall speak exclusively. To bring in again an Exchequer contribution to the fund must raise questions about the future of national insurance, and the importance of national insurance remains. According to the public expenditure White Paper, contributory benefits account for about half of total expenditure on social security. By 1993-94, it is estimated that £40 billion will be spent through the national insurance fund. It is clear that national insurance is still a major part of our national insurance system.

The Secretary of State mentioned the historical occasion tomorrow of the 50th anniversary of the Beveridge plan. It is worth reminding the House of what William Beveridge had to say about national insurance and the contributory principle. When explaining these matters in his plan, he asserted that a key view was that benefits should be gained in return for contributions rather than as free allowances from the state. He took the view that that is what the people of Britain desired. Towards the end of my remarks, I shall raise questions about the future of national insurance and whether—I am open-minded about this—it has a future in Britain as we approach the year 2000.

We can all agree, I think, that since the time of Beveridge there have been major social and employment changes. These have made Britain in 1992, 50 years on, a very different country from the one of 1942 when the great plan was first published. The Secretary of State said that his proposals were in the spirit of the Beveridge plan, and I welcome that. I recall—I was not present at the time—that the then Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, was rather more cagey and hesitant before accepting the plan.

Things have changed, and we must ask ourselves whether national insurance today is relevant and matches the needs and changes that we have seen. For example, Beveridge assumed a world in which, despite the different circumstances and experiences of war time, a woman's place was in the home and a man's income was a bread-winning wage. He concluded that social security should be built around those assumptions.

I suppose that he would have looked back to the census of 1931, social statistician that he was, and noted that, in those days, only 10 per cent. of married women were in employment. In 1961, the percentage had increased threefold to 30 per cent. In 1991, it was 59 per cent. Against that background, we must ask ourselves whether the fund, which we seek to reform, is relevant to the changing needs of our world, and especially to the needs of those who are in part-time work.

Many married women with children work part-time. In fact, they are engaged in full-time work—part-time at home and part-time at the workplace. They pay national insurance contributions, but what are they paying for? Will they receive decent benefits in future? How do our proposals take account of the major social insecurity problem of the strong association between women and poverty? Many of our poor people are women, and the national insurance debate is relevant to that.

Since the time of the Beveridge plan, we have seen develop—he considered this in part, but he could not make a full estimate for the future—a rapid increase in family breakdown. We have witnessed the rise of the one-parent family, and with it a growth in poverty that has been caused by the accompanying social circumstances. This is important.

It was 50 years ago that Beveridge toyed with the idea that marital breakdown, because of its association with poverty, might be an insurable risk. For reasons that perhaps we can understand, he shied away from making marital breakdown such a risk in his social insurance plan. Perhaps he was wrong to do so, and hon. Members may have views about that.

Today, 37 per cent. of recent marriages are at risk of divorce. There has been a rapid increase in the number of children living in one-parent families. We know that all too often—in about seven out of 10 cases—those one-parent families depend on social security in the form of non-contributory income support benefits, not on contributory benefits.

Another major change has been the aging of our population. Beveridge considered the pension implications of aging and welcomed the idea of a national health service for the future, but if we were thinking now about a modern national insurance fund and the risks that we might wish to insure against, we would consider care in old age as well as income.

More and more of us, despite experiences in the House, may live to a ripe old age; we may continue into our 80s and 90s. Many of us will become frail and in need of care. We shall not need full medical treatment and the full technology of a modern hospital, but we shall need to be looked after because of frailty, which means care in the community.

The answers are manifold, and perhaps they lie with other parts of the social security budget and not with national insurance. If Beveridge was producing his plan today and the Secretary of State was responding to it, Beveridge might say that one of the insurable risks in a modern society should be the need for care. That should be on our agenda as we reflect on the national insurance fund while considering the Bill.

We must carefully consider the national insurance fund in the context of the Bill and employment assumptions. Underlining the Beveridge plan was the clear assumption of full employment. Undermining social security now is the reality, not the assumption, of unemployment.

We are discussing the Bill in part because economic recession and rising unemployment are putting pressures on the national insurance fund, and these call for the reinstatement of an Exchequer contribution. That, in part, is what the Bill is all about. It is fair, therefore, to ask Ministers to set out their employment or unemployment assumptions. If they are saying that about a 20 per cent. contribution is more or less right, what are their estimates of unemployment in the financial year 1993-94 and in the years beyond that?

Actuarily speaking, what assumptions are being made about unemployment? I do not understand how the

House, on Second Reading or in Committee, can consider the adequacy of the percentage proposal without being given some insight into the Government's projections on unemployment.

More importantly in the longer term, we must know whether we are in a society in which we accept unemployment as a phenomenon to which our social security system adjusts. If so, is the fund adequate to meet that task, or do we as a society still have a goal of full employment? What is the Government's view? Is it that we must return to an attack on mass unemployment?

I note the Secretary of State's remarks on what is so nearly the golden anniversary of the Beveridge plan. He claimed that the proposals in the Bill are in the spirit of Beveridge, and I welcome that, but I am slightly sceptical. Beveridge waxed lyrical about social security, in a language which we seldom capture today in the technicalities and jargon of social security benefits. He talked about five giant evils that we needed to attack in the post-war period—want, disease, ignorance, squalor and idleness. The last evil, idleness, is a rather old-fashioned term now, but not a bad one. Beveridge meant unemployment.

William Beveridge said that idleness was the largest and fiercest of the five giant evils, and the most important to attack. He added, in words that are more relevant in 1992 than in 1942, that unless we attack the giant of idleness, all our aims of post-war reconstruction will be out of reach.

I ask the Under-Secretary of State whether she agrees that idleness is the largest and fiercest of the giants. If she does, how will the Government attack it? What are the implications for social security, the Bill, employment training and many other things? We must know about the Government's unemployment—or, I hope, employment—assumptions before we can fully master the Bill and debate it adequately.

Sadly, national insurance—if we use the term properly—does not work for many families and others in society. It is right that on this historic occasion we should remember that Beveridge was clear that there was a role for income support—it was called public assistance in his day. However, he envisaged it as only a minority role. He thought that, with full employment and national insurance at a decent level, only relatively few people would, from time to time, need public assistance. He said in his report:

"The proposals in this Report . . . will make the permanent scope of assistance much less than that of public assistance and of the Assistance Board at present."

He said "much less"—not the same, and certainly not more. What is the reality today?

Mr. Willetts: The hon. Gentleman accurately reports Beveridge's observations, but he must accept that Beveridge's claim that the level of national assistance would reduce in significance was not supported by the figures and analyses in his report. There was nothing in it to show how contributory benefits would be of greater value than national assistance. Beveridge's assertion was not supported by his calculations.

Mr. Wicks: Others read the Sunday newspapers; the hon. Gentleman and I obviously spent the weekend re-reading the Beveridge report.

I take his point, but if we think about Beveridge's ambitions rather than simply the details in his report, we see that he envisaged means-tested benefits playing only a minor role. He was anxious to promote jobs and national insurance. The detailed arithmetic in the report was done in the midst of war in 1942, when the Nazi threat was ever present—more difficult circumstances than we face today—so immediate implementation of his social security plan might not have been possible.

In 1948, shortly after the war and when the legislation was beginning to take effect, only one in 33 people were dependent on means-tested public assistance. In 1990, the figure was one in eight. Whatever else has happened to the Beveridge plan and to the social security system, we have not attacked means-testing and dependence on public assistance. More of our citizens, including too many of our children, depend on means-tested income support than was the case during the period of the Beveridge plan.

I am reminded of what Gandhi said when he first visited this country many years ago. He was in his native costume, surrounded by Fleet street's finest, when he was asked by a reporter from one of what we would now call the tabloids, "Mr. Gandhi, this is your first visit to England—what did you think of English civilisation?" Mr. Gandhi replied, "I think it would be a good idea." Perhaps today we should say that the Beveridge plan would be a good idea—especially if we think of the term "social security" as something with a real meaning rather than a technicality.

I want to discuss the insurance principle because, in part, we are today discussing the national insurance fund. I hope that, at some stage, hon. Members on both sides of the House will more fundamentally debate the fund and its future. I am open-minded on the matter and I have no hidden agenda. Indeed, I have not made up my mind on this important matter. Should we consider abandoning national insurance and the idea of contributions and benefits, or should we consider revitalising the national insurance system?

The last test of public opinion on that matter was during the 1985 social security reviews. Perhaps hon. Members will correct me if there has been a more recent test. During those reviews, people were asked what they thought about national insurance contributions, which were then a matter of political controversy. Some 35 per cent. said that they thought that they were just like income tax. However, 52 per cent. thought that they were very different—that they were contributions, in return for which people received pensions and other benefits.

I wonder what public opinion would be today. Public attitudes to how we contribute to the Exchequer—whether through income tax, VAT, council tax or national insurance—are important to the acceptability of taxation.

We need to re-evaluate the national insurance concept and to consider key questions. We need to examine the current nature of social insecurity in the Britain of 1992 and up to the year 2000 and compare it with the past. Like Beveridge, we must question the risks that people face during their life cycles.

I have mentioned the new challenge of the care of the elderly. We must compare the new risks with those of the past. We must question which risks should be insurable and how that can be achieved. There may be a difference of opinion on the role of the public and private sectors and on the right mix. On the other hand, we must also question which risks should be covered by non-contributory benefits.

There might be a need for a reinvigorated social insurance system, although I am not absolutely sure about that. However, such a proposal would not come to the House through a technical Bill on a quiet Monday

[Mr. Wicks]

afternoon. If that were to be the way of the future, it would be the subject of a new Beveridge-type plan, which would arouse the public excitement and public debate which, although it may seem surprising today, met the original Beveridge plan.

We are 50 years on from Beveridge, and it is a golden anniversary—and "golden" is an appropriate word for that historical figure. I believe that there is a real opportunity for the House to debate a new Beveridge-style plan.

6.17 pm

Mr. David Willetts (Havant): Thank you for calling me to speak in the debate, Mr. Deputy Speaker, which is especially apposite as it takes place on the eve of the 50th anniversary of the Beveridge report. I congratulate whichever powers in Mr. Speaker's Office or the usual channels managed to arrange for the debate to take place at such an apposite time—*[Laughter.]* Labour Members have a surprisingly cynical view of the workings of the House.

The origins of both features of the Bill—the national insurance fund top-up from the Treasury and the opting-out procedures for personal pensions—can be traced back to the Beveridge report. It is not often understood, although I am sure that the hon. Member for Croydon, North-West (Mr. Wicks) understands, that William Beveridge took the insurance principle seriously. Indeed, he took it so seriously that his original proposal was for benefits at a fixed rate—there was no additional second pension in his scheme—and contributions at a fixed amount. Indeed, at one point in his report he refers to the contributions as being by way of a poll tax. In all the arguments about poll tax during the last few years, it is surprising that no one pointed out that most of our social security budget from the late 1940s to 1961 was financed by precisely such a tax.

The structure of a fixed sum contribution—analogous with paying fire insurance, for example—and fixed benefits severely constrained how much could be raised. It was manifest that as national insurance contributions were to be a fixed amount, there would be considerable constraints upon what people were prepared to pay. That led to two crucial features of the social security system introduced after the Beveridge report. Beveridge himself acknowledged—though his figures were even more dramatic than his prose—that a hefty Treasury contribution would always be necessary to finance insurance benefits. On Beveridge's figures, by 1965 about 50 per cent. of all expenditure on national insurance benefits was to come from the Treasury. That so-called tripartite system was in fact heavily slanted towards the taxpayer, with employer and employee contributions between them being much more modest.

Mr. Frank Field: Was not the figure 67 per cent.—I do not have the table, but I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will find it if I intervene long enough—and did not Beveridge realise that if a poll tax was to be introduced, it must be covered with an enormous coating of sugar? Did not the former right hon. Member for Finchley learn that lesson when she introduced another poll tax?

Mr. Willetts: I do not have time to identify the source of the hon. Gentleman's figure of 67 per cent. but I am happy to bow to the experience and knowledge of the hon. Gentleman, on whose Select Committee I am honoured to serve.

The structure of national insurance as envisaged by Beveridge had two consequences. A hefty Treasury contribution was necessary. We must debate its exact size, but it was certainly more than 50 per cent. Also, pressure rapidly built up to change the system so that contributions would no longer be at a fixed rate but progressive, as a percentage of income between the upper and lower earnings limit.

Within a few years, the Treasury started asking, "Why can't we have a progressive tax structured in this way, so that we can raise more money from national insurance?" The consequence in turn of that argument was that it was thought that a progressive contribution rate would have to be matched by benefits that similarly rose as people paid in more. In other words, we were driven to a second, top-up, contributory pension not because of enormous desire for one but because that was the only way of legitimising the financial pressure to have a progressive, not fixed, national insurance contribution scheme.

Beveridge left us with a system heavily dependent on Treasury finance, and the only way of escaping that was to introduce progressive contributions—which in turn meant a second, top-up pension. It is therefore ironic that, on the eve of the 50th anniversary of Beveridge, the proposal for a Treasury grant to cover some of the costs of the national insurance fund is in many ways taking the fund a tiny step back to the sort of model that Beveridge envisaged.

As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State explained, the origins lie in the effects of the economic cycle, with both the expenses of the fund rising in recession and contribution income falling. The Government have held national insurance contribution rates constant since 1983. One might ask why the option of changing them has not been pursued. On reflection, clearly it is undesirable to increase contributions in a recession if that can possibly be avoided. I am sure also that during the boom years of the late 1980s, Ministers felt that it would be undesirable to cut contribution rates having gone through the political trial of increasing them in the first place.

We are therefore left with a Government policy that can be described only as purposeful immobilism. There is no intention to move contribution rates either up or down, and as a result it is the Treasury contribution which must be adjusted. That will be done in accordance with the economic cycle, and I personally welcome the extra flexibility in the new system of Treasury grants, which is far superior to the rigid formula on which the old Treasury supplement was calculated.

The Treasury contribution that we may expect next year is in the order of £8 billion, which places in context the figure for the extra incentive for people to take out personal pensions—the 1 per cent. proposed in the Bill, which the Government Actuary tells us will add up to about £165 million. We heard briefly from the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) the standard rigmarole of criticism of the incentives offered to those who contract out of SERPS and subscribe to a personal pension. It is worth re-examining the figures, because so much mischief and misleading information has been generated on the basis of bogus calculations.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): How much does the hon. Gentleman think will be saved?

Mr. Willetts: The National Audit Office set out calculations on a basis that I find difficult to accept, and I will return to that point later.

The contract-out rebate of 5·8 per cent. is available to all who contract out of SERPS—it does not matter whether they are new to a personal pension, have subscribed to a personal pension for some time, or are members of an occupational pension scheme. Over the five years from 1988 to 1993, that rebate adds up to £6·9 billion. The 2 per cent. incentive that aroused such controversy when it was introduced adds only £2·4 billion, to make a grand total of £9·3 billion.

We are all familiar—the hon. Member for Garscadden mentioned this—with the argument that the rebate is a grotesque subsidy that is way out of line with the savings accruing to the Exchequer. It ought to be remembered that, over that five-year period, total national insurance receipts ran to about £220 billion, so as a proportion of the fund's total income the rebate is rather paltry—some 4 per cent.

The National Audit Office says that the savings accrued to the Exchequer by people leaving SERPS and thereby reducing the Government's future liability were merely £3·4 billion. Those calculations were set out on a very precise basis, and one that seemed to be ignored when the Opposition started making hay with the figures. The assumption was that everyone who opted out of SERPS would return to it in 1993—that the policy had only a short-term effect, and that in 1993 the 5 million people who had so successfully been encouraged to leave the state scheme would re-enter it.

That was a manifestly absurd assumption. It is not correct to assume that people who were given the incentive to leave SERPS would all pile back into it straight away. As soon as one accepts that many would remain out of the state scheme much longer, the savings to the Exchequer from the Government's incentive scheme become more considerable.

Mr. Kirkwood: I am closely following the development of the hon. Gentleman's argument, and he touches on a most important point. If he thinks that the National Audit Office calculations were wrong, will he venture a figure himself as to the likely savings and a cost-benefit analysis of that expenditure?

Mr. Willetts: I asked the Institute of Fiscal Studies but it has not made any calculations on its own basis. The National Audit Office appears to be the only body in a position to make such calculations, because it has access to information on 1 per cent. of all those who opted out of SERPS. The NAO is the only organisation that has the hard, empirical data on which to draw, because it knows the characteristics of the people concerned. As far as I am aware, the NAO has only made its calculations on the one assumption that I mentioned, and I much regret that it has not been commissioned by the Public Accounts Committee or anyone else to examine the figures on another basis.

Even if one accepts the extraordinary assumption that people who were given a 2 per cent. incentive to leave SERPS would all pile back into it in 1993, that seems a good argument in favour of continuing the incentive so that they do not do so. It points to the need to continue the incentive, and I welcome the proposal in the Bill for a further 1 per cent. incentive for those who stay out of SERPS over the next five years.

During the past few years there have been many arguments about the future of the state earnings-related pensions scheme. I regret that they have focused so much on cost. I shall turn away, therefore, from cost arguments to other arguments for encouraging people to contract out of SERPS. The Government have relied too heavily on the cost argument and insufficiently on a variety of other arguments that point towards encouraging as many people as possible to leave SERPS.

There are four arguments that I shall put before the House. First, SERPS is, in effect, a negatively means-tested benefit. It is worth more to people on higher earnings—those between the lower and the upper earnings limit. It is not sensible for the state to run an enormous second pension scheme which, in effect, mimics what the commercial sector would do anyway.

As I tried to point out in my observations on the Beveridge report, we ended up with such a structure for the second pension because it was the only way that Ministers and officials in the 1950s and early 1960s thought that they could justify the shift from a flat-rate contribution to a progressive contribution. It is not right for the state to run such an enormous scheme. After the conclusion of the social security review, I understand the reasons which led my right hon. Friend the Member for Sutton Coldfield (Sir N. Fowler) to decide that complete abolition was not possible, but it makes sense to encourage as many people as possible to make provision for their own pension rather than to be trapped within a negative means test.

My second argument, which is unashamedly ideological in its nature and not one which I expect Opposition Members to accept, is to examine the way in which people, currently of working age, are to make their claims on resources when they retire. There is no way in which those resources can now be set aside: we are talking about legal mechanisms whereby people who are working now can have a claim on the output of the economy in 2010 or 2020.

If we look at the way in which those claims on future resources should be levied, I unashamedly believe that as many of those claims as possible should be in the nature of private sector contracts and that as few as possible should rest on the state's future power to tax. It is good for the economy and it is good for people's sense of having a personal stake in the economy that as many as possible of those claims should be through assets—such as share dividends and income from property. That is the most flexible and sophisticated way in which future pensioners can have a claim on future assets. That is far better than a system that rests on the state's power to tax.

The third argument, to which insufficient attention has been given, is that although people have debated the future of SERPS they have ignored the extraordinary position of occupational pension schemes. Many more pensioners now retire with an occupational pension—and a good thing, too. I salute the performance of occupational pension schemes. However, we are so preoccupied with the increasing number of pensioners who retire with occupational pensions that we ignore the fact that there has been no increase since the mid-1960s in the net number of employees who are members of occupational pension schemes.

Having reached 50 per cent. of the work force, they got stuck at 50 per cent. of the work force. An increasing

[Mr. Willetts]

number of people were employed in the public sector, but the number of members of occupational pension schemes who were employed in the private sector went down. The explanation appears to be that, although occupational pensions do a very good job for certain categories of future pensioners, there are others for whom they do not appear to be well suited. They do not appear to be well suited to women or part-time workers; they do not seem to be well suited to small firms; they do not appear to cover many employees in the services sector. Therefore, we must look increasingly at the provision of personal pensions to cover people in those employment categories who cannot enjoy the benefit of occupational pension schemes, which have remained static while the number of such employees has risen.

The fourth argument for encouraging personal pensions and for encouraging people to opt out of SERPS is a crude, simple, political argument: that if one conducts any research into what people want, one finds that they want a personal pension. One only has to look at the results of opinion polls. The hon. Member for Croydon, North-West (Mr. Wicks) referred to the research carried out for the Fowler review in the mid-1980s.

If people are asked what sort of pension they would like, they say that they would like a pension that gave them a personal, direct stake in it. The Government are undoubtedly going with the grain of human nature. They are meeting the aspirations of the majority of our fellow citizens. Therefore, I welcome the 2 per cent. incentive for personal pensions during the first five years of the policy between 1988 and 1993. I welcome also the 1 per cent. incentive that will be in place from 1993. When the Minister replies to the debate I hope that she will address certain questions that I shall put to her regarding various aspects of the Bill.

The hon. Member for Garscadden was not alone when he asked why this incentive applies only to personal pensions. He was wrong when he implied that it should apply to all occupational pensions, but it is odd that it does not apply to contracted out money-purchase schemes, unlike the current 2 per cent. incentive, and that it does not apply to group-run personal pensions. I should be grateful if the Minister could explain the Government's thinking about a provision which, on the face of it, is a little odd.

Secondly, I support the Government's clear commitment to moving, in the longer term, to more age relating of the structure of incentives for people leaving SERPS. Although it is rational that people in their twenties or thirties should opt out of SERPS into personal pensions, there is a cross-over date. Learned experts may differ, but it is probably when people are in their mid-forties that it becomes rational for them to go back into SERPS. That is not a sensible basis upon which to plan pensions. I hope that the Minister will set out in more detail how the Government intend to improve the sensitivity of the rebate system and relate it to the age of the person involved.

Thirdly, I am slightly concerned about the role of the Occupational Pensions Board. Several hon. Members have asked about the future security of personal pensions. I very much hope that the 5 million people who have taken out personal pensions will continue to contribute to them and will enjoy the benefits of their personal pensions in retirement. The Occupational Pensions Board, however, is under a clear responsibility to supervise and monitor personal pension schemes to the highest possible standards. Some people in the personal pensions industry take the view that too many people on the Occupational Pensions Board are Department of Social Security officials who were moved to the board and that they do not have a feel for the way in which the personal pensions market operates, or a feel for how the pensions industry is changing. I hope that the Minister will deal with that point in her speech.

My final point is that it is always difficult to strike a balance between wishing to encourage personal pensions but not wishing to do anything to deter employers from contributing to their own occupational pension schemes. Some people with grandiose plans for forcing employers to do this or for obliging them to do that ignore the fact that many employers will at some point say, "This is too much trouble; I'm not going to carry on with this. I'll close down my occupational pension scheme." Every person who has an interest in pensions policy must bear that crucial point in mind.

Nevertheless, is it not possible to think of additional ways by which employers could be encouraged to make contributions to personal pensions as well as to occupational pensions? Is it impossible to expect employers to make contributions to personal pensions if they are in any case making a much larger contribution to occupational pension schemes? If we believe in personal pensions—all my hon. Friends strongly believe in them—we must ensure that by their behaviour employers do not provide a disincentive to people who wish to take out personal pensions.

The Beveridge report, to which the hon. Member for Croydon, North-West referred, is fascinating reading. I did not reread my copy last weekend, but it has melancholy traces of sun tan cream on it—I shall not name the sun tan cream involved—which remind me of the happy days of the summer. One brief passage sets out a philosophy for social security, which I am sure would command the support of the majority of hon. Members, and certainly Conservative Members. Beveridge said:

> "The State in organising security should not stifle incentive, opportunity, responsibility; in establishing a national minimum, it should leave room and encouragement for voluntary action by each individual to provide more than that minimum for himself and his family."

I believe that the Bill is a modest contribution to achieving the objectives that Beveridge set out.

6.40 pm

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): I begin by apologising to the Minister and the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) for not being able to listen to their words of wisdom, because I was attending an important meeting elsewhere in the House.

I was impressed by the speeches of the hon. Members for Croydon, North-West (Mr. Wicks) and for Havant (Mr. Willetts) who, despite being new Members, brought new and welcome experience and knowledge to the subject. I can now claim to be the longest serving social security spokesman of the major parties, but it is always good to see fresh faces, who no doubt have fresh ideas. I look forward to their contributions, to the remaining proceedings on the Bill and to other debates on this important subject.

The Bill mentions the new Treasury grant. I hope that, in future uprating and autumn statements, greater care will be taken to dampen speculation—of both kinds. I see that the Under-Secretary is raising her eyebrows and hands in horror, but despite the ethic of secrecy that suffuses Departments to a ridiculous extent, it must be possible to be more open about the options in a way that will quell some of the speculation. I hope that the Government will try to be more objective in press announcements made before statements.

The Bill offers us the opportunity—the hon. Members for Croydon North-West and for Havant referred to it—of considering the principle of national insurance contributions. For some years, Liberal Democrats have been considering abolishing it. I accept that it would require much public discussion, because it would be a fundamental step, but there is a prima facie case for abolishing it. The national insurance contribution system is now so shot through with anomalies and piecemeal reforms that we should start from scratch.

There is an argument, on which we have been trying to work for the past few years, for integrating the tax and benefits system. Such a proposal would require careful thought, but we must bear in mind the fact that it costs £1·2 billion to administer the national insurance system. The Bill proposes extra administrative costs of about £1 million, which is not a lot in the context of the sums that we are debating, but the panoply of bureaucracy that we are employing to deliver national insurance contributions and means-tested benefits is a cause of concern. The more often we debate how we deal with such sums and systems the better it will be in the future.

The Bill deals with the future provision of pensions. I remain convinced that the most urgent problem facing the Government is dealing with pensioners who are in pension today but who have to rely for most or all of their income on state provision. My father receives a small occupational pension from his career on the railway that takes him out of eligibility for means-tested or other benefit. Although he and his generation continue to enjoy the twilight years of their lives, they are under much financial pressure.

The Government will say that recent measures have attempted to target benefit—I accept and welcome that; it would be churlish not to acknowledge it—but between now and the end of the century that group of pensioners will face continuing adversity unless the difference between increases in prices and average earnings is addressed. The Social Security Advisory Committee—some years ago, admittedly—expressed its opinion on that, but the Government do not accept it. Although the Government have done something recently, they must do more.

Statistics issued by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys have caused me some concern. Its 1991 general household survey covering the proportion of people in employment by type of pension scheme showed that about 13 per cent. of the total work force were not in occupational or personal pension schemes. That hides, as the hon. Member for Havant said, the fact that 8 per cent. of men but as much as 20 per cent. of women have no cover.

In addition, 12 per cent. of men and 27 per cent. of women have no occupational pension scheme available to them or are not in a personal pension plan. As the hon. Member for Havant said, at the beginning of the next century, when those who fall in the self-employed categories move into retirement, they will not be able to have the kind of protection that we would all like. The Bill does not do enough to address that problem, but the Government will have to do something about it.

I listened carefully to what the hon. Member for Havant said about the cost-benefit analysis of incentives offered now to make savings in the future. I have always been fairly relaxed about incentives, and I am sure that the hon. Member for Havant is only too well aware of the dangers with personal pensions that arise from the 1986 Act. They are more unpredictable than final salary schemes. We should not run away with the idea that personal pensions are a panacea, although they have a role to play.

I come back to the question how much we are spending and for what return in terms of the long-term savings to the state earnings-related pension scheme. I am also concerned about the National Audit Office figures. The hon. Member for Havant, who has obviously studied the matter, as one would expect, was honest enough to say that the answer to the question is unknown in a sensible, statistical way. The hon. Gentleman and I are in agreement on the matter, and I am sure that other hon. Members also want an answer to the question.

The Government should set in train some more objective research into what the assumptions were and what the assumptions should be so that we can try to come to an objective view about what we are saving from the future costs in SERPS. I shall return to that subject in Committee. If some thought can be given to the question between Second Reading and Committee, I shall welcome a Government statement giving more details, if that is possible.

The age-related provisions of the Bill are rather crude. I understand that there are difficulties, and I know that the Government do not want to make things too complicated. However, the Institute for Fiscal Studies took the opposite view, pointing out that other elements of the pension industry already have sophisticated age-related mechanisms which are perfectly workable and which are well understood by the people who operate them. My criticism of the age-related aspect of the Bill is that it is not sophisticated enough. There are mechanisms that we could have adopted which are not contained in the Bill.

Like the hon. Member for Havant, I have serious reservations about whether the state should be in an earnings-related pension scheme, for the reasons that the hon. Gentleman rehearsed—I will not repeat them, because he argued his case succinctly. However, we should think about that matter. I am not persuaded, in spite of the fact that the 1986 changes took some money out of the costs of SERPS, that the sums add up. I believe that, in the long term, the SERPS provisions cannot be afforded. Of course, we cannot withdraw any entitlement accrued to date, but I should be interested to consider how we could redeploy some of the resources freed by any change to deal with the problem faced by the existing generation of pensioners who are struggling so hard.

The new Treasury grant is an interesting device. The former Secretary of State for Social Security, now Leader of the House, used always to start our debates by saying that national insurance debates dealt with enormous sums and that no one paid any attention to the fact that the House was dealing with a new Treasury grant of, for example, £8 billion. He said that we had arguments over £5 million here and £2 million there, although we were dealing with huge sums. It is worrying that we may be

[Mr. Archy Kirkwood]

having such a discussion here and that we are not giving the matter more thought. I look forward to the Committee, when we may be able to give the matter more thought.

I repeat my apology for not having been able to be present for the opening speeches. I am certain that my next point was raised then. I believe that there is a bias in the Bill against occupational pension schemes, such as group pensions and contracted-out money purchase schemes, or COMPs. The industry is worried about that bias. I do not understand why the Government have not produced a level playing field. All I can make of the Government's reasoning is that they believe that all the provisions are temporary because there is going to be a review, so they do not need to worry too much. If that is the Government's reasoning, it is not acceptable. I have no doubt that the Minister will expand on that point.

I see no justification for the differentiation between the two systems. I understand that it is not possible to get a level playing field for occupational pensions in some respects, but it is perfectly possible to make the provisions on group pension schemes and COMPs equitable in terms of personal pension plans and occupational schemes. That is the one improvement that I should like to see included in the Bill in its remaining stages. I hope that the Minister will say a word about that when she sums up.

6.54 pm

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): I declare my interest in the Waterfront Partnership.

I very much enjoyed the speech by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar). I have debated social security matters in the House several times. I have sometimes felt that the voices from the Opposition Front Bench induced hyperbole fatigue. That has its advantages at times, because if a debate comes across in that way, it makes it easier to avoid any points that one might want to avoid.

I did not agree with all the hon. Gentleman's conclusions, which I am sure is as much a comfort to him as it is to me, but I very much valued the way in which he set out the stall. I accept that he has identified the way in which we need to approach the Bill. He made a fair point in saying that the key was the additional 1 per cent. rebate and what the motives might have been for introducing it. He also said that our debate takes place in a wider context, which I am sure is right.

It is fair to say that the hon. Member for Garscadden doubted our motives for the additional 1 per cent. rebate. It is not up to me to speak for Treasury Ministers, but I will say that it seemed to me that the motive behind it was either to encourage people to take out their own pensions or to stop them going back into the scheme. That was a perfectly proper thing to want to do.

The hon. Member for Garscadden also said that the whole debate had to take place in a far wider context. As the Bill is rather narrow and specific, the debate so far has not concentrated on the wider aspects. It is worth while taking a moment or two to dwell on those aspects.

We have heard how much the Department of Social Security budget is per week. I do not know whether it is a tribute to the uncertainty of Government spending or the fact that the Secretary of State's research is more up-to-date than mine. I was minded to say that I understood that the Department of Social Security budget was running in excess of £1 billion a week. My right hon. Friend was able to say with some confidence that it was running at £1·5 billion a week. I am happy to adopt that figure.

The figure forms part of the totality of projected Government spending for 1992-93 of £244·5 billion, which is a pretty dramatic sum. The Department of Social Security budget is close on £80 billion. In a rough and ready way, one can say that one third of what the state spends is spent on social security, which is a dramatic sum. One can make the point—which, in different ways, would come as a comfort to all hon. Members and to many of our pensioners—that the sum represents an increase of 50 per cent. in real terms since 1979. In any event, it is a pretty massive commitment.

The question then immediately posed, as it was by the hon. Member for Garscadden, is whether such a level of commitment can be sustained. We must be prepared to consider that question. The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) touched on an important point in questioning the continuing role of national insurance contributions. The difficulty with national insurance contributions is that there are some rather odd ideas out there about what national insurance contributions really are, as one learns if one talks to people.

We might consider the Albert Tatlock syndrome. Devotees of "Coronation Street" over the years will remember that Albert Tatlock was a man of advanced years. In fact, he made Dixon of Dock Green look like a newcomer. Albert's great line was that he had spent three years going through muck and bullets in the first world war, and that meant that he was entitled to everything free for life and subsidised pints of beer down at the Rover's Return.

If Mr. Tatlock had been asked what he felt about his national insurance contributions, he would have said that having been through muck and bullets and returned to a land fit for heroes to live in, he had paid his dues, and that gave him the right to a decent pension. It is all very well to say that the world owes one a living—many people fairly make that claim. However, the difficulty is that the world has a nasty way of showing that it will not come up with the swag.

The difficulty with national insurance contributions is that they are not a funded scheme. Many members of the public will say, "What's a funded scheme? And anyway, who cares?" When we participate in a private scheme, we make a judgment for better or for worse about the scheme into which we intend to contribute. The success of that scheme rises or falls in relation to the country's economic prosperity, the worth of the scheme and the professional judgment of those who manage the scheme.

The private scheme is a funded scheme. The money one contributes is invested and, at the end of the day, one receives a pension, annuity or contribution. The national insurance scheme is not funded. The scheme reflects one's moral right to be supported by future generations. In a sense, it gives a legal right for one to be supported by those generations.

One can pay one's dues whether one is Albert Tatlock or a Member of this place, but whether one obtains a pension from the state which will sustain one—or, as was said earlier, would sustain our parents in a state in which

we would want them to be sustained—depends not on one's own contributions but on the ability of future generations to meet the moral obligations that one has in mind.

It is relevant to consider the number of people who will be available to make those contributions. In 1990, there were 10·3 million over the state pension age. By 2030—many of us, with some confidence and perhaps a little hope, expect to be alive then—there will be 14·1 million people over the state pension age. That is an increase of 40 per cent. It is good news. It shows that people are living longer and can write more letters of complaint to their Members of Parliament.

Although I do not have the precise figures, I am sure that the Minister will be able to confirm that the number of congratulatory telegrams sent by Her Majesty the Queen has increased dramatically over recent years. Although I cannot find the figures now, I recall that at the beginning of Her Majesty's reign she sent about 100 telegrams a year. I understand that she now sends well over 1,000. That is absolutely tremendous. However, those people must be supported.

Between 1990 and 2030, the number of pensioners over state pension age will increase by 40 per cent. Who will support them? In 1990, there were 34·4 million people of working age. By 2030, that figure will have decreased to 33·6 million. To make the point as succinctly as I can, in 1990 3·4 workers supported a pensioner. By 2030, only 2·4 workers will be supporting a pensioner. We must consider the consequences of that.

The question that underpins the SERPS debate is whether our children and grandchildren will be prepared to look after 40 per cent. more pensioners in a state to which they are likely to have become accustomed and to which they believe that their dues have, over the years, entitled them. I believe that our children and grandchildren probably will not be prepared to do that. Therefore, the Government are strongly encouraging people to make private arrangements, so that the burden—be it a tax burden or whatever—that the state imposes on people in the early decades of the next century will not be intolerable.

The problem exists not simply in the United Kingdom, but throughout Europe. We are a member of the European Community. Some of us greet that with more enthusiasm than others. Some of us greet it with no enthusiasm at all, but recognise that it is something that we must tolerate. France reduced its pension age to 60 in the early 1980s, but the demographic trends in France have led the Government to publish a White Paper which reopens the debate.

Italy faces a 35 per cent. increase in its elderly population by 2040. The Italian Government are proposing to raise the pension age from 60 for men and 55 for women to 65 for both. Germany is equalising its pension age at 61 to replace the current minimum pension age of 60 for women and 63 for men. The standard common pension age in the United States is 65, and that is to be raised to 67 for both sexes by 2027.

It seems that, in due course, all things Japanese come to us. Japan's rate of demographic change has been faster than that of anywhere else in the developed world. The proportion of people over 65 in Japan will rise from 9·1 per cent. in 1980 to 27·7 per cent. in 2040. That is a hell of a lot of Hondas.

Holland's budget deficit is directly related to its social security expenditure, and that will have to be cut by ending the earnings-related part of social security provision. Belgium, Germany, France and Denmark all face other problems.

Debates in this House about the equalisation of pension ages are often presented in terms of equality between the sexes. That is a somewhat difficult area for Government Members to broach. If I tell a 59-year-old woman who has worked all her working life in my constituency that I have great news for her in the equality stakes and that she will now have to work five years longer than she had intended, that message would not be particularly well received. Therefore, we talk about equalisation in a fiscally neutral way at about 64 years of age.

While we talk about the matter in terms of equality between the sexes and then, to some extent, shy away from the electoral consequences, many European countries believe that something must be done about the matter in order to discover a way to cope with the burden which would otherwise be supported by the state.

Mr. Wicks: I do not intend to undermine what the hon. Member has said about demographic ratios because they are very important, but if we are not careful, we may verge on demographic panic. The hon. Gentleman was projecting beyond the year 2000 and 2020. If we can produce hundreds of motor cars in that time—let us be optimistic and suppose that we will still produce motor cars in this country then—simply through technology and by using robots, without any workers, surely we will still be producing wealth.

That wealth can help future pensioners even if the ratio between the number of workers and elderly people appears to be poor. I do not dismiss the hon. Gentleman's point, but I believe that national wealth, and not necessarily ratios, is the key ingredient.

Mr. Nicholls: One man's panic is another man's foresight. Inevitably, the truth lies somewhere in the middle. The hon. Member for Croydon, North-West (Mr. Wicks) made a fair point when he said that the wealth of the nation is important. Ultimately, the wealth of the nation is reflected in tax revenue. That makes it possible to pay pensions. If fewer people produce that tax, and there are more people to live off it, there would be a problem that must be addressed.

I cannot say precisely what the position will be in 2030, but we can make projections and it is clear that we will have to have some regard to the consequences. While I have tried to set the matter in the overall context, this is not 2030 but 1992, and I want to examine some of the consequences for our current pensioner community.

During the election campaign, I received a visitation from a new political party called the Pensioners Protection party. I am delighted to say that it did not stand in Teignbridge; it stood in Thurrock, and it obtained a perfectly respectable result. I should like to think that its results will always be respectable but perhaps no more than that. The interesting point about that political party is that it was first suggested in a BBC Radio Cornwall programme. Its literature states:

"Despite what they say, all the existing political parties, whether of the right, left or centre are just not interested in pensioners, treat us as second class citizens, who are powerless and unable to improve our situation."

[Mr. Nicholls]

It continues in a similar vein. I do not share that analysis, but I can certainly understand why pensioners will sometimes come to that conclusion.

In an area such as Teignbridge, the averages that we can talk about in relation to pensioners are not particularly reflected on the ground. For example, the Pensioners Protection party quoted *Hansard* in its pamphlet, and it is worth mentioning. I suspect that it would no longer be entirely accurate. It is a 1989 statistic which the party produced to show that 58 per cent. of pensioner households depend on state pensions and benefits for at least 75 per cent. of their income. I suspect that the position has changed for the better, but that illustrates an interesting point.

The Under-Secretary will correct me if I am wrong, but I believe that nearly nine out of 10 pensioners have some secondary form of income other than the state pension. That is good, and it is an improvement—the problem is, not around Teignbridge, they don't. There is no way in which one could expect the Minister to come up with Teignbridge-specific figures any more than one could come up with Birkenhead-specific figures, although if she has them I shall be impressed and thank her for them. One of the joys of being a constituency Member is that one develops a feeling about one's area which one cannot quantify in terms of hard statistics. One develops a feeling for the way in which a situation applies on the ground.

Many pensioners in Teignbridge have worked hard all their lives—sometimes perhaps in not desperately exciting jobs, and certainly not in particularly well-paid jobs. They did so at a time when, under previous regimes, such savings as they had were ravaged by inflation. Now, they are at a stage in their lives when, having worked hard, they have not been around for occupational pensions and the like, and are more or less dependent on state-related benefits.

The Pensioners Protection party suggested—I do not say this lightly, because its suggestion is very brave, and I have never seen it before—"Why don't you pay us a pension on which we would pay income tax? There would be no question of our receiving means-tested benefits as such." That party made the point that its members

"are entitled to proper pensions, not means-tested handouts."

Their idea is that, if their pensions could be increased, losing means-tested handouts and having to pay tax as well are things that they would be prepared to take on board. When I put it to them that that would mean they would not be able to have free television licences, which is sometimes a rallying cry in the House, the pensioners said, "Okay, if we don't get free television licences, at least we will have a choice about whether to have them or not."

It was interesting that, when the delegation came to see me, I was not expecting to receive a delegation of like-minded people who just popped in to tell me that the Government's track record on retirement pensions was first rate, that they would not detain me—they just wanted me to tell everybody else that. My perception was entirely correct. They made the point that they had examined the matter and were concerned about trying to highlight the group of people who are not properly reflected in the idea that nine out of 10 people receive some secondary income. That group is becoming smaller, and it will continue to become smaller over the years.

In due course, the average statistic, even if it is not a reflection of the position in Teignbridge, will come to pass that ultimately almost 10 out of 10 people will have some form of income other than their retirement pension. That is extremely healthy, for all the reasons that my hon. Friend the Member for Havant (Mr. Willetts) mentioned, and for the reasons that I mentioned about the burden that would otherwise be represented on the state.

In our social security policies and judgments about available resources, we have to bear in mind the fact that looking after those who ultimately are not in a position to look after themselves is one of the first responsibilities of the state. There is no doubt that the Government have a good track record on that. The state retirement pension has been fully proofed against inflation since 1979. In a particularly amicable debate—let us try to keep it that way—I will not dwell at great length on the history of earnings and incomes matters of that sort, but, behind the averages, one must consider some specific problems.

In our desire to look forward, to understand that there is a limit to what the state can be responsible for, and to understand the implications of an increasing pensioner population and a decreasing tax-paying base, we should not lose sight of another section of society which, in the nature of things, will dwindle. If we can understand the needs of people such as members of the Pensioners Protection party in the context of a global view, we will be doing the right thing.

7.15 pm

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): It is clear that the Pensioners Protection party won many votes in the west country. The hon. Members for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) made a bold bid both for its votes——

Mr. Wicks: And for the leadership.

Mr. Field: As my hon. Friend says, he made a bold bid for the leadership of that party.

I apologise to my hon. Friend the Member for Teignbridge—I call him hon. Friend this evening because we are members of the Social Security Select Committee—as I shall not immediately pick up his points. I apologise also for not being present for the opening speeches, because I wanted to compliment both spokesmen not on their performances in the House today but on their performances on another day, as the Bill is a consequence of the autumn statement. The autumn statement was a success for the Secretary of State. When questions are asked it is difficult to put on the record the extent of one's feelings and the extent of that success. *[Interruption.]* That attitude makes it difficult to make constructive points.

The Secretary of State said that we whipped up fears about cuts and so on. He did himself an injustice. He did a brilliant job of engendering such stories and then swept into the House to show us that our fears could be put to one side at a time when the public sector borrowing requirement will probably grow to about £50 billion. It was a success that the Secretary of State was able to protect his budget. Whether hon. Members will cheer him quite so loudly a year or so hence when the effect of the public sector borrowing requirement comes to roost is another matter, but this evening we should not quibble; we should pay him a compliment.

My hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) must have found the Secretary of State's

speech one of the most difficult to respond to. I was delighted with the skill and finesse with which he dealt with it.

The hon. Member for Havant (Mr. Willetts) said that when we are considering pension provisions or welfare provision generally we should emphasise the successes that have occurred and should be keen about spreading successes. I am reminded of a comment by a first world war poet in a footnote to his first poem. He said that, if the British were promoted from inferno to paradise, they would still gather around and talk about the good old days. Something in the British culture wallows in failure and despises success. All three parties need to encourage success when it is there.

The hon. Gentleman asked why there appears to be a glass ceiling on the membership of occupational pension schemes. In the post-war period, the extension of occupational schemes has been one of the big successes, linked to the size of the pensions that they are providing to an increasing number of our constituents.

Some storm clouds are gathering over the occupational pension scheme and I shall relate them to the Bill. The hon. Member for Havant said that we must be careful when we advocate reforms of occupational pension schemes and perhaps of the legal framework in which they operate, because there is no compulsion on employers to provide such schemes. If one goes about reform hamfistedly, an increasing number of employers will wind them up and go into money-purchase schemes. That is already happening.

I think that one of the changes that will be evident from the reports of the Select Committee on Social Security this Session—as opposed to those during the previous Session—is that Committee members will be more mindful of the difficulties facing employers when meeting occupational pension requirements. There have been changes in economic growth. We face a decade of sluggish growth, and the assets of pension funds will not grow as they have done; nor will funds get the income that they had in the past decade. Employers will take that factor into account when they decide whether to continue an occupational scheme, let alone extend it.

There are worries about how the Barber judgment will be enforced on occupational pension schemes, and about the other non-discrimination decisions that the European Court is about to make. That time bomb is waiting to explode on the finances of all occupational schemes.

During the recent past, surpluses in funds have been run down. The difficulties associated with sluggish economic growth and the enormous cost of implementing the Barber judgments, and others, will come at a time when pension schemes have less surplus than they had a decade ago.

We should not consider pension reform unimaginatively. I am sure that the Goode committee will take that into consideration when it deals with any reforms of the legal framework and with whether we should try to enshrine people's expectations of their occupational schemes into legislation. If we move too fast on that front, there will be a mass exodus of employers from the provision of occupational schemes and that will be a bad move.

The second storm cloud is one that the Government have made for themselves. They worked themselves and the House up into a frenzy and tried to get the country to share their worries about financing SERPS. Perhaps they were right to have that debate. However, we cannot now guarantee that if people remain in SERPS they will draw a pension adequate to lift them free of means-tested assistance.

Mr. Nicholls *rose*—

Mr. Field: I shall give way in a moment. I might answer the hon. Gentleman's question. The fact that we cannot guarantee that adequate pension must be taken into account when we consider the bribes or incentives—whatever we want to call them—that the Government are offering to people to leave SERPS and to make private arrangements. One of the disadvantages of the personal schemes that people are contracting into is that they also cannot guarantee the sort of income that pensioners will have.

I am worried that we are building up a new army of pensioners who will not receive the sort of income from the private sector that people who have recently retired—or will do so shortly—get from occupational schemes. It is not right to think that the success of occupational pension schemes will be writ large, either from SERPS or from the private pension arrangements that the Government are encouraging and we are debating.

Mr. Nicholls: Is the hon. Gentleman saying that it is safer for pensioners to be part of a huge state pension scheme than to be in a private occupational pension scheme? If so, he must consider that there will be a smaller number of people to supply the funds.

Mr. Field: Both the hon. Members for Teignbridge and for Havant have put the case—or the incentive or bribe—more effectively than any Treasury Minister or Minister on the Treasury Bench, that at least if one takes out a personal pension one knows that one will have a nest egg, whatever the amount.

When we are pensioners, we will be the majority of the electorate and we will be trying to enforce a contract on workers, who will be the minority. Pensioners will have the majority of votes and therefore it will be much easier to sway candidates—whether in Teignbridge or Birkenhead, and whether there are pension action groups or not—to support that majority view.

The working population will be able to get back at the pensioner majority by behaving in a way which will engender inflation. The majority might be able to win through the legislative reforms to gain pension increases, but the minority will get their own back in an inflationary society by redistributing the gains that the majority have enforced on them.

Mr. Nicholls: The hon. Gentleman is right, as is so often the case. Is it not even worse than that? Experience and sheer common sense show that if taxpayers feel that their burdens are unfair they will evade tax. They always have done and they always will do. If the working population know that they cannot win in a vote and if too much money is being taken away from them by the majority, they will evade tax, revenue will decrease and that will exacerbate the problem.

Mr. Field: Perhaps, or they might ensure that the Government have inflationary policies, so that the real gains for pensioners are wiped away by rising prices, but they—being in the labour market—could protect their living standards by successfully negotiating wage and salary increases. We might have to face those politics.

[Mr. Field]

The hon. Members for Havant and for Teignbridge made a case for the incentive or bribe more effectively than the Treasury Bench, because if the form of political struggle that I have described takes place, at least people with assets in personal pensions will be able to realise them in a way that those who remain members of SERPS will not. That is the most powerful argument that I have heard for personal pensions. I do not agree with it, but it is more powerful than the arguments that I have heard from the Treasury Bench.

Another storm cloud over the future shape of pension politics is the fact that a new army of poor pensioners is already coming on to the rolls. That is not because an increasing number of people are going into schemes which might not provide them with an adequate pension. All constituencies now contain a large number of elderly constituents, who are below retirement age but are unemployed and have been pushed on to disability benefits. We are disguising part of our unemployment problem by so categorising them and they are not building up pension entitlements.

It is wrong to think that the frail and elderly are the only poor pensioners, as my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, North-West (Mr. Wicks) commented. As they die, a new group of poor elderly will come along—those constituents who do not have a job and have been classified as sick or long-term disabled, who are not building up entitlements and will be totally dependent on the minimum state pension and on income support.

Five years ago one might have thought that the spread of occupational pensions and the generosity of some of the schemes would guarantee that an increasing number of pensioners would be lifted free of poverty in old age. That will happen to some of us but not, sad to say, to all of our constituents.

Mr. Willetts: If, in the future, we have groups of poorer pensioners, who are not just old pensioners, and if we have a greater diversity of income between pensioners, does not it follow that an uprating, an increase in the real value of the basic pension, above inflation, would be a particularly inefficient way in which to help the very people to whom the hon. Gentleman has referred? Has not he made the case for the poorer-pensioner package which John Moore introduced and the subsequent poorer-pensioner package that was introduced in 1990?

Mr. Field: I hope that I would do more than what has been achieved by those limited measures, welcome though they are to the people in receipt of additional benefits. That intervention takes me on to the other part of my speech, which relates to imagining what contribution Beveridge would make to our debate today. That will make up the second and shorter half of my speech.

Mr. Dewar: How can one have a shorter half?

Mr. Field: I am about to embark on my actuary-unsound contribution.

I am sure that Beveridge would draw enormous pleasure from the real successes that his report has ensured for many groups in our society. However, I do not believe that he would commend to us the idea that he came down from Mount Sinai with that report, that everything was written on tablets of stone and that nothing should be changed.

The House underestimates the current Secretary of State for Social Security if it does not believe that, at some stage, he will bring forward some radical plans to reshape our welfare state. The Labour party is committed to a debate, at least, about such a reform. I wish to keep alive the rumour that we will establish a social justice commission, which will think radically about what should be done.

Mr. Kirkwood: The hon. Gentleman should give evidence to it.

Mr. Field: Yes, I hope to do so.

Mr. Ralph Howell (Norfolk, North): Is the hon. Gentleman implying that we are likely to make some changes to the welfare system in the near future, but that he would insist on everything carrying on as before? If not, would he mind telling us what changes he would like to see?

Mr. Field: I am suggesting that if we do not think very radically, we will drift into our fifth election defeat and we will deserve that. I am seeking to keep alive the rumour that we are going to think radically. I want to propose one or two ideas and to suggest the atmosphere in which that debate should take place.

If there is to be a debate on such changes and if one is to contribute to it, one might be persuaded by other people's views. We should therefore encourage people to give their ideas even if, by the time we draw conclusions from that debate, we may have changed our minds three or four times. One should encourage different contributions, rather than score points off people who may behave inconsistently.

My first suggestion has already been put by my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, North-West. It is inconceivable that we should conduct our debate about a radical reform of the welfare state without being prepared to take on board the issues relating to full employment. If we talk about moving back to a time of full employment, it is clear that we will all have to entertain new thoughts in order to achieve that objective.

That objective will be more difficult to achieve than that achieved by Keynes. He advanced his ideas, or managed to pinch others' ideas and convince people that they were his, at a time of falling prices. We are living in a time of mass unemployment, when prices are rising—they are not going up as much as before, thank goodness, but they are still rising. In those circumstances, it is much more difficult than it was in the 1930s to consider what measures one should take to try to reflate the economy. Then, the Treasury, without telling anyone, followed the policy of constructing a tariff rule and it reflated the economy behind the rule. We all know that that policy was successful well before the second world war broke out.

When we conduct that debate and when we allow ourselves to think in a totally different way, we should not limit ourselves to considering ideas from this country. The German trade unions are equally worried about the extent of unemployment. Those trade unions are now saying that if they forgo wage increases, given the rate of productivity in society, their employers and the Government should start talking about expanding the job base as a result of

those forgone productivity increases. In other words, the German trade unions are now saying that they will break up the cartel that has operated in western society. That cartel is composed of those in work and, all too often, it operates against the interests of the unemployed.

That idea may not work out to be the most profitable way in which to return to full employment—I accept that it is one of many such strategies. However, the German trade unions are thinking about a dynamic policy. It is not equivalent to the old crude policy of wage freezes or the policy for which we voted just the other day: to shift resources from the employed to the unemployed in a manner which would give those people a chance to work. We should consider that policy very carefully.

Mr. Ralph Howell: I am extremely interested in the hon. Gentleman's remarks. Does he subscribe to the idea of the right to work? Does he recognise that if we could institute a workfare system in this country it would, over time, eliminate unemployment? I should be interested to know whether he supports that idea.

Mr. Field: I think that we should consider that proposal. I understand that the Cabinet has considered it, but rejected it because it would be immensely expensive. It is not a cheap scheme and it does not rely on what my constituents call "Mickey Mouse" training.

Under such a scheme the public sector could initially create jobs that paid proper wages. On the other hand, running alongside that provision, one could build up pukka training schemes. People could opt for training, and the compulsion element would operate on the work side. Therefore, benefits would be withdrawn from those who failed to take up the work opportunities. That would be a totally different scheme from anything that has been discussed publicly in this country—I know that the Government have, privately, considered the option, but have rejected it because it would be so costly.

I read the record of the debate that was initiated by the hon. Member for Norfolk, North (Mr. Howell) on the Friday before last—I was unable to be present—and I noted that the Government said that they would conduct a pilot study in the hon. Gentleman's constituency. He is a wily old bird and he does not need my advice on this, but I am sure that he will ensure that the jobs offered under that study are proper ones and that decent wages will be paid. I am sure that he will ensure that that study does not resemble what one might have been offered—a scheme whereby people would be given a small addition to their benefits and threatened with the loss of their benefits if they did not take up the job offered. I know that the hon. Gentleman has a healthy majority, but it will be slimmed down greatly if he does not stick to his guns, as I see them, on this point.

Mr. Ralph Howell: The hon. Gentleman is one of the most radical thinkers in this House. Surely he is making a mistake by saying that the scheme that I have advanced for so many years would be so expensive. No one knows, because no one knows what percentage of the unemployed would take up the option. If there were a 100 per cent. take-up, and it was voluntary, I accept that the scheme would be expensive, but if only two thirds of those eligible took it up, many others would still be engaged in lucrative work in society, known as the black economy. Until we have tried it, nobody knows whether it will work. It would be helpful if the hon. Gentleman put his weight behind trying the scheme effectively. We shall know only when we have operated, perhaps not the pilot scheme that has been promised but a true pilot scheme, such as I have been suggesting.

Mr. Field: If the scheme is voluntary, we shall never know whether hordes of people are undertaking work on the side, because they will not volunteer for the hon. Gentleman's scheme. We would only know about that if there were an element of compulsion in the scheme. We know that the scheme that the Cabinet has considered was rejected on the ground of cost. The effort of ensuring that the jobs would pay proper wages and that there were training schemes which the hon. Gentleman and I would be prepared to go on, rather than some of those offered, is much more expensive than what is now being provided.

I shall watch with interest to see how the hon. Gentleman boxes from his corner when the Government try to unleash that experiment in his constituency. As he says, we shall not know the true cost until the pilot scheme has been run. I hope that it will be a genuine scheme that offers proper jobs and training, not one that tries to operate on the cheap.

Mr. Nicholls: May I return to the point which the hon. Gentleman was making a few moments ago when he said that the German trade unions might be prepared to trade off job losses for restrictive or no pay increases? Surely that would institutionalise overmanning. The hon. Gentleman will admit that one can hide unemployment in a number of ways, one of which might be with the scheme that my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North (Mr. Howell) has in mind. At least that would be an honest and open "hiding". What the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) has in mind would institutionalise and structuralise inefficiency. I do not think that that is what he means.

Mr. Field: No, I do not mean that. Discussions are going on among the car unions in Europe on the basis that workers should not accept lay-offs but should all accept shorter time. They would then not add to the job queues, which may lead to what the hon. Gentleman is saying. That is separate from what the German trade unions are beginning to discuss, which is a scheme whereby workers would not take a salary increase, even though increased productivity figures might show that it had been earned, provided that the job base was expanded by the wealth so created. That might lead to the inefficiency that the hon. Gentleman described, but it probably would not.

It is an interesting debate and, if we are serious about breaking up the employment cartel to which most of us fortunately belong—people on the outside feel that it is almost impossible to break into it—those ideas must be considered. If we are to think about a new Beveridge scheme, it must be run in harness with a serious debate on achieving full employment.

I shall end this part of my "actuary-unsound" contribution by saying that, in the 1920s, reformers were disturbed that some workers had entered the third winter of unemployment. In all our constituencies now there are households with third generation unemployed. That is how long unemployment has stayed with certain groups of people. There is no urgency in this debate about moving back to full employment and therefore offering people hope of the chance to work again. I look forward to having that debate in the next year or two.

[Mr. Field]

We should rethink the welfare state. I happily pick up the challenge made by the hon. Member for Havant about pension increases and the reforms that we should at least say are on the table, even if, on balance, we decide that we do not wish to back them. At a time when an increasing number of people are retiring with occupational pensions that are substantially greater than their state pensions, it is worth debating whether we should continually increase the national insurance pension for everybody at the same rate as in the past. Should we not think of ways in which we could concentrate on to the poorest pensioners the sum it would cost to increase the state pension for everybody?

Every time that we put regulations through the House, without a vote, to increase the national insurance rate, we are increasing our own old-age pension without knowing what our circumstances will be and whether we will need that help. When we consider the proportion of the current pensions budget to the large social security budget—it is about a third—we cannot leave undebated our approach to that topic. We may ultimately still think that the method by which we now provide benefit is the most perfect form of benefit provisions that mankind has ever devised, though I should be surprised.

We now have a budget of £75,000 million to £80,000 million, yet many of our constituents are desperately poor. They are unemployed, do not know whether they can pay heating bills, must economise on food, and do not know how they will provide Christmas presents without getting into the money lenders' hands. Moreover, they know that it is not just this year but that, unless we come up with a full employment policy, that future may stretch on and on into the sunset. In those circumstances, it is important that we consider whether we could spend some of that £75,000 million to £80,000 million more effectively to offer a greater chance to people who have least. We must bite the bullet on that issue and realise that if we are to advocate such a policy, we shall not give increases to other much more advantaged groups of people and we must do that in an electorally successful way.

The exercise cannot, therefore, be conducted in a purely statistical way, balancing the books. The review on full employment and welfare must be conducted within a framework that sets the public imagination alive, as Beveridge managed to do 50 years ago tomorrow. Unless one gets over the sense that those two policies are building a different Britain, it will be impossible to win electoral support to take help away from some people and give it to those who have least.

7.47 pm

Mr. David Faber (Westbury): I am grateful for the opportunity to add a few words to this debate. I am a newcomer to social security debates and I have enjoyed listening to the whole of this debate. My hon. Friends and Opposition Members have made many interesting contributions.

It is a pleasure and a privilege, albeit a daunting task, to follow the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field), whose knowledge of these issues is so well known and on whose Select Committee I, too, am pleased to serve. I particularly welcome the praise which he lavished at the start of his speech on my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

Mr. Frank Field: I lavished praise on the Opposition Front Bench, too.

Mr. Faber: The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right—the praise which he lavished on my right hon. Friend and his hon. Friends, on their performances after the autumn statement.

I particularly enjoyed the erudite intervention from my hon. Friend the Member for Havant (Mr. Willetts), whose expertise in the subject is also well known. I enjoyed listening to my hon. Friend and the hon. Member for Croydon, North-West (Mr. Wicks) swapping stories about Beveridge. Had I known last week that the hon. Members for Birkenhead and for Croydon, North-West and my hon. Friend the Member for Havant were so well versed on Beveridge before I spent a rather windy night with two of them earlier last week, I would have swotted up on Beveridge so that we would have had a little more to talk about late into the night.

I enjoyed the speeches by the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) and by my hon. Friend the Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) both of whom brought considerable experience to the debate—certainly more than I can bring, especially as I cannot claim to be an expert on "Coronation Street". We all agree that the issue of national insurance contributions will be the subject of another debate. I look forward to playing a part in that in the House and, I hope, in the Select Committee.

I warmly welcome the Bill's further measures to widen the personal choice that is already available to most people in providing for their retirement. The Government have shown foresight not only in safeguarding their current pension provision but in ensuring that as many people as possible will be able to seize the opportunity to provide for themselves in retirement. The Bill is part of the Government's continuing policy to promote personal pensions—one tier of their comprehensive strategy to improve living standards for all pensioners now and in the future.

The strategy has three main strands, the first of which is to maintain at all times the basic state retirement pension, always increasing it in line with prices. The Government have done that and, as we know from the autumn statement, they will continue to do it. It is worth repeating that since 1979 social security spending has risen by more than 50 per cent. over inflation and that in 1988 the average pensioner was about 34 per cent. better off than he was in 1979, a point made by my hon. Friend the Member for High Peak (Mr. Hendry).

Secondly, the Bill is part of continuing Government policy to make everybody responsible for his own pension provision where and when he is able to do so. People may make provision through occupational and personal pensions and, if possible, through savings or other investments so that they can add to income from the state pension. As my hon. Friend the Member for High Peak said, the recent falls in interest rates were warmly welcomed by all hon. Members because they are essential for recovery, but they are not always so warmly welcomed by pensioners. More than three quarters of those who have recently reached retirement age derive income from savings and the average income from those savings doubled between 1979 and 1988. Therefore, personal savings are playing an ever more important part in the life and financial considerations of pensioners.

Thirdly, Government policy focuses additional resources on those who are less well off. That is especially true in recent years for some older pensioners who have had less time to build up personal pensions or whose savings were ravaged by the inflation of the 1970s. Therefore, it is right that over the past three years special attention has been paid to those pensioners, and income-related benefits have been targeted more than ever to the tune of about £700 million a year over that time.

As we enter the next century the number of people over pensionable age will be much higher than at present. My hon. Friend the Member for Teignbridge dwelt on that at length and I shall add my example to those that he employed. On Friday evening my wife and I were fortunate enough to attend the 80th birthday party of one of the most loyal party workers in my constituency, Mrs. Edith Belcher. On that happy occasion Mrs. Belcher did not qualify for a telegram from Her Majesty the Queen, but she received many telegrams and letters from my right hon. Friends and from some of my noble Friends. She reminded me that a few years ago she held a 25th anniversary party for my predecessor, Sir Dennis Walters, and that 25 years before that she held a 25th anniversary party for his predecessor, Sir Robert Grimston. She left me with the news that she intended to hold my 25th anniversary party 25 years from now.

Many people are now living to a much greater age, and that means that we shall have to make much greater provision for pensioners in the next century. That was why we introduced personal pensions in 1988 as part of a wider Conservative philosophy to increase choice and personal responsibility and to help to increase the freedom epitomised by other landmark Conservative legislation such as our highly successful privatisation programme and the sale of council homes.

Since 1988 nearly 5 million people have taken out personal pensions. They are already making a massive contribution to an ever-stronger structure of pension provision into the next century. Everyone is now able to make a choice as he prepares for retirement and to do it as he best sees fit. Personal pensions are now available to almost every employee, irrespective of whether his or her employer operates an occupational pension scheme. Personal pensions also provide a crucial source of finance for industry. The schemes are almost always fully funded and provide an important stimulus to industry through investment.

Since 1979 people of this country have voted four times for a Conservative Government. That is a resounding yes four times over for greater choice and greater flexibility —the sort of flexibility that the Bill seeks to provide. On each occasion such choice and flexibility would have been denied to people if there had been a different electoral result. So that we do not overburden the next generation, it is essential to continue to spread the message about the benefits of non-state pension schemes across the whole age spectrum.

The advantages of personal pensions are undoubtedly greater for younger people, and that is shown by their take-up among that age group and the vigorous marketing directed at them. I understand that the Institute for Fiscal Studies has calculated that the take-up of personal pensions is highest among the age groups 22 to 26 and 27 to 31.

Clause 1 introduces the 1 per cent. additional rebate for holders of personal pensions who are over 30 years of age and is in line with the commitment in our election manifesto. The new rebates should help about 2 million people and will be a vital incentive to those entering that age group to maintain their personal pensions. My hon. Friend the Member for Havant spoke about that. I understand that this is to be a temporary measure and, as we know, the existing 2 per cent. rebate for those who opt out of SERPS will end in April.

I welcome the Minister's news that a new system of age-related rebates and all options will be considered. I welcome his offer to consult widely on that so that such a system may start to operate in April 1996. The Government want to see all age ranges and groups benefit from personal pensions and not just younger people. By using clause 1 to remove the anomaly the Government fully comply with their manifesto pledge

"of ensuring that personal pensions remain attractive across the age range."

Clause 2 relates to the national insurance fund and ensures that the top-up grant will become available to the fund from the Treasury from 1993-94 and, if necessary, subsequently. In his absence I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Chancellor on the autumn statement and for rightly safeguarding, as we knew he would, all social security spending. It was welcome news, despite scaremongering in the press, that all benefits are to be uprated in line with inflation. The hon. Member for Birkenhead claimed that the stories were put about by the Government. I prefer to agree with my hon. Friends who said that the stories were put about by the Opposition.

Mr. Frank Field: It is unfair of the hon. Gentleman to downgrade the achievements of the Secretary of State, who had two successes. He managed to frighten—goodness knows how—his Cabinet colleagues into agreeing his budget. At the same time he had the energy and wit to orchestrate extraordinary campaigns saying that everything would be smashed. He was able to claim those successes in the House. I was not trying to make mischief. I wanted the House to give full credit to the Secretary of State for his double success.

Mr. Faber: Having had the pleasure in recent weeks of serving on the Select Committee under the chairmanship of the hon. Member for Birkenhead, I would not accuse him of making mischief. I do not believe that he was doing so here. However, he credits my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State with doing a better public relations job than even he would lay claim to.

The national insurance fund is financed by contributions from employees and employers alike through national insurance payments. Therefore, as has been pointed out, it is sadly inevitable that, at a time of severe world-wide recession, income to the fund will fall while benefits payments will rise. It would have been all too easy for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor to have increased national insurance contributions the other day, thus easily increasing income to the fund, but that would also greatly have increased the tax burden on employers and employees alike, which would have been fatal in a time of recession.

It is also worth remembering that, had the Labour party won the general election in April, we would have seen those increases in national insurance contributions, as promised in its election manifesto. However, I am a little confused—I say that in all seriousness—following a recent statement in *The Guardian* by the hon. Member for

[Mr. Faber]

Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) that such rises in national insurance contributions were no longer necessary. I cannot understand why in April those rises would have stimulated recovery and growth in a recession, but for some reason they have now become dependent upon recovery and the end of the recession.

Clause 2 will introduce a top-up grant to enable the fund to meet fully its commitments to those in receipt of all social security benefits, without hitting employers or employees in their pockets. The Bill is innovative in that, unlike the old Treasury grant, it will not be automatic, but will be used only when needed, and will not be implemented when there is no need for its provisions. That will result in greater flexibility in management as the grant will vary in each year according to need. Most important of all, it means that the taxpayer's money will not be wasted on surpluses, and there will be no effect on overall public expenditure.

We have heard that spending on social security over the next three years will be £79·8 billion, £82·9 billion and £87 billion respectively. That is an accurate gauge of the Government's commitment to the needy, sick and elderly. We shall maintain full support for those hit hardest by the recession, while focusing additional support on the most needy and safeguarding the pledges that we made to the elderly in our manifesto. We heard from my right hon. Friend in the autumn statement that all major benefits will be increased by 3·6 per cent., fully in line with the rate of inflation. That uprating will cost us some £2·5 billion next year and real increases in disposable income for the needy will cost a further £1 billion.

One aspect of the autumn statement and the social security uprating that has not been mentioned so far is social security fraud. In considering a top-up-grant to the national insurance fund, we should also remember the many millions of pounds that are lost every year through social security fraud. I warmly welcome the Government's plans to combat fraud and especially my right hon. Friend's reiteration in the autumn statement of his determination to step up his efforts in that direction. Total savings next year are expected to be £1 billion—a staggering amount of money—and that can only ensure that more money is available to the majority of needy claimants.

My constituents in rural Wiltshire need no reminders of the problems of social security fraud. Year in and year out, hordes of scroungers dressed up as new age travellers descend on our farmlands, villages and famous beauty spots. Most infamous was the mass invasion of our landmark white horse between Westbury and Bratton. My constituents witnessed at first hand the mobile benefits officers dishing out money to those who had no intention of ever looking for work in their lives.

Mr. Frank Field: I cannot understand why the Government and Conservative Members draw attention to that. Is it not a disgrace that the Government took so long to deal with the matter?

Mr. Faber: I can only repeat what I said earlier. I warmly welcome the fact that the Government have reiterated their intention to crack down on fraud, and I hope that that will be done swiftly. I also hope that my right hon. and hon. Friends in the Department of Social Security will get together with other Departments to try to find some lasting solution to the problems that my constituents have to face year in and year out, and which they dread.

Mr. Frank Field: It was not just the hon. Gentleman's constituents who suffered. The Government allowed mainly women benefit officers to go there and be almost abused by some of those people. That was the other shameful part of such incidents, which continued year in and year out before the Government did something about them.

Mr. Faber: The invasion of Bratton was three years ago and I was not then Member of Parliament for the constituency, so I did not have the opportunity to comment on it. I agree with the hon. Gentleman. It is wrong that anybody should have to hand out allowances from mobile caravans, dishing out income-related benefits to people who had no intention of looking for work.

Mr. Nicholls: Does my hon. Friend agree that the full extent of the problem was found out only this summer, and at that stage my right hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People acted with commendable speed? Given that the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) is an acknowledged expert in social security matters, does my hon. Friend not find it curious that he did not bring this matter to the attention of the Government before?

Mr. Faber: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. The hon. Member for Birkenhead knows that the invasion of Bratton was one of the first of such incidents that drew the problem to people's attention. My hon. Friend is right. The problem became significantly worse, possibly last summer but certainly this summer. I welcome the speedy action taken by my right hon. Friend the Minister to deal with the matter.

The Government are committed to improving living standards for the whole community, and that includes people for whom national insurance contributions make provision in their old age. We now have lower inflation and interest rates and pensioner incomes are higher than they have ever been before. Spreading the ownership of personal pensions will encourage that trend to continue, and that is the aim of the Bill. I am pleased to support the Bill and I urge the House to do likewise.

8.7 pm

Mr. Jim Cunningham (Coventry, South-East): Like the hon. Member for Westbury (Mr. Faber), I am not an expert on pensions. I can only relate to the House some of the things that my constituents have had to say about the present system. Pensions have become a political football. The Government often dress up ideas in such a way that they appear good and seem to benefit people, when they do not in reality do so. The Government's scheme to encourage people to leave SERPS and join private pension schemes has done more to cause confusion than to improve the situation for people who might want to retire before pensionable age. Such people believe that they have security, but they often find that private pension schemes do not give them the benefits to which they thought they were entitled. As a result, there is a long series of complaints to the ombudsman, sometimes there is redress, but sometimes there is not.

We cannot say often enough that pensioners in this country have made a major contribution to its wealth and it is not their fault or that of the unemployed that the prospects for wealth creation have been called into question. That problem is basically due to the Government's policies. The key to the problem of private and state pension schemes lies in contributions and higher insurance premiums. Wealth creation is needed in order to fund those contributions. The Opposition say that we must get people back to work to create wealth—to use a Conservative expression. We would rather see full employment, whereas Conservatives would rather see wealth creation. The Government never exactly tell us how they intend to achieve that end, despite various Budgets over the years.

As long as there is high unemployment in this country, there will always be a generation of pensioners who miss out, primarily because they cannot afford the contributions. That is the fundamental isssue, which some of my colleagues mentioned earlier. Wealth creation and full employment should be the major topics for debate in future. The central thrust of the argument is that wherever there is segregation, whatever the economic policies, there will always be funding problems.

I have had consultations with pensioners in my constituency. We had a meeting not long ago that 500 to 600 pensioners attended. Before we start discussing targeting, we must ensure that pensions are adequate. Many of the pensioners at the meeting wanted a minimum pension of £100 a week. I do not think that that is too much for pensioners to ask in this day and age, given the sacrifices and contributions that they have made to the wealth creation of this country. The House must consider whether the pension is enough for pensioners to be able to afford television licences.

The Government say that they believe in consultation, but I have not heard very much from the Government about how they propose to consult pensioners to find out their views. From time to time, we hear a variety of opinions from the Government about what they believe to be pensioners' needs. We must set up the machinery so that pensioners' organisations can be consulted and their needs taken into consideration.

I am sure that some hon. Members—at least, those in Glasgow—will have seen the Channel 4 programme some weeks ago about a number of people with young families who were out of work. They found themselves in the hands of money lenders. How many districts are there in this country where advice bureaux give financial advice to families who find themselves in such a position? Not only do many families in this country go to money lenders, but they suffer considerable intimidation. All those who saw the programme would recognise some of the problems that seem to be hidden from the Government when they look at the needs of pensioners and those who are unemployed through not fault of their own.

Very often, Conservative Members such as the hon. Member for Westbury are more interested in the propaganda of what the Government are doing and how many people are caught abusing the system. Those abusing the system are obviously in the wrong and should be caught and brought to book, but the real issue is the level of pensions and how we see pensions in the future.

Some 40 or 50 years ago, Beveridge predicted what would happen. Today's debate probably took place in the early 1930s—the clock has been turned back during the past 10 to 12 years. The Labour party is not in government—the general election is over and the responsibility lies with the Conservative Government. They must stop reminding us of what happened in the 1970s and what we said during the general election, and instead deal with the injustices in society.

An old-age pensioner in my constituency has a serious heart problem and cannot obtain the necessities of life such as a replacement cooker. Anybody who considered the injustices that I have witnessed in my constituency would realise the laborious processes involved. Those in need have to talk to voluntary organisations to see whether they can provide a gas cooker or a little bit of furniture on the cheap.

It is time that we had a realistic debate on the problem of unemployment in this country. We do not need any more phoney training schemes; we need adequate pensions and unemployment benefit. The debate should be about how we can achieve those goals in future.

8.16 pm

Mr. Hartley Booth (Finchley): I rise with some temerity to speak on the subject of social security, as, during the debate, many hon. Members such as my hon. Friend the Member for Havant (Mr. Willetts) and the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) have spoken with the benefit of an enormous wealth of experience on the issue.

I welcome the debate, and the Social Security Bill. I am often brought face to face with the stark reality—the comparison between now and the 1930s before we had a social security system, so many benefits, and the capacity to care for those in need. The comparison between the 1930s and now is nothing more than a stark contrast between darkness and light.

My hon. Friend the Member for Havant dealt with the Beveridge report, complete with suntan oil stains. I entered the debate in the 1970s in Islington, when, as a young barrister, in my spare time in the evenings I tried to give free legal advice to those who needed it. Young barristers need to work in their spare time to gain experience and give help where they can.

I found that we had a generation of people who had relied on the results of Beveridge and lived through the myth that Whitehall could provide for all their needs. I found people who were disillusioned by the promises of socialism. There were poor people who had never been told that their talents could provide for them if only they could be taught the confidence to use them.

The Bill will be judged on four criteria. First, will it make people better off? It certainly will—2 million people will be £160 million better off as a result of the Bill. If we work that out as an annual payment with uprating, on a conservative estimate, each of those 2 million people will be £3,000 to £4,000 better off. I stand to be corrected by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe).

Secondly, will the Bill penalise other pensioners? Of course not. At Question Time today, we heard that even *The Guardian* welcomed the fact that this autumn, despite the recession, pensions had been uprated in line with prices.

Thirdly, will the Bill improve choice and resolve a problem? The answer is yes to both those questions—and we have discussed that.

[Mr. Hartley Booth]

Fourthly, will the Bill provide a disincentive to all those people in the matrix of helping and caring for the needy to come forward? I believe not. I wish to talk about this matrix of care. A distinctive feature of what my right hon. and hon. Friends understand by care is that, beside state provision, which is the main thrust of the debate, is private care, such as care for a neighbour. That fits into the pattern of provision of every constituency.

In Finchley, which I represent, there is everything from the Milly Apthorpe trust, which provides for the disabled when they are in need, to talking newspapers for the blind, from excellent homes for the elderly to the Finchley friends of the local hospital, who provide for the geriatric wards. We need idealism. We need a matrix and a partnership in care.

In the past, young men dreamed dreams and old men saw visions. We on the Conservative Benches are now told that it is the middle-aged Members who mess things up. Of course we need idealism, even those of us who carry the burden of government, but we must aim higher. We have heard about the realities of demography, and to expand upon that, I tell the House that the uncle of one of my constituents recently died at the age of 118 years.

People will live longer, and we must provide for them. Some call for the cause of euthanasia to be advanced. I vehemently oppose that, as a matter of deep conviction. Surely we want to see the quality of life after retirement improved and improved again.

My hon. Friends and I are proud that pensioners have seen annual growth in their receipts from the Government —five times faster than that achieved during the Labour Administration. Pensions have increased in line with prices. Many argue—for example, Pensioners' Voice—that pensions should be linked to the rise in average earnings, but the entire picture needs to be put in perspective and all factors taken into account.

Pensioners' incomes doubled between 1979 and 1988, whereas they fell by 16 per cent. between 1974 and 1979. If we set inflation alongside pensioners' savings and their income from their savings, we find a generation of pensioners who are better off. In 1986, I came across a sad case of a delightful old man who had put aside £1,000 since 1974 to pay for his funeral, which meant a great deal to him. By 1980, the value of that £1,000 had been whittled away. It was then worth only £400. He was deeply worried, because that sum would not pay for his funeral. As I have said, we must consider all the aspects of care. Inflation and the excellent increases that will stem from the Bill must be set side by side.

We Conservatives alone have had the courage to deal with fraud within the social security system. We have provided an extra £10 million this year to tackle fraud and abuse of the system. We estimate that £100 million will be brought back to help provide for the extra benefits that will stem from the Bill. It is this approach that will make the money available, and we want to provide it for those who are in need. I ask Opposition Members to condemn fraud in the social security system, which they have not done.

Let us compare provision in the United Kingdom with that in other parts of Europe. Taken against France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Spain, Britain fares well. A study was published on 29 November by an organisation called Hannan Ltd. Media Scan. It compared six individual cases, and went into its research in great detail. In every case, the United Kingdom took either first or second place, except for one in which it came third. We have a proud record in provision of care for the elderly through pensions and other benefits and allowances. The survey justifiably demonstrates that.

Of course there is more to do. There will always be more to do to help those who are in need, including the elderly, and the Bill is a step forward. It is sensible, short and balanced. That balance continues to provide an incentive to public as well as private provision, and I commend the Bill to the House.

8.25 pm

Mrs. Angela Browning (Tiverton): I welcome the Bill and the opportunity that it provides to debate yet again the merits of pensions—especially personal pensions—for the current generation.

It is easy—perhaps this is typical of the Conservative party—to confine ourselves to present needs, but perhaps it would be more advantageous to consider the burden upon taxpayers as we move into the next century. In other words, we should consider the position of the next generation. Perhaps I should declare a personal interest: I am a member of the generation who will be pensioners to be supported by the next generation. It is probable that I shall be asking my children's generation to pay out to meet any entitlement that I may have to a state pension.

The Government, in taking account of demography and actuarial figures, especially in relation to the state earnings-related pension scheme as it is attached to the state pension for the next century, are right to draw attention to the fact, as they have done since 1988, that it will be our children's generation who will have to earn the money and pay the taxes to provide for our generation when we receive the money at a post office or in our bank accounts.

I hesitate to use the word "philosophy", because it has many connotations that tend to be rarefied and academic, but that is not so of pensions. When talking of pensions we are discussing the practicalities of people's lives. Many years ago, when they were asked what they most wanted in life, people in my peer grouping said that they wanted a home of their own. If we ask people in my generation—those in their 40s—to identify their aspirations, we find that they are looking forward to their years of retirement and are interested in what their quality of life will be in their 60s, 70s and 80s.

We are asking people now to start making provision for their years of retirement during their working lives, when they are earning money and paying national insurance contributions and taxes. We know that, as people's health improves and there is the prospect of living much longer, the money available for retirement will have to last much longer. Fortunately, people often remain much fitter for much longer than hitherto. That means that their expectation of what they will be able to do in retirement is greatly enhanced when set against the expectations of previous generations.

The average woman has a life expectancy to the middle 70s. Let us take 74 as an example. If she retires at the current retirement age of 60 and we consider her potential for making provision for her retirement, we find that the first 18 years of her life were spent in the education system,

when she was dependent on others to provide for her. We can then take six years of her life, for example, when she was looking after children and was not able to contribute to a pension. She will often be dependent on a husband with an occupational pension. When she retires, she will have a life expectancy of another 14 or 15 years. Out of a lifespan of 74 years, she would have been in a non-earning capacity for 38 years, so there were few years in which she could make provision for her retirement.

The Government are right to be flexible in the range of pension provision, especially for women. I want to emphasise the difficulty they face. Britain has a high divorce rate, with one in three marriages expected to end in divorce. Many women work only part-time or are dependent on their husbands' occupational private pensions for their quality of life in retirement. There is little opportunity for such women, especially if they divorce later in life, to accrue financial security. For many of them, SERPS is the one opportunity to accrue some independent financial provision during their working lives.

The Government's approach to pension provision has been flexible right through from SERPS—I welcome the additional bonus for those who contract out—to additional voluntary contributions for those who wish to top up a company or occupational pension scheme, to free-standing pension schemes, to portable personal pensions and to a whole range of pension provision under which people can, for example, invest a single lump sum.

That flexible approach is important, because people's working patterns have changed. Now, someone coming out of education can expect to be in employment for a few years, then perhaps to be self-employed; then later, he may have to reduce the number of hours he works. All those factors now impinge on people's life patterns, so it is right that pension options should marry, meet and fulfil their expectations.

Previously, people in occupational pension schemes who changed their jobs had their contributions and those of their employers frozen. The effect was punitive, especially on those who changed jobs more than once. That is why the Government were right to free the pensions market and ensure that those who could make pension contributions during their working lives should have the flexibility and opportunity to do so. It can only enhance their quality of life in retirement.

I accept that currently a group of people are not in that happy position but depend on the state pension, plus any top-up benefits to which they are entitled. I am not saying that they are well off, but there is now a growing generation of pensioners who are beginning to reap the benefits of investing in a personal pension. It is easy to recognise the enhanced quality of life they enjoy.

That is why the Government, contrary to what the Opposition want, are right to act as an enabling body through the introduction of flexibility into pension provision—of which contracting out of SERPS is a good example—and through the tax discounts available to those who invest money in a pension. It is wise to give someone a tax break during his working life, so that the next generation will not have to pick up even higher bills to support him in retirement.

Labour Members have a rather wry expression on their faces—*[Interruption.]* Perhaps not; I do not want to misjudge them. It must be right to encourage investment in personal pensions for those who have the opportunity to do so, so that when they retire they can enjoy a good quality of life.

Of course I fully accept that the state must always provide for those who are dependent on a state pension or on benefits and for those who are widowed or divorced and whose retirement expectations will not be fulfilled. However, that should not deter those who have the opportunity to do so from investing in a pension during their working lives. It is not simply a question of capitalism and personal wealth; it is the quality of life for a whole generation of pensioners. We have to consider those, in whom I include myself, who will have to provide for that generation.

When a range of options is available, it is important that people receive professional advice. I recently wrote to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State about that, not just in the context of pensions but about the way that the Financial Services Act 1986 has been implemented through the devolution of power to the Securities and Investments Board, LAUTRO, FIMBRA and others.

If self-regulation is to work, people must be able to trust the advice they receive from financial advisers. I am encouraged to learn that my right hon. Friend intends to produce a leaflet giving further guidance—*[Laughter.]* Before Labour Members collapse with laughter, I must tell them that I have received a personal assurance, not just from my right hon. Friend but from the self-regulatory bodies and those who have to deal with them, about certain cases that should have been picked up earlier.

I am pleased to hear that my right hon. Friend is to tighten the way in which the self-regulatory bodies work because they need to be scrutinised. They must ensure that they properly exercise their devolved powers to ensure that the pensioner or other person receiving financial advice is protected. We can never stop the fraudsters and crooksters in, for example, the Maxwell case. It would have been difficult even for those with advance knowledge to have recognised what Maxwell was doing, even if it is easy with the benefit of hindsight.

There will always be villains. The regulations should work, provided that my right hon. Friend uses his powers. I have asked him to scrutinise more thoroughly what is happening within the regulatory bodies, and he has assured me that he will do so. If he does not, I shall be at the front of the queue wanting to know why. It is important that people receive the right advice.

The Government have put SERPS at the heart of the Bill. The Opposition have publicly criticised the provision to contract out, but they should realise that, if someone who has paid into SERPS dies before pension age, there is little provision for his next of kin, whereas, if he had contracted out of SERPS, there would be a lump sum. I think that is admirable, especially for widows whose retirement expectations would not otherwise be fulfilled. It is more beneficial to the individual, because he or she can monitor how the policy is growing.

I support the Government's most welcome move to expand and increase the provision of private pensions. They will definitely be much more meaningful to the next generation—in the same way that the present generation of pensioners enjoy a greater quality of life because their basic state pension is topped up by private provisions. There is nothing wrong with that.

If one asks people what they look forward to in retirement, they reply that they want time and leisure, to

[Mrs. Angela Browning]

go out and do things that they previously never had the time to do. We all know that costs money, and pensioners will be unable to enjoy those pursuits without the wherewithal—unless they stay at home in their gardens seven days a week.

I support the Government's proposals in the Bill, and hope that they will continue to ensure that personal pensions are available and flexible, and that a wide choice will be available to the next generation.

8.40 pm

Mr. Stephen Day (Cheadle): I apologise to the House for not being present for the first part of the debate. You knew, Mr. Deputy Speaker, of my intention to speak, but I was delayed in my constituency and then had the joys of a five-hour drive through the rain and traffic jams. I apologise also if I repeat any points that have already been made.

Whenever I speak as a member of the Social Security Select Committee, I make a point—and I do now—of declaring my indirect interest as a parliamentary adviser to the National Association of Local Government Officers.

Whenever Opposition Members speak on the topic of social security—this came across strongly this evening—they say that their key objective is to ensure that the level of pensions is addressed. The hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Cunningham) also said that unemployment is rarely addressed and expressed a desire for the House to deal with that aspect, too. I have no quarrel with that, because surely right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House agree with both objectives. It would be a funny person who did not.

However, the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East repeated the fundamental error made by many Opposition Members, in believing that just by making such a remark, the problem will be dealt with. There are harsh realities and choices confronting this country and, I readily admit, many individual pensioners. I will try to address that aspect in the debate.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: I touched on the point that the hon. Gentleman mentioned, but followed it up by saying that the key to the pensions problem is wealth creation—or, as my right hon. and hon. Friends would put it, putting people back to work. Whether or not one is talking about a private or state scheme, the key to an adequate pension must be wealth creation. I did not glibly make that point and leave it at that. I emphasised the fact that people must be put back to work, to create the resources necessary to pay adequate pensions.

Mr. Day: I am glad to have given the hon. Gentleman an opportunity to explain the position. No one on this side of the House would disagree that wealth creation is the key to the future of all benefits and to any modern society. That is the heart of Conservative philosophy. Wealth creation comes first—and then one decides how to allocate that wealth among the least well-off. That is a fundamental tenet of Conservative thinking, so I cannot disagree with the hon. Gentleman on that.

Conservatives make the same point as the hon. Gentleman, but that is not enough. Obviously we must get people back to work, but the political debate on that issue and on the Bill is how to achieve the necessary wealth.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: That political divide is obvious, but I am also saying that your polices have led to a situation in which there has been a depreciation of state benefits and pensions, because your policies are not necessarily designed to get people back into wealth creation. They are designed more to put people on the dole—and that is the political divide.

Mr. Day: I do not think that the hon. Gentleman meant to blame me, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I presume that his comments were directed at the Government whom I support.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. I believe that the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Cunningham) meant "your party".

Mr. Day: I stand corrected, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I strongly believe that whatever provision society makes for personal pensions in the foreseeable future, for the public to believe that they can rely on the state to provide a basic pension that will meet all their needs is, in the modern age, living in cloud cuckoo land. One may be able to make a theoretical moral case for making such a provision, but it comes down to the practicalities—and of not only the present but potential economic performance of this country and of the economies that surround it. I will expand on that point later.

That background makes it essential that personal provision is made and that choice is available to those who are able to make choices. Whatever provision the Government make, and whatever encouragement they give, I acknowledge that they cannot help everyone. Not everyone is able to make use of opportunities. I refer particularly to pensioners in the 75 to 80 age group and older. When they were youngsters, even if they could have afforded the luxury of a pension scheme, such a thing did not exist, while many others did not earn enough to exploit such an opportunity.

Those who rely totally on existing state benefits definitely struggle. That is why hon. Members on both sides of the House are right. The Opposition say that pensioners cannot manage. In the case of older pensioners who rely on state benefits, that is true. It is also true when the Government say that state pensions have risen far more under them than they did under the last Labour Government. The record of Conservative Governments in that regard surpasses anything achieved by Labour in terms of pensions, savings and retaining value.

At the heart of the issue is whether we can deliver. The pensioners who are aged 80 or more must be looked after by the state—and the state ought to do more in respect of those people. As to pensioners generally, while those who rely on state benefits are struggling—I know that from my own constituents—I am firmly convinced that the majority of pensioners in my constituency are doing comparitively well. They have, of course, struggled in recent years and experienced difficulties—especially with the significant fall in interest rates. That brought joy to mortgage holders but despair to many pensioners in my constituency who have savings.

In general, pensioners have savings. Many more find themselves in that situation than ever dreamed that they would at the end of the last war. There have been great advances and Conservative Members have nothing for which to apologise in that regard.

However, the realities must be faced, and I should like the Government to do more for older pensioners who rely totally on the state. They cannot make use of the opportunities for private pension provision that are now available—but it is right that such provision should be offered to those who can make use of it. That is the only realistic course to take.

Social security, like health, creates massive problems for this country and other western societies. We all face the same demographic pressures. When we have addressed that key issue we may have to take some difficult decisions. Pensions have become a political football. That is unacceptable. The vast majority of people, who are not assisted by politicians who never tell the whole truth, believe that the provision of state benefits is theirs by right. That belief was fostered by years of socialism. The state is supposed to provide everything and people think that it will always be able to do so. The harsh reality is that that is not so.

We know that health and social security issues are at the heart of the problems that face the United States of America. They were the two great issues with which the electorate were faced during the presidential election. They are the two great issues which also face this country. New Zealand faces massive problems over its social security payments. The number of working people in the developed world with an income and the number of companies that make profits, the two things which alone create the funds for pension schemes and state benefits, has been reduced, while the number of people who want to benefit from pension schemes continues to increase. The problem is made even worse in a recession.

The western world—the so-called first world—is in danger. A fundamental shift of economic power is taking place in the world. It is time that politicians faced up to that reality and considered what could be a realistic objective. We should stop raising people's hopes that, somehow, the state will always be able to provide pensions. We can take some steps. To some extent, the Bill takes us forward, particularly over private pensions. The problem is greater, however, than any of us is prepared to admit.

In terms of the world's economy, the growth area is the Pacific basin. There are all sorts of reasons for that. They are newly industrialised countries. Expectations are low, so wages and costs are low and productivity is high, though workers in this country would not accept the working conditions in that part of the world. Nor should they have to accept such conditions. However, economic reality may force us to make changes.

The world does not owe this country a living. It is nonsense to assume that the standard of living that I enjoyed when I was a young man and that the wealth that created it will always be there. The debate on this issue never addresses that point. People are never told that the countries of the west face a major problem. No Opposition Member has ever addressed that fundamental shift of economic power. Whether we like it or not, the truth is —my perception of the truth is—that economic— *[Interruption.]* It is the only valid perception of truth that anybody can have, is it not? It must be their own, certainly in this place.

The economic facts are that economic sovereignty no longer exists. When we deal, therefore, with issues such as this we have to face the reality that we are part of a world economy and suffer from its effects. If, therefore, we are to ensure that pensioners will be provided for by some means or other, we shall be unable to rely on the belief that private pensions are bad and that the state must provide them. It will be impossible for the state to do so. When Opposition Members say here and, by so doing, say to the people outside the Chamber that the provision of state pensions is morally correct, they mislead the House and they also mislead the nation about the fundamental problems that face any Government when trying to provide pensions for the people of this country.

To some extent, the Bill addresses these great difficulties, but I should like the Government to address other issues that we have not yet had the courage to deal with. Since we face great demographic pressures, we must not be afraid of targeting benefits. If only a shrinking pot of money is available, we must ensure that the money goes to those who most desperately need it. The so-called first world countries will have to think about that problem.

Let me take as an example family allowances. I supported uprating in the past. I supported, too, the principle that the allowance should be paid to the lady of the household, but the economic position is so grave that we must look again at that benefit and consider whether it is right that it should be paid to everyone, irrespective of need. We must ask ourselves whether that is the best way to use limited resources. It will be a difficult decision, but I believe that we should look at it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Not under this Bill.

Mr. Day: You are absolutely correct, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Bill's provisions take us in the right direction, in that they provide for private pensions, but my case is that the state can never again be the only provider and that people should not be led to believe that the state will be able to provide benefits to everyone. The point that I am trying to make by mentioning family allowances is that the benefit is provided generally and that we shall have to address that issue.

The Bill proves beyond doubt that the Government are committed to providing for those members of society who are least able to provide for themselves. The recent measure to protect social security payments was widely welcomed in my constituency not only by recipients of such benefits but by many people who receive no benefit but want fair play for those who do. The Government certainly achieved what the vast majority of my constituents wanted—fairness. Social Security Ministers fought hard in a difficult spending round and I add my congratulations to them on securing extra benefit for the least well-off members of society and on giving the firm message that the Government are committed to looking after their interests.

There are other fundamental issues that the Bill does not address, but they must be addressed if we are to maintain the care and provision that every hon. Member wants to see.

9 pm

Mrs. Lilla Golding (Newcastle-under-Lyme): The Secretary of State's speech showed once again what chaos the Government are in and how badly they are managing our money. He confessed, four years after the Government said that there was no need for Treasury payments to the national insurance fund, that he will have to go cap in

[Mrs. Llin Golding]

hand to the Treasury for money. At the same time, he had the nerve to ask us to support giving away unnecessarily the people's money in the fund.

What has happened since the 1988 autumn statement, when it was announced that the Treasury supplement to the national insurance fund would be abolished? Only four years ago, John Moore, now Lord Moore of Lower Marsh, speaking for the Government about the supplement, said:

"We consider that there is now no need for it at all. The £26 billion of expenditure from the fund is fully covered by contributory income, and the abolition of the supplement will have absolutely no effect on that expenditure." [*Official Report*, 10 January 1989; Vol. 144, c. 719.]

What has happened since? Payments to the fund have increased from £29,825 million in 1988-89 to an estimated £35,000 million in 1991-92. That takes into account changes following the Social Security Act 1990. In the same period, payments out increased from £26,744 million to £37,802 million.

The Government have turned a surplus of £3,081 million into a deficit of £2,802 million, and things are getting worse. The Government Actuary report on the financial provisions of the Bill showed that the estimated deficit for 1992-93 has been revised from £2,850 million to £4,659 million. Paragraph 12 reads:

"Lower earnings and fewer contributors reduce the estimated contribution income in 1992-93 by some £360 million and £750 million respectively whilst other miscellaneous changes increase income by £8 million in aggregate."

Paragraph 13 says that estimated benefit expenditure is £991 million higher than in the uprating order for 1991 and that

"Unemployment benefit is increased by £408 million due to an increase in the assumed average numbers employed."

Expenditure on invalidity benefit is estimated to be £460 million higher. Minor revisions to estimates for the other benefits increased expenditure by £43 million. This has come about because lower earnings and fewer contributors have reduced the estimated contribution income. This is an example of another fine mess that the Government have got us into.

What are the main reasons for the mess? First, there is the removal of the Treasury supplement. Secondly, there is the payment of personal pension incentives which rose from £239 million in 1988-89 to a colossal estimated £2·487 billion in 1991-92, I will deal with that later. Thirdly, there is the fact that benefit payments increased more rapidly than contributions. Who is responsible? Who was Chief Secretary to the Treasury in 1988 when the Treasury supplement was taken away? Who was the Chancellor who watched personal pension incentives grow to massive proportions? Who is the Prime Minister who has seen unemployment grow—and grow and grow? I will not name him because he will only say that it was somebody else.

Our people now know that the responsibility for our appalling unemployment rate and for the devastation of British industry lies with the Prime Minister, with the Chancellor of the Exchequer and with the Secretary of State for Social Security who, in his time at the Department of Trade and Industry, destroyed more of our factories than the Luftwaffe ever managed to do.

Let us look at the record since the third quarter of 1990. There are 1·25 million more unemployed, 110,000 businesses have failed, 140,000 homes have been repossessed and there has been a 4 per cent. fall in output. I see it starkly in my constituency. There is the fight to survive and the battle against short-time working, there are redundancies, there is unemployment, there is the closure of factories, foundries and shops, there is the devastation of the building trade, there is the contraction of the pottery industry and now the threat of the closure of Silverdale colliery. Against that background, nobody should be surprised that the Government have had to ask for more money. As a result of lower earnings, people are paying less. Unemployed people, who should be paying into the fund, are having to be paid out of it, which is a great part of the problem.

The national insurance fund is receiving fewer contributions than was expected because more people are losing their jobs and more firms are closing. Every day seems to bring more job losses and yet another disaster for the British economy. People are insecure, fed up and depressed. They do not expect miracles, but they do expect the Government to be doing more to get the country back to work. They do not expect the Government to introduce a Bill that asks people in work to pay their hard-earned money into the nation's insurance fund so that the money can be given to people as an incentive to opt out of the state earnings-related scheme.

The Government have not explained what is wrong with SERPS which has led them to pay incentives to people to contract out. The Opposition have always opposed the payment of those incentives. Although we welcome the reduction in incentive payments from 2 per cent. to 1 per cent. of earnings, we believe that it is unfair that the new incentive will apply only to personal pension holders. Why should people with occupational pensions now be left out of the scheme? What is so good about private pension schemes that people should be encouraged to transfer to them? Private pension schemes are a lottery. Some may be well run, whereas others may be badly run.

People who take out private pension schemes often do not have enough information. The Opposition believe that the incentive money could be better spent providing the regulation of personal pensions and giving better information to contributors. Why are occupational pension schemes excluded? Why should workers in factories see their money used to help pension companies to undermine the state scheme? Why should working people in the state scheme pay their hard-earned money to do the pension companies' recruitment job for them? Is not it iniquitous that money from workers in the state scheme should be paid out to private schemes? What kind of fairness is that? The Government should be strengthening the state scheme, not weakening it.

Why is it that only people aged over 30 may now apply? If 30 years is such a magic figure, why did it not occur to the Government when the scheme was first introduced? I suppose that the Government will say that the figure is ambiguous and that it is rough justice. Everything about the Government is more rough than justice.

The Labour party is convinced that no incentive should be paid to opt out of the state scheme. We believe that it is in people's interest to stay in the scheme. The Bill is forced on the Government because of the complete collapse of the Government's economic policies. However, we will not ask Opposition Members to vote against Second Reading tonight because we know that it is not the Government who have suffered from their incompetence.

The Prime Minister, the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the former Secretary of State for Trade and Industry have not suffered. It is the people who have lost their jobs, incomes, savings and homes who have suffered and they would suffer even more if we did not support the Bill.

Because of those people, we will not oppose the Bill tonight. However, we will examine the Bill in detail in Committee. We will urge the Government to abandon what seems to be their overwhelming desire to squander the money which belongs to the people and on the proper management of which so much of their standard of living depends.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security, the hon. Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe), has many questions to answer. She must be aware that our concern is that the money be properly managed because the standard of living and quality of life of so many of our people depend on it.

9.11 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Miss Ann Widdecombe): This has been a well-informed and interesting debate with many detailed contributions. I begin by congratulating the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mrs. Golding) on her first appearance, at least in respect of legislation, at the Dispatch Box. I look forward to more exchanges with her, perhaps even in Committee as she anticipated at the end of her speech.

Various themes have emerged from this wide-ranging debate. I think that I should be able to touch on them at least once in the time that remains to me. The first theme to emerge was the apparent conflict of views on the two sides of the House about whether it is better to encourage dependency on the state or to encourage individuals to make provision for themselves. I thought that I detected a difference of opinion on that issue not just between the Opposition Front Bench and the Government, but between the Opposition Front Bench and some Opposition Back-Bench Members.

It was a recurring theme in the debate that the SERPS burden was growing and Opposition Back Benchers offered various suggestions about how to reduce that burden. The main thrust of the opening and closing speeches from the Opposition Front Bench was that we should concentrate our efforts and resources on the greater promotion of SERPS, rather than on assisting people to make private provision.

Another theme in the debate commanded great cross-party support. That was the shared concern that the personal pensions that we are determined to promote and encourage should be reliable and subject to regulatory safeguards to ensure that when people take out those pensions, what they are told they will get is what they get at the end of the day.

There were several interesting contributions in that respect and perhaps the most interesting was made by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), who opened the debate for the Opposition. He said that it is very difficult for people to give the best advice when they are financially dependent on the outcome, as is the case when they rely on commission. The hon. Gentleman was a solicitor before he was elected to the House. Of course, solicitors often give advice on going to law. Presumably, they must occasionally advise clients not to go to law, even though they know that that would deprive them of their fees. Provided that the profession is properly regulated and is honourably conducted, there is nothing unique about an insurance salesman having to distinguish between best advice and his own financial interests. That principle is applied to many occupations. I shall return to the main point about reliability and safeguards.

The third theme was the soundness of the state pension, the soundness of our general provision for pensioners and, in particular, a point that grew towards the latter part of the debate—how we best assure that soundness in the light of the growing number of pensioners and the number of pensioners who are living longer. I was even challenged by my hon. Friend the Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) to state the number of centenarians. I am delighted to be able to tell my hon. Friend that I can produce the figure, but I shall do so when I refer to the issues that he raised. The hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme referred——

Mr. Willetts: We are heading for an epic speech. It is helpful to have the structure laid out so clearly before we move to the substance of my hon. Friend's speech. Will she refer to European comparisons in respect of pensioners' incomes? Many of our figures on British pension provision are not properly compared with their continental counterparts.

Miss Widdecombe: For the benefit of those who did not read the *Sunday Express*, I shall be delighted to allude to the very favourable position of British pensioners.

As I was saying before I was so helpfully interrupted, the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme and other hon. Members made much of the present economic situation. The hon. Lady reeled off the standard and requisite gloom and doom statistics which the Opposition always churn out with relish. As we are on the subject of Euro-comparisons, let me point out that there is nothing unique about the British recession. We are in a world recession. In the spirit in which the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) congratulated my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on his triumph in protecting benefits in the autumn statement, perhaps I may also congratulate my right hon. Friend on not following a large number of our European partners in having to reduce benefit. Although our recession is not unique, our ability to handle it brings great credit on the Government.

Mr. Dewar: My point might seem a little pedantic, but it is relevant. The Minister is talking about the excellence of the management of her Department. She knows that the national insurance fund has forecast unemployment of 2·8 million during 1993-94. Is she confident that that forecast will be held?

Miss Widdecombe: The hon. Gentleman has a fondness for repetition. He raised that point no fewer than three times in his speech. In setting out the themes that governed the debate, I have made it very clear that I shall deal with each point. He will be delighted to know that I shall deal with that matter and with all the others that he mentioned four, five or six times because he had no others. He will get an answer, but it will be in my good time and not at his request.

Mr. Dewar: What a gracious lady.

Miss Widdecombe: Well, the hon. Member for Garscadden did not like it earlier when I smiled and nodded at him, so I thought that perhaps he wanted a change of approach.

Having discussed the general themes that were dealt with during the debate, it might be as well to remind the House of what the Bill is about. It contains three specific clauses. Towards the end of the debate, I thought that we were dealing with the wider question of pension provision, rather than the three small and modest clauses in the Bill.

Mr. Dewar: Ah.

Miss Widdecombe: The hon. Gentleman senses that I am getting nearer to answering his questions. The clauses cover the provision of a 1 per cent. rebate for holders of personal pensions over 30, the Treasury supplement, and the technical adjustment to enable administrative expenses to be paid from the fund.

The hon. Member for Garscadden mentioned the Treasury supplement, as did the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme. The thrust of both of their criticisms was that somehow we were wholly improvident when we abolished the Treasury supplement, that we did not expect that we might need it again, and that we took a risk that has not paid off.

My right hon. Friend who is now the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People said, when dealing with the question in the Committee stage of the Social Security Act 1986:

"If the position changed dramatically a future Government could have a single clause in a social security Bill and bring it back."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee F*, 17 January 1989; c. 35.]

What a prophet he turned out to be. As the position has changed dramatically, we have produced a single clause in a Social Security Bill to bring it back. So it was not improvidence. We have provided for the situation.

However, there is an enormous difference. Last time, the Treasury supplement was mandatory—it was there whether we needed it or not. We did not believe that that was a sensible use of public money. The difference this time is that the supplement will be flexible, and will be there for need rather than being mandatory.

The hon. Member for Garscadden said that it used to be a balancing act, but it was not, because the supplement arrived whether we needed to balance or not. We are creating a much more sensible arrangement, whereby we can call on the supplement, as we always said that we might have to do, as and when we need it, rather than being tied down to it.

Four times during the debate the hon. Member for Garscadden mentioned the 2·8 million figure for unemployment. Our job is not to second-guess the Government Actuary but to respond to him. That is why we have brought forward the Bill. The Government review the position each year. If, at the point of review, we decide that the projections are wrong, necessary adjustments can be made. We must make it clear—I was not even certain that the hon. Gentleman appreciated this in his opening speech—that the balance that we are seeking to maintain in the fund is simply the prudential minimum. Once that balance is restored—even if the outcome next year should be different from the forecasts—the fund will still be manageable.

Mr. Dewar: I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Lady. I appreciate the point that she made, to which I referred in my remarks, but I should like go back to my original question, although with some trepidation in view of her strictures. The hon. Lady says that it is not her job to second-guess the Government Actuary, but, as he made clear in his report:

"I have been instructed to use for the purpose of the above estimates"

the figure of 2·8 million unemployed. It is not up to the Government Actuary to second-guess. What I want to know is whether the Minister believes that the figure of 2·8 million will hold.

Miss Widdecombe: I have already taken care of that point. One of the reasons that those on the Opposition Front Bench get so muddled sometimes is that they do not listen to what is said. They spend so much time barracking from sedentary positions, in total contravention of the Standing Orders of the House, that they do not hear the things that are said to them. I have already said clearly —I will repeat it again, because, apparently, the fashion tonight is to repeat endless points—that the figures are reviewed every year and that adjustments can be made, as necessary.

The hon. Member for Garscadden also said that the Opposition would not oppose the Bill because it was necessary to keep the fund in balance and because they rejected the only other two options—to reduce benefits or to increase national insurance contributions. I think that the House will welcome the change of heart that has apparently swept through the Opposition, especially when one considers that they fought the last election on the issue that they would raise national insurance contributions. At long last they have seen the light—

Mr. Frank Field: We lost the election.

Miss Widdecombe: Yes, the Opposition did lose and they will go on losing because every time they have a policy that looks a bit inconvenient, they change it. They do not know from one day to the next what they stand for. Tonight those on the Opposition Front Bench have made it clear that they are against raising national insurance contributions.

Mr. Terry Rooney (Bradford, North): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Miss Widdecombe: Not at the moment, but I may do so later.

We are delighted to note that the Opposition have now made it clear that they are against raising national insurance contributions and we are delighted to note that they have withdrawn a policy under which 3 million extra people would have paid increased national insurance contributions.

The Opposition also say that they are against cutting benefits—they speak one way but look the other. Let me reiterate what my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said at Question Time about the attitude of the Opposition when he announced that there would be no benefit reductions. When they heard that, their faces were as glum as owls. They not only want people to be dependent upon the state, but, when there is a Conservative Government in power, they want such people to be consistently worse off so that they can make political capital out of that.

Mr. Field rose——

Miss Widdecombe: The hon. Gentleman can sit down because I cannot remember what his face was like on that occasion, but I know what the overall reception from the Opposition was like. When we called out for the Opposition to cheer on what we were doing, they still sat silent and they still looked miserable. They did not want us to protect benefits on that occasion.

Mr. Field: We were relieved.

Miss Widdecombe: If the Opposition express relief by those gloomy looks, I should love to know how they express horror.

Mr. Field: It is totally untrue to say that we were not relieved. Earlier in the debate a number of Conservative Members minimised the Secretary of State's two achievements. First, he defended his budget in the face of bizarre Cabinet colleagues and, secondly, having conducted an extraordinary campaign in the press that suggested that every sort of benefit would be cut, he came to the House in triumph to say that no benefits had been cut. Why do his colleagues suggest that he did not gain such achievements? Why will the Under-Secretary not accept that the Opposition were genuinely relieved when, for once, those on the Treasury Bench protected the poorest in our society?

Miss Widdecombe: I am happy to accept that the hon. Member for Birkenhead was relieved, because that would be in keeping with the characteristics that he has always displayed in the House. But if the expression on Opposition Members' faces on that day indicated relief, I dread to think what they look like when they are gloomy.

Mr. Field: Will the Under-Secretary of State give way?

Miss Widdecombe: No. I immediately regretted giving way last time, because the hon. Gentleman's intervention contributed little to the debate.

I shall now jump a point in my speech to deal with a matter raised by the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood), which has just been raised again by the hon. Member for Birkenhead and others—that somehow my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State encouraged adverse speculation, raised fears among the dependent and weak, and generally encouraged people to think that the worst would happen simply so that he could come here and present a great triumph in the end.

I remember sitting on these Benches and, time and again, Opposition Members stood up and asked where in the Conservative manifesto we promised to tax invalidity benefit, because that was what we intended to do. They asked whether we denied that we intended to means-test the state pension, given that that was what we intended to do. The Opposition are responsible for stirring up many fears by asking those questions time and again.

Mr. Field: Will the Under-Secretary give way?

Miss Widdecombe: If I give way to the hon. Gentleman, I hope that he will give the House some information. Will he name one journalist or any other source who says that his or her information came from my right hon. Friend?

Mr. Field: The hon. Lady knows perfectly well that, under the wretched Lobby system of this place, that cannot be done. It would let people down. It is terrible that the Secretary of State, who has achieved so much, should now be supported by a wretched Minister——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Will the hon. Gentleman rephrase that?

Mr. Field: A non-wretched Minister, who comes to this House and, under the guise of loyalty, tries to minimise his achievement.

Fortunately, English courts do not decide whether people are guilty on the basis of what their faces look like. The Secretary of State has now cheered up, but he looked pretty glum when the hon. Lady was minimising his significant double achievement.

Miss Widdecombe: In no way do I minimise my right hon. Friend's achievements.

Mr. Dewar: Will the Under-Secretary give way?

Miss Widdecombe: May I deal with one intervention at a time?

Mr. Lilley: I want the hon. Gentleman to praise me, too.

Miss Widdecombe: I know that my right hon. Friend wants the hon. Gentleman to praise him, but may I deal with one intervention at a time?

Far from minimising my right hon. Friend's achievement, I put it on a Europewide and worldwide basis by comparing it with the non-achievement of other countries that did not protect their benefit system.

Mr. Dewar: Will the Under-Secretary deal with two brief points? First, she probably read, as I did, the reports of her right hon. Friend's speech to the 1922 Committee shortly before the autumn statement, which gave some substance to the press reports that were coming from somewhere not far from the Department about the possible content of that statement.

Secondly, when the Minister accuses the Opposition of irresponsibility talking about the possibility of taxing invalidity benefit, does she recall that the right hon. Gentleman made it honestly and explicitly clear that he wished to tax invalidity benefit and was merely being held back by technical difficulties that he soon hoped to overcome?

Mr. Lilley: It might help the hon. Gentleman to overcome his credulity——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We cannot have an intervention on another intervention.

Miss Widdecombe: I am delighted to give way to my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Lilley: Would it help my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary to relieve the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) of his profound credulity with regard to the newspapers if I told him that, as much as I should love to address the 1922 Committee, I have never received an invitation to do so?

Miss Widdecombe: We may judge the accuracy of the second observation by the hon. Member for Garscadden by the accuracy of that one.

I was asked about tax and invalidity benefit, although I am not sure what they have to do with the Bill. Although the policy has always been clear, the autumn statement did not say that we intended to do anything about that. It was a scare story dreamt up by the Opposition.

[Miss Widdecombe]

The hon. Member for Garscadden asked about age-related rebates and our overall plan on that issue. We made it clear in the manifesto that our ambition was to introduce age-related rebates by April 1996. We have no reason to depart from that at this time. Nothing will be done without extensive consultation, and when we have formed a view about the appropriate structures there will be such consultation and the necessary views will be taken into account.

The hon. Member for Garscadden asked about the extensive nature, as he saw it, of the 2 per cent. incentive. My hon. Friend the Member for Havant (Mr. Willetts) made a valuable point about the projection of savings. I listened carefully to the amounts mentioned by the hon. Member for Garscadden. He classified them as a net expense to personal pensions, but they include the rebates that would have been paid if they had been ordinary contracted-out occupational pension schemes. The observation by my hon. Friend the Member for Havant and the inclusion of the rebate figure closes the matter from both ends. The hon. Gentleman should do his sums again before he challenges us in Committee on the expense of the incentive.

The hon. Member for Garscadden asked why we, to use his words, discriminated against company-operated money-purchase schemes—COMPs. My hon. Friend the Member for Havant, the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire and several other hon. Members also asked legitimate questions on matters related to that, which are causing concern. There is a difference between COMPs and the operation of a personal pension scheme, which is simply an arrangement between a person and a provider. We need to examine the whole history of personal pensions and what moved us to introduce the incentive.

The hon. Members for Garscadden and for Newcastle-under-Lyme, in their call for a return to SERPS, seemed to be denigrating personal pensions, which have benefited 5 million holders. The average wage of a person taking out a personal pension is £9,750. That means that such pensions address the problems of precisely those people whom the Opposition always say they want to protect—people on modest incomes who are not able to benefit from the large structures of occupational pension schemes and big corporate plans. We wanted to encourage such people and at the same time to promote the flexibility of choice, which is not in SERPS but which exists in personal pensions. We also wanted to encourage pension portability and flexibility of ages at which a pension can be taken out and so on. All that implies an arrangement between an individual and a provider.

COMPs operate rather differently. First, there are economies of scale. Secondly, there is inflexibility in the age at which benefits may be taken. Thirdly, and most important, there is a difference in the method of payment. COMPs generally pay monthly, but personal pension contributions are made after the end of the tax year. This reduces the burden on the employer and throws into question whether, at this juncture, it is appropriate to extend to COMPs the same arrangements as for personal pensions to employers. The point has been taken on board, given the essential differences—

Mr. Field: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Miss Widdecombe: No, I am trying to address the point seriously, because it was well worth raising and I want to get our thinking on it clear and, in turn, to make that clear to the House. Because of those essential differences in the way in which the big corporate scheme operates—it is determined by the employer, it does not give the same flexibility and, although it does not work in the same way as an occupational pension scheme, in that it is not salary-related, it works in the same sort of structure—we do not see, at this stage, the argument for extending the rebate to it.

Mr. Field: When the hon. Lady is in the Department considering whether these rebates should operate, should not one of the considerations that the Government take into account be whether schemes will give people adequate income so that they are free of income-related assistance and, in the Government's own words, they can stand on their own two feet? Can she guarantee that the subsidies will achieve that objective?

Miss Widdecombe: I shall come to the regulation, safeguards and reliability of the scheme—legitimate concerns which have been raised by hon. Members on both sides.

Mr. Willetts: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's explanation of the Government's position on COMPs. Is the regime for COMPs part of the review of age-related rebates that is taking place in the Department with a view to a new structure being in place by 1996?

Miss Widdecombe: All aspects of age relation are being reviewed, including salary-related schemes, personal pensions, COMPs and any other variety that my hon. Friend may be able to describe. Although I cannot give him an assurance as to the outcome, I am happy to give him an assurance that they will all be considered.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): One of the disadvantages of a personal pension plan, which has emerged in the case of a constituent of mine, is that there appears to be no precedent for the Inland Revenue giving consent, in cases of terminal illness with a life expectancy of less than 12 months, for the fully paid-up pension to be drawn out by the person with the terminal illness. That is possible with executive pension plans and some other company schemes.

The Inland Revenue is remarkably slow, particularly when someone has a life expectancy of less than 12 months. That seems to constitute maladministration in the affairs of government. I have already written to the Treasury, but will the hon. Lady look into the matter as well?

Miss Widdecombe: We have recently been made aware of that subject—the hon. Gentleman may have been instrumental in that. We are exploring the matter and I hope to write to him in due course, but I cannot give him an answer now.

Viability, reliability and safeguards are necessary to protect those who take out personal pensions. There is continual contact between the Department and the regulators. Most of the various recent initiatives have been entirely motivated by the regulators rather than the result of a request from the Department. Some initiatives have been concerned with tightening up the advice that is given and the check list of what information must be given by the

potential buyer to the person who is selling him, or not selling him as the case may be, the pension. The regulators constantly review the monitoring process. However, we accept that it is necessary for us to produce regulations that command the confidence of those who wish to take out personal pensions and we are consulting the regulators to that end. We want to see a tightening up of the present procedures, or possibly an enlargement of them, and more detailed monitoring than is currently possible, rather than an entire new regime.

Mr. Day: My hon. Friend will be aware that the Select Committee on Social Services has been examining the matter of regulation. Will my hon. Friend give an undertaking that when the Select Committee is in a position to report she will take its findings closely into account? The present regulations, especially for the state earnings-related pension scheme, need investigation. The Select Committee has carried out a detailed investigation.

Miss Widdecombe: I assure my hon. Friend that any report of the Select Committee will be examined and responded to according to normal procedures. Of course, we wish to take into account the views of the Select Committee before reaching any conclusions. I am sure that the regulators will be equally interested in suggestions such as those proposed by the Select Committee which is chaired by the hon. Member for Birkenhead.

Mr. Kirkwood: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Miss Widdecombe: I want to give way to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire. However, time is running out, and his will probably be the last intervention.

Mr. Kirkwood: In the course of a review, will the Government consider the concern that has been expressed about the amount of commissions that are being deducted from contributions?

Miss Widdecombe: Certainly, both the amount and the nature of the commissions—for example, front-loaded commission—will be taken into account. *[Interruption.]* I have been reminded by a rather helpless gesture that I am in breach of a promise, so I will allow the final intervention to come from the hon. Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Rooney).

Mr. Rooney: Earlier, the Minister talked about 5 million beneficiaries. Technically, people become beneficiaries when they retire. The feeling in the House is that it could be 20, 30 or 40 years before people find that they have been given bad advice. Without a meaningful compensation scheme, it is not enough simply to have a system in which people can be suspended from the Financial Intermediaries, Managers and Brokers Regulatory Organisation and the Life Assurance and Unit Trust Regulatory Organisation.

Miss Widdecombe: If we were to discover evidence of widespread difficulties or even malpractice, it would be our intention that there should be a trawl of those who have already taken out personal pensions. Therefore, I do not think that anybody will be left behind if we conclude that tighter regulation is desirable and there has been a widespread problem. I do not necessarily say that we have already reached that conclusion. However, if we come to it, the hon. Gentleman is right—we will have to consider those who are already in the system just as much as those who have not yet entered it. I am pleased to give the hon. Gentleman that assurance.

The subject of Mr. Maxwell and the Maxwell pensioners was raised several times during the debate, although I have no idea what it has to do with the Bill. I can only repeat what I said during Question Time today: the way forward to restore peace of mind to the Maxwell pensioners must be to achieve a distribution from the common investment fund, which, after all, has £123 million. It is not a matter of trying to recover something that is missing. Achieving a distribution from the common investment fund is essential.

The hon. Member for Croydon, North-West (Mr. Wicks) made a valuable and thoughtful speech. He spent some time talking about unemployment. As I understood it, he effectively said that unless we tackled the matter of wealth creation and took measures to stimulate employment, we were talking in a vacuum because we were talking theoretically about what we would be able to do as a future contribution. I draw the attention of the hon. Gentleman to a large number of initiatives that the Government have taken to stimulate employment and counter the undoubted evil of rising unemployment and the misery which it brings.

There have been almost 1·5 million opportunities for unemployed people this year—an increase of 500,000 on the year—through the introduction of new job plan workshops and training for jobs, and the expansion of existing successful measures. There is now the widest-ever range of opportunities for the unemployed which, together with a vast range of measures, including extra resources, and more places in job clubs and on job interview guarantee programmes, is a clear sign of the Government's acceptance of the necessity, which we have always accepted, of promoting employment and getting people back to work. It also shows our recognition that measures need to be taken and are being taken.

Mr. Frank Field: Will the Minister give way?

Miss Widdecombe: I made it abundantly clear that I had taken my last intervention. I reneged on that pledge one minute later only because not to do so would have meant a breach of promise.

Another theme that was consistently raised, mainly by Conservative Members, but also by the hon. Member for Birkenhead, was the importance of not tying up occupational pension regulations so tightly that we encouraged employers to opt out of supplying pension arrangements such as salary-related schemes or even money-purchase schemes. The Government are fully seized of that issue. When the Goode committee reports we shall take account of what it says and seek to achieve a balance between keeping the confidence of the pensions industries and the confidence in pensions, however provided, of people who take them out, and ensuring that employers do not find that they are so over-regulated that it proves a disincentive to them to set up schemes.

The subject of older pensioners and the general level of state provision was repeated by all hon. Members. The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire described the cohorts who are not covered by occupational pensions and, of the 30 per cent. not covered, he differentiated between men and women. He will, of course, understand that the present figures reflect an historical influence

[Miss Widdecombe]

brought about by the fact that women have always been more likely to take part-time, temporary and low-paid work. We are aware of that. Personal pensions which are flexible, portable and "come-back-toable" would benefit women. We recognise the differential in those figures, and will take any reasonable steps that we can to address the issue.

The subject of pensioners without secondary income —not the 30 per cent., which refers only to those without occupational income—was also raised, particularly by my hon. Friend the Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls), who spoke of the Teignbridge action group.

Another hon. Member, whose constituency I did not note and who spoke shortly after the hon. Member for Birkenhead, referred to the need to consult pensioner interest groups. I regularly meet pensioner interest groups such as Pensioners Voice, the Pensioners Convention and Age Concern, and many much smaller interest groups that ask to come to see me. I can assure the hon. Gentleman who is now absent that I take such consultation very seriously.

Mr. Wicks: What did they say?

Miss Widdecombe: They told me that they want savings that are protected against inflation, a reasonable state pension, a good state pension in comparison with what is available in the rest of Europe and a general rise in their incomes. I am pleased and proud to say that the Government have delivered all their wishes.

The major concern of the groups was not whether they were linked to a theoretical earnings figure, as they were under the last Labour Government, when they saw a measly rise in their incomes of 3 per cent., but what their overall incomes would ultimately be when they had to rely on state pensions. They are not interested in theoretical links to something that does not deliver the goods.

The issue of new-age travellers was, for a while, hotly debated across the Floor of the House. I am not sure how they come into these matters unless they have personal pensions. It seems—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Birkenhead should not point to my hon. Friend the Member for Westbury (Mr. Faber), because the hon. Gentleman said that it was disgraceful that the Government had not done something sooner. The hon. Gentleman, who is always concerned to protect those who might be caught up in regulations, would have protested had we reacted to a one-off incident three years ago. Once we found that there was a recurrent problem we reacted to it. There was no question of staff going out in buses to distribute social security benefits. The forms were processed in the usual way and 199 claimants were allowed, not the many hundreds that have been suggested. We were responding to a public order situation in which we did not want a small town swamped. Nor did we want the Department's offices swamped. We responded sensibly. The interpretation that has been placed on it owes as much to the Opposition as it does to the excesses of our friends in the press.

Mr. Frank Field: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Miss Widdecombe: No. I have already told the hon. Gentleman that I shall not give way. He does not understand easily. It is necessary to tell him things five or six times before he comprehends. I have taken my last intervention in this debate. Time is now pressing.

My hon. Friend the Member for Finchley (Mr. Booth) talked wisely about a matrix of care, and I shall put the policy that we are advancing into that context. My hon. Friend is right because we are looking for a partnership between the voluntary agencies—providers of care from a vast range—and the state. In promoting the Bill, we are similarly promoting that partnership. It is based on the individual providing for himself and the state making its contribution in the form of incentives and rebates. I think that my hon. Friend talked extremely wisely and caught in his words the thrust of the Bill.

At the end of a long and interesting debate I take up the issue that was raised——

Mr. Frank Field: I shall not ask the Minister to give way again.

Miss Widdecombe: I am delighted to hear it.

Several hon. Members talked about the reform of the state earnings-related pension scheme. It is interesting that the comments were not confined to my right hon. and hon. Friends. Opposition Members called for an examination of the nature of SERPS, on which the Government have already embarked. That was done in 1986 when we modified the provision for SERPS to take account of the changing nature of things. We have SERPS under review, as we have everything else that relates to pensions.

I end on a happy note. My hon. Friend the Member for Teignbridge asked how many telegrams of congratulations for 100th birthdays have been issued this year. I am delighted to report that 285 men and 2,317 women were aged 100 or over this year. That represents a 15 per cent. increase over the previous year. Perhaps women's longevity somewhat redresses the balance which the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire brought to our attention.

We believe in the provision of personal pensions. We believe in making such pensions available to people with modest incomes who would not be able to provide for themselves through an employer. We believe in a state pension that is based on sound principles and not on profligacy. That is what we have produced in the Bill, and I commend it to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House. —*[Mr. MacKay.]*

Committee tomorrow.

SOCIAL SECURITY BILL *[Money]*

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Social Security Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any sums required to be paid into the National Insurance Fund.—*[Mr. MacKay.]*

SOCIAL SECURITY BILL *[Ways and Means]*

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Social Security Bill, it is expedient to authorise payments out of the National Insurance Fund into the Consolidated Fund in respect of administrative expenses incurred by the Secretary of State.—*[Mr. MacKay.]*

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

DOUBLE TAXATION RELIEF

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Guyana) Order 1992 be made in the form of the draft laid before this House on 6th November.—*[Mr. MacKay.]*

Question agreed to.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Falkland Islands) Order 1992 be made in the form of the draft laid before this House on 6th November.—*[Mr. Mackay.]*

Question agreed to.

Motion made, and Question put forthwich pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

PRIVATE STREETS (NORTHERN IRELAND)

That the draft Private Streets (Amendment) (Northern Ireland) Order 1992, which was laid before this House on 19th October, be approved.—*[Mr. Mackay.]*

Question agreed to.

EMPLOYMENT

That Mr. Ian Bruce be disharged from the Employment Committee and Mr. Harry Greenway be added to the Committee.—*[Sir Michael Neubert, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

HOME AFFAIRS

That Mr. Hartley Booth be discharged from the Home Affairs Committee and Dame Jill Knight be added to the Committee.—*[Sir Michael Neubert, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

SOCIAL SECURITY

That Mr. Michael Bates be discharged from the Social Security Committee and Mr. Alan Duncan be added to the Committee.—*[Sir Michael Neubert, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

PETITION

Rail Privatisation

10.1 pm

Mr. Hugh Bayley (York): I wish to present a petition on behalf of many of my constituents who are concerned that rail privatisation will lead to a poorer service for the travelling public. The petition is signed by Mrs. V. Wellburn of Milner street, Acomb, York, and by 1,911 other York residents. It reads:

To the Honourable the Commons of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled.

The Humble Petition of rail travellers who use or are eligible to use British Rail railcards Sheweth

That there is great concern on the part of rail travellers that rail privatisation may limit the eligibility of families with children under 16, young people and students, disabled people (with or without an escort) and senior citizens to purchase nationally recognised railcards entitling them to concessionary fares on the current full range of railway routes and services.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your honourable House will enact legislation which as part of a national rail ticketing service will safeguard the eligibility of families with children under 16, young people and students, disabled people (with or without an escort) and senior citizens to purchase railcards entitling them to concessionary travel on the current full range of railway routes and services.

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, &c.

To lie upon the Table.

Macedonia

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Boswell.]*

10.3 pm

Mr. Michael Stern (Bristol, North-West): Following the initial stages of the collapse of Yugoslavia, the British Government, in common with their European partners, set out certain principles that would guide them in granting recognition to the republics emerging from the ruins. Those conditions included internal respect for human rights, a single territory with a well-defined population under undivided control, and all the normal diplomatic standards—including a clearly popularly elected Government.

As a result of unilateral action by Germany that the remaining countries of the EEC loyally and predictably followed, two of the emerging republics—Slovenia and Croatia—were duly recognised. A third, Serbia, has rightly been refused recognition because of its naked aggression against others, while a fourth, Macedonia—despite being itself the subject of aggression from Greece—has been left in limbo.

Despite Macedonia's ethnically mixed 2 million population of Serbs, Albanians, gipsies, Turks, Bulgarians, Greeks, and—above all and overwhelmingly—Macedonian Slavs, and despite its history of being tugged in different directions by big and powerful neighbours in the form of Serbia, Greece, Bulgaria, and now Albania, the population of Macedonia have been able to unite under their present Government. Until a recent outbreak of intercommunal violence that left at least four ethnic Albanians dead, Macedonia has enjoyed internal harmony. After all—as Macedonia's president, Kiro Gligorov, recently pointed out to the Centre for Policy Studies—Macedonia was the nation that negotiated the withdrawal of the Yugoslav army without a single bullet being fired.

According to *The Times*, Macedonia is the only ex-Yugoslav republic to elect a moderate, non-nationalist Government and which has made no attempt to build up an army—yet it is the republic to which the British Government and their allies refuse recognition.

The reasons for that refusal lie solely across the southern border. The peace-loving democratic republic of Greece, which claims in its history to have been the source of so much of that which we now regard as civilisation, has—in what can only be described as an act of war against an undefended country—imposed economic sanctions against Macedonia that are already the cause of grinding poverty. The reason? Greece does not like Macedonia's use of that name.

I wonder what would be the reaction of my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office to an announcement by France that it was about to impose economic sanctions on Great Britain and seek in the world's councils for the British Government to be isolated purely because the inhabitants of Brittany objected to our use of the name. After all, those inhabitants are as entitled to use that name as we are—and probably had it before us.

Of course that is a ridiculous argument, yet it is exactly that argument—that Macedonian Slavs are not entitled to call themselves Macedonians, while the Macedonian Greeks are—that gave rise not only to Greece's unprovoked action against Macedonia but to that country's success in dragging its allies along with it. The same Greek republic was recently welcomed into the Western Europe Union. According to its secretary-general, Mr. Wim van Eekelen, the WEU is a pillar of the North Atlantic alliance—and Greece sees WEU membership as ensuring that it helps shape future EC security and defence policy. Perhaps we should be a little more careful about our allies.

The consequences of Greek economic aggression in a small country that is dependent almost entirely on agriculture are inevitably severe. The embargo against Serbia—which of course Macedonia does not have to join, since Macedonia does not exist, but to which Macedonia has voluntarily acceded—will cost Macedonia about $1·3 billion this year, yet according to Kiro Gligorov, if the Greek blockade continues, the people of Macedonia will face real hardships that will threaten life this winter. Are the sanctions against Serbia as severe? Is there not a real danger that while the rest of Europe cowers behind Greek prejudice, the inter-ethnic violence which, as I previously noted, is already beginning to appear will spread, as it has done in other former Yugoslav republics, including Croatia which we continue to recognise?

Is there not at least the possibility that the nations of Europe, by treating Macedonia as a pariah, will end up carrying the responsibility for the growth of an Albanian separatist movement, a Bulgarian separatist movement—we should not forget that it was such a movement which in 1923 was responsible for the return of Bulgarian Prime Minister Stambouliisky to his capital in two separate boxes—and even, dare we say it, a Greek separatist movement? Is that what Greece is really after?

I suggest, in all sincerity, to my right hon. and learned Friend that, while the nations of Europe continue to ignore the existence of Macedonia, their legal and moral position is at least very difficult to defend. Can we not use the remaining days of our presidency of Europe to reduce unprovoked aggression within Europe, rather than to increase it? Have there not yet been any results from the shuttle diplomacy of a British diplomat between Athens, Skopje and London? Above all, can we not, this time, follow the lead of Germany in taking notice of

"a quarrel in a far away country between people of whom we know nothing"?

10.10 pm

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Douglas Hogg): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern) on raising the question of the recognition of Macedonia. He has urged the case for the recognition of Macedonia in urgent, pressing and persuasive terms, which I hope will be listened to by persons outside this House, not least by our friends and allies in Greece.

I welcome the debate. It gives me the opportunity to say something about the Government's thinking on the matter. We ought to understand the background. Even in Tito's time, the Greeks made no secret of their dissatisfaction with the choice of the name Macedonia for this Yugoslav republic. They claimed that such a name was historically Greek and should not be used by a nation which is predominantly Slav. That was their claim, even though the Slavs have been in the area since the 6th century.

On 16 December 1991, the European Community and its member states adopted guidelines for the recognition of the former Yugoslav republics, including provisions specifically to deal with Greek concerns about Macedonia. They required the adoption by the Republic of Macedonia of

"constitutional and political guarantees ensuring that it has no territorial claims towards a neighbouring Community state and that it will conduct no hostile propaganda activities versus a neighbouring Community state, including the use of a denomination which implies territorial claims."

The Government in Skopje decided to apply for recognition. They made amendments to their constitution to meet the Greek concerns, and they made additional statements in a form binding in international law. Mr. Badinter, the chairman of the arbitration commission attached to Lord Carrington's conference, then concluded that Macedonia did meet the 16 December conditions. Greece remained unhappy about recognition, and a decision was deferred.

The issue was discussed by the European Community Foreign Ministers at regular meetings. The Portuguese presidency tried to negotiate agreements in Athens and Skopje to allow recognition, but without success.

At the Lisbon European Council, the European Community heads of state and Government expressed their readiness to recognise the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia under a name that did not include the term "Macedonia". The declaration was cast in positive terms. It did not say that a change of name was a precondition. Member states realise the need to recognise this republic and wish to do so as soon as possible, but the strongly held concerns of a member state had to be taken account of.

It therefore fell to Britain, which holds the presidency, to try to implement the Lisbon policy. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary appointed Mr. Robin O'Neill as his personal representative to handle the issue. He has visited Skopje and Athens four times and has been unstinting in his efforts to find a way of allowing the 12 member states of the Community to implement their readiness to recognise the republic. He submitted his report to my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary today, but, as I am sure my hon. Friend will appreciate, this is not the occasion to announce its contents. Further discussion on the issue will take place at the Edinburgh summit on 11 and 12 December.

It is worth saying something about affairs within the republic of Macedonia, which faces severe problems. There is great concern in the republic about instability elsewhere in Yugoslavia, and in particular about the risk that could attach to Macedonia from unrest in Kosovo.

The republic's economic problems have been worsened by the effect of United Nations sanctions imposed on Serbia and Montenegro and by an oil embargo imposed by Greece and European Community trade licensing regulations, which cut off trade between Greece and Macedonia. It is obviously important to keep the sanctions as tight as possible, but it is also important that we ensure that Macedonia does not suffer from unintended side effects of the sanctions regime. We are seeking to address that problem.

As hon. Members may know, a sanctions assistance mission—known as a SAM—is operating in Macedonia to help and advise on the fulfilment of the obligations under the Security Council resolutions. Security Council resolution 787 has tightened arrangements for the trans-shipment of goods through Serbia and Montenegro. Those decisions permit the European Community to withdraw its dual licensing regime for Community exports to Macedonia. The Commission has therefore proposed that Macedonia be omitted from dual-licensing regulation.

We have supported that, and hope that rapid agreement will be reached with our partners in Brussels. At the moment, a Commission team is in Skopje examining the most effective ways of getting oil to Macedonia if the route from Greece stays blocked.

We have been pressing for increased European Community help for Macedonia. A proportion of the 240 mecu of humanitarian aid that the Community has commited since July has gone to Macedonia, in line with the UNHCR's needs assessment. The Commission has just commited 5 mecu of medical supplies and we shall encourage it to look at what more the Community can do.

The position within Macedonia remains volatile and unstable. Growing tension within the ethnic Albanian community and dissatisfaction with the current status has caused trouble. Tension flared in Skopje on 6 November, which resulted in four deaths, after police acted over black market trading by Albanians.

The Macedonian constitution is generous in its treatment of minorities and we have no reason to doubt the statement of the Government of Macedonia that they intend to adhere to their constitution. There is no doubt that the absence of recognition of the republic is exacerbating the problems to which I have referred and is leading to instability in the region.

A solution to the problem is urgent, but we cannot ignore Greek concerns and recognise the republic irrespective of the wishes of Greece—an important power in the region—if only because to do so would lead to the kind of instability which we are most anxious to avoid.

I very much welcome the decision to send the United Nations mission to Macedonia to review the possibility of United Nations forces being stationed in the republic. That could help to maintain stability, and we await the Secretary-General's recommendations. I am also glad that the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe has deployed a small team in Macedonia under a United States ambassador. The aim is to prevent a spill-over of troubles from elsewhere by diffusing tensions within the republic.

Such circumstances are not new. In the very different circumstances of 1897, William Gladstone wrote:

"nothing can be more deplorable and blameworthy than jealousies between Greek and Slav."

I agree with him. He then said:

"Why not Macedonia for Macedonians, as well as Bulgaria for Bulgarians and Servia for Servians?"

He had rather a good point. In calling for co-operation among neighbours and asserting the right of self-determination of peoples, Gladstone was ahead of his time in anticipating the results of the CSCE. I very much echo what he said about the need for understanding between neighbouring peoples.

We now need to find a solution that will ensure peace in the area for the 1990s and beyond, and, incidentally, settle the Macedonian question for good. The efforts of the British presidency will have gone some way towards achieving that. I very much hope that, at the Edinburgh

[Mr. Douglas Hogg]

Council, we shall be able to find a way in which to resolve the issue which is right, meritorious in itself and acceptable to all parties.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty minutes past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 1 December 1992

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Message from the Queen

THE VICE-CHAMBERLAIN OF THE HOUSEHOLD reported Her Majesty's Answer to the Address, as follows:

I have received your Addresses praying that the Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Guyana) Order 1992 and the Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Falkland Islands) Order 1992 be made in the form of drafts laid before your House.

I will comply with your request.

Oral Answers to Questions

EMPLOYMENT

Merseyside Training and Enterprise Council

1. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what changes she is planning in the funding of Merseyside training and enterprise council.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Patrick McLoughlin): Merseyside training and enterprise council's budget this year is more than £50 million, allowing it to help more than 20,000 people. The regional director will discuss funding for next year with that TEC in the next few weeks.

Mr. Wareing: Is the Minister aware that this year the funding of Merseyside TEC was 7·5 per cent. down in real terms, and that the 231,000 training weeks for which it contracted this year represented a 20 per cent. reduction compared with last year? What sort of Government talk about recovery but are prepared to pay more than treble the amount that they pay out to Merseyside TEC to keep unemployed people idle on Merseyside? Does the Minister appreciate the fact that I represent one of the worst unemployment zones in the country and that when people there hear the Prime Minister talk about recovery they laugh, and laugh and laugh. I cannot wish my constituents a prosperous new year, because the Government will have to go before they can have one.

Mr. McLoughlin: If anybody laughs, it must be at the hon. Gentleman's whingeing. One must look at what has happened in his constituency. In July 1986, unemployment was 9,472; in October 1992, it was 6,394—down by 33 per cent. I hope that even the hon. Gentleman could welcome that.

Mr. Simon Coombs: What has been the take-up of resources for employment action within the Merseyside training and enterprise council area? Do the Government intend to make funds for employment action more widely available in the future?

Mr. McLoughlin: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. None of the training schemes that we have introduced has ever received the Opposition's support. They whinge about wanting training to be provided, yet criticise every scheme that we put forward positively. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced some new training initiatives that will come into force as a result of the excellent settlement that she managed to achieve during the public expenditure round.

Mr. Alton: Is the Minister aware that, from this very day, the disabled people previously being trained at the Greenbank project in Liverpool will cease to be trained there because of the reductions in funding by the Merseyside TEC? Does he accept that the disabled are a vulnerable group of people, about whom he has received personal representations? Will he look again at the funding for that specific group and see whether additional resources can be made available to the Merseyside TEC for their benefit?

Mr. McLoughlin: That point has been brought to our attention. My noble Friend Viscount Ullswater has been dealing with the matter and I assure the hon. Gentleman that we shall look at it again.

Mr. Evennett: Does my hon. Friend agree that business and community leaders have welcomed TECs as the best way to deliver training, taking into account local needs?

Mr. McLoughlin: That is the case. The simple fact is that TECs are making a substantial contribution throughout the country both locally and nationally.

Unfair Dismissal

2. **Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what action she proposes to take to protect people employed for less than two years from unfair or arbitrary dismissal.

The Minister of State, Department of Employment (Mr. Michael Forsyth): Many people without two years' service are already protected against unfair dismissals, for example, for trade union reasons or on grounds of race or sex.

Mr. Mackinlay: Will the Minister reflect on the fact that many hundreds of people will be disappointed by his reply, bearing in mind that they have suffered unfair and arbitrary dismissal and have no remedy because they have been employed for less than two years, and many part-time workers, particularly women, have to be employed for five years before they have a remedy? Many people who are rich and powerful obtain substantial sums in compensation, but ordinary workers have no remedy. Is that consistent with maintaining the rule of law and in the spirit of the rules of natural justice?

Mr. Forsyth: At a time of high unemployment we must be wary about making changes that would make recruitment of people more difficult or less likely. But perhaps I can reassure the hon. Gentleman in at least one respect. We plan to extend the rights that people enjoy

against unfair dismissal to include pregnant women and to extend protection without a qualifying period to workers who are dismissed on health and safety grounds.

Mr. Sykes: Does my hon. Friend agree with the people of Scarborough and Whitby who welcome the Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Bill, on the standing Committee of which I have the privilege to serve, which protects individuals against the unfair and alien practices so long practised by the trade union movement?

Mr. Forsyth: I entirely agree with the people of Scarborough, particularly in their sending my hon. Friend to the House. I welcome his participation on the Committee stage of the Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Bill, which, as he rightly emphasises, extends employment rights for a number of our fellow citizens.

Ms. Quin: Will the Minister confirm that no other European Community country has as long a qualifying period as we do for protection against unfair dismissal? Will he further confirm that no other country savagely penalises part-time workers in the way that we do? Is he not in favour of a level playing field in Europe?

Mr. Forsyth: Certainly not. We have a higher proportion of women and part-time workers in our work force than do many of our European partners. We have a higher percentage of women in our work force than any other European country, apart from Denmark. The hon. Lady, perhaps unwittingly, has made my point. Were I to take her advice there might be fewer opportunities in the labour market for women, part-time workers and others. Is that what she wants?

Local Initiative Fund

3. **Mr. Andrew Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans she has to provide further support for the local initiative fund.

The Secretary of State for Employment (Mrs. Gillian Shephard): I am pleased to tell my hon. Friend that the local initiative fund, which allows training and enterprise councils and local enterprise companies to develop new ideas in support of training and business growth, will be increased by £12 million in 1993-94.

Mr. Mitchell: Given that that fund goes to support local training initiatives by TECs and related bodies, will my right hon. Friend reassure the House that TECs and similar bodies now have sufficient funding to redeem the Government's pledge to school leavers that they will all be offered a place on a training programme?

Mrs. Shephard: Yes. We have always made it clear that TECs will be adequately resourced for that purpose. In the five months since June, 99,000 young people in England have entered youth training. Estimates from TECs last week suggest that of all those young people who left school this summer, about 19,000 have yet to take up a training place. I have written today to the Chairman of the Select Committee on Employment with full details of how TECs are meeting that guarantee and I am taking a close TEC-by-TEC interest to ensure that that guarantee is met.

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: What would the Secretary of State say to the organisation in my constituency called Mustard Seed which must fold at the end of the month because it does not have the money to keep going and because the TEC does not have enough money? Mustard Seed deals with the back-end—with the young people leaving school who cannot get jobs or apprenticeships. What advice does the Secretary of State have for organisations such as those run by the Church who are trying to keep those kids off the streets and off the dole, but which are folding because of a lack of money? What guarantee does the right hon. Lady have for them?

Mrs. Shephard: I have always made it absolutely clear that we stand by the guarantee of places for young people. All TECs and LECs are adequately resourced to meet the youth training guarantee. If any TEC or LEC can show that it is not, we will certainly look at its case.

Training and Enterprise Councils

4. **Mr. Milligan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what measures she is taking to meet the concerns which have been expressed by TECs.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Last month, I was pleased to be able to announce a package of measures that has been welcomed by TECs throughout the country.

Mr. Milligan: I thank my right hon. Friend for the statement that she made in reply to the previous question, but is she aware that 1,000 young people in Hampshire still have not been able to get training places? Hampshire TEC has a most imaginative scheme for providing initial training, to try to get those young persons up to the level that private business requires. Can my right hon. Friend explain what will be the effect in Hampshire of the announcement that she just made?

Mrs. Shephard: I can certainly explain with pleasure to my hon. Friend that close attention is being paid to Hampshire TEC's particular problems with meeting the guarantee. As I said, all TECs have the resources required to meet it. In fact, we have provided for 244,000 places for young people in the current year and the number required is only 216,000. There is no problem with resources, but there may be a problem with Hampshire TEC—as there are with some others—in finding employer placements. Each and every TEC—few now are finding difficulty—will be helped to meet the guarantee by the end of this month.

Mr. Wallace: How can the Secretary of State say that the guarantee is being met when she has just heard that 1,000 young people in Hampshire have no training places? A similar survey in Fife also found a large shortfall. Is not the reason that the right hon. Lady's budget for this year is £3·5 billion, when, in 1987, in real terms, it was £5·1 billion? In other words, the Secretary of State has only two thirds of the amount that was available in 1987, but unemployment is roughly at the same level. Is not the right hon. Lady abdicating her responsibilities to those who are unemployed and seeking training?

Mrs. Shephard: Unlike the hon. Gentleman, we welcome the fact that more young people are staying on at school. That results, perforce, in fewer young people coming forward for a training place. As I said, some TECs have found it difficult this year to find employer placements. There is of course always a surge of demand when young people make up their minds to choose youth

training in the autumn. I repeat that there need be no problem of inadequate resources preventing TECs and LECs from meeting the guarantee.

Mr. Heald: Does my right hon. Friend agree that training and enterprise councils can play a special role in cases where there are large redundancies by co-ordinating task forces—as they have done in Hertfordshire and in my constituency in north Hertfordshire?

Mrs. Shephard: Yes. Hertfordshire TEC has played a key role in helping with British Aerospace redundancies, and I was delighted by the positive and strong response made by TECs in preparing plans to cope with pit closures.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: How can the Secretary of State claim that TECs are happy with the settlement when last year, this year, and next year they received and will receive real-terms cuts in their budgets at a time when long-term unemployment and unemployment generally are continuing to rise?

How can the right hon. Lady tell the House that she is keeping to the guarantee when, by her own figures, she admits that 19,000 young people have not been found a youth training place? Will she undertake to re-examine the situation whereby many young people for whom the guarantee has not been honoured find themselves without any income? Will she talk to her friend at the Department of Social Security and suggest that those young people should once again receive some kind of benefit?

Mrs. Shephard: As the hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well, there is a special hardship allowance and bridging allowances for young people who are between YT places. Given that in the House on 20 November the hon. Gentleman wrongly claimed that 75,000 young people were waiting for a training place, I thought that he would welcome today's figures.

Mr. Sweeney: Does my right hon. Friend accept that Britain is unique in offering a guaranteed place on a training scheme for all 16 to 17-year-olds?

Mrs. Shephard: Yes, I accept my hon. Friend's point. There is no question but that we have a better record in that respect than many of our European counterparts, including France.

Labour Statistics

5. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will make a statement about employment levels in west Cumbria.

Mr. McLoughlin: The most up-to-date figures are available down to regional level and show that between March 1983 and June 1992 the civilian work force in employment in the northern region, which includes west Cumbria, increased by 67,000.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Does not the Department of Trade and Industry's current national energy review, with all the talk about coal, important as that is, have major implications for employment in the nuclear industry in west Cumbria? What guarantee have we that the voice of the nuclear industry, as in the case advocated by the West Cumbria TEC, is being channelled into the Department of Employment and relayed on to the Department of Trade and Industry when decisions are taken on the regional assistance map?

Mr. McLoughlin: I am sure that that case will be taken into account if the TECs feed it into the review currently being undertaken by the President of the Board of Trade. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman would like to feed that view to his Front-Bench colleagues.

Retraining

6. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will make a statement on developments in the retraining of unemployed adults aged over 21 years.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: On 12 November I announced training for work, a new programme for those aged 18 and over who have been unemployed for six months or more. It will start from April 1993 as part of a new range of measures that together will provide 500,000 more opportunities to help unemployed people back to work —resulting in 1·5 million available places.

Mr. Nicholson: I thank my right hon. Friend for that reply. The whole House will recognise the priority that the Government place on training for people of 16 and 17, and we welcome the remarks that my right hon. Friend made earlier today. However, is she aware that in our constituencies people are concerned about the plight of people over 18, and over 21, who face unemployment in this dreadful and prolonged recession? That concern is especially marked among those who have retired from work. Will my right hon. Friend redouble her efforts to provide retraining and suitable employment advice for the people whom I have mentioned, and make efforts to bring the below-average TECs up to the standard of the best? Will she also tell me what role she envisages for job clubs?

Mrs. Shephard: My hon. Friend may be reassured about the performance of TECs by the knowledge that a larger proportion of their funding will be output related. In other words, the money that they receive for training will be related to the output of jobs and qualifications. We now have a big package of measures which should meet the needs of all those who need to be retrained, reskilled and helped back into work, and we have a vastly increased number of places in job clubs, which have an excellent record in helping people back to work.

Mr. Olner: Can the Minister tell my constituents who have recently been made redundant from Rolls-Royce, Alvis and Clarkson Machine Tools—men who are at the pinnacle of their skills and experience in modern technology—what on earth she will offer them in the way of training?

Mrs. Shephard: The hon. Gentleman will know that the Government cannot create jobs. It is business, industry and commerce which create jobs. The role of the Government is to prepare the right framework for the recovery, to help people to get jobs, to prepare people for the jobs available and to help them keep in touch with the jobs market. Our new 1·5 million place programme is designed to do exactly that.

Sir Peter Emery: Although we see the importance of training, will my right hon. Friend make it absolutely clear

that the proportion of the population in employment in the United Kingdom is far greater than the proportion in almost any other country in the European Community? That point should be underlined.

Mrs. Shephard: I thank my hon. Friend. We have a higher participation rate of people in work than any other EC country except Denmark. That also applies to women in employment.

Mr. Dobson: The Opposition welcome the announcement by the Secretary of State today in so far as it acknowledges the abject failure of the existing schemes for people who are out of work. Will the right hon. Lady confirm that only one in five people who have been on employment training schemes have gone on to get a job, and that people who have not been on schemes have, therefore, stood a better chance of getting a job than those who have been on employment schemes? Surely the answer is not a host of schemes, but a Government who will come forward with a package that will provide jobs that people can get. People do not want training: they want work.

Mrs. Shephard: The hon. Gentleman should have listened to what I said. The funding for training and enterprise councils is to be output related—related to the outcome of training in terms of obtaining jobs and obtaining qualifications.

The hon. Gentleman's enthusiasm for employers is a little ill placed, given his remarks about them as recently as September. He said of employers:

"These people are stinking, lousy, thieving, incompetent scum."

How much credibility does the hon. Gentleman have?

Mr. Bellingham: When my right hon. Friend is next in Norfolk, will she find time to visit the King's Lynn job club, which I recently opened? If she does, she will hear support for the way in which she has protected her Department's budget in real terms. She will also hear some people say that many firms tell them that if they are over 50, they are too old to apply for jobs. What advice would she give such people?

Mrs. Shephard: I know my hon. Friend's job club. He may know that last year, before I had any connection with my present responsibilities, I visited that job club.

I should perhaps declare an interest in the question of people over 50. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State will announce later this week the membership of a working group that is designed to bring to employers' attention the qualities of people over 50 in the work force.

Unemployment, Barrow and Furness

7. **Mr. Hutton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what policies she intends to pursue to reduce unemployment in Barrow and Furness.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Employment Service and Cumbria TEC deliver a wide range of employment, enterprise and training programmes to help unemployed people in Barrow and Furness find the best and quickest route back to employment.

Mr. Hutton: Is the Minister aware that my constituency has experienced the biggest increase in unemployment of any constituency in the north of England over the past two years? Unemployment has doubled during that period. Unemployment now affects every family and every part of my constituency.

Will the Minister give my constituents two assurances? First, will he increase the resources available to the Cumbria training and enterprise council this year, instead of imposing further cuts on it, so that young people especially can have access to quality training now that apprenticeships at VSEL have finished? Secondly, will he assure my constituents that he will place his Department at the front of a new and fresh initiative to secure jobs in my constituency by giving it assisted area status?

Mr. McLoughlin: As the hon. Gentleman knows, assisted area status is a matter for the Department of Trade and Industry. I am sure that he has made representations to my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade.

We shall discuss with each TEC over the next few months the allocation of budgets. We shall, of course, want to look at the detail of what has happened in particular areas and at the training requirements that are necessary in each area.

Astra Training Services

9. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will make a statement on the value of contracts placed by training and enterprise councils with Astra Training Services.

Mr. McLoughlin: Contracts placed by training and enterprise councils are a matter for the councils individually, and the Department does not collect information on the amount of business that TECs place with individual training providers.

Mr. Mullin: Is the Minister aware that, since Astra was handed over, along with a large sum of public money, to a group of former civil servants, that company has reneged on its pension commitments and demanded from its employees on pain of dismissal salary cuts of 10 and 15 per cent., and that employees have recently been surprised to discover that they are now owned by a company called Schroeder Ventures? Is the Minister able to assure the House that that is not just the beginning of an asset-stripping operation and another privatisation scandal?

Mr. McLoughlin: The sale was conducted on a clean-break basis. It is not for Ministers to comment on what is happening in private companies.

Lady Olga Maitland: May I give a warm welcome to the initiatives that have been announced today to help 18-year-olds and others? However, is my hon. Friend aware that the information services——

Madam Speaker: Order. The question is specific to TECs with Astra Training Services. One has to keep to the question.

Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service

10. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether she has any plans to privatise ACAS.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: ACAS will continue as an independent statutory body charged with improving industrial relations, but, following representations from my hon. Friend and others, its duty to extend collective bargaining will be removed.

Mr. Riddick: As it is clearly inappropriate for Government bodies such as ACAS to promote collective bargaining in this day and age, may I congratulate my hon. Friend on the statement that he has just made? Is he aware that the Institute of Directors is advocating the full privatisation of ACAS? Is that not a first-class idea?

Mr. Forsyth: I was not aware of that fact and, no, I do not think that it is a first-class idea. My hon. Friend, having persuaded the Department to abandon the terms of reference which put a duty on ACAS to promote collective bargaining, should quit while he is ahead.

Mr. Eric Clarke: In the past, ACAS was very helpful in industrial disputes. Because it is being privatised, will there be a bonus system, a productivity agreement, or what? Will people who are liked be appointed, rather than people who can do the job? I fear that ACAS will become a Government-friendly society and will demonstrate the attitude that the Minister is demonstrating today.

Mr. Forsyth: I am not quite sure what is going on. I have just said to my hon. Friend the Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) that we would not be privatising ACAS. The hon. Gentleman has given the argument for privatising ACAS. If he had gone on for much longer I might have had second thoughts.

Youth Training

11. **Mr. French:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment she has made of the effectiveness of the youth training scheme.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: More than three quarters of all young people who complete their YT training go into a job, further education or training. I am concerned, however, about the operation of the YT guarantee, and my right hon. Friend has taken steps to ensure that every training and enterprise council meets its obligations.

Mr. French: Is my hon. Friend completely satisfied that, in terms of monitoring and organising YT placements, there can no longer be any grounds for trainees to say that their time is not well used because they are required to make the tea or sweep the floor?

Mr. Forsyth: I am not entirely satisfied about any aspect of YT, but credit should be given to the extent to which the scheme is a considerable success. My hon. Friend will know that his own TEC—Gloucester TEC—is doing extremely well on the delivery of YT, with 90 per cent. of those involved getting a job in or at the end of their period of training. I agree with my hon. Friend that we have to continue to improve the monitoring of the YT scheme and to ensure that more of its output is related to its funding, which is precisely what my right hon. Friend has done since her appointment as Secretary of State.

Mr. Llwyd: Does the Minister accept that, dealing with the YT scheme in general, it is high time that the Government made funding available for young people to take job opportunities so that they are able to take full part in the scheme? In rural areas, they are paid insufficient to enable them to travel to take up YT.

Yesterday I was discussing this very subject with various people in north Wales. The main impediment to the take-up of YT schemes unfortunately is that very matter. Will the Government rethink?

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Gentleman is making a serious point which is worthy of consideration. There are problems in rural areas. One effect of the flexibility to which my right hon. Friend was able to get agreement, and which will apply to TECs under the new proposals, is that there will be more scope to tackle the difficulties which the hon. Gentleman has identified.

Labour Statistics

12. **Mr. Robathan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when she last met training and enterprise council chairmen to discuss progress on young people's unemployment.

Mr. McLoughlin: My right hon. Friend meets TEC chairmen frequently to discuss with them the arrangements they are making to meet the vocational education, training and employment needs of young people.

Mr. Robathan: I understand from speaking to TECs that one problem is finding work placement schemes for people in YT. What measures is my hon. Friend taking to encourage employers to take people into work placement schemes?

Mr. McLoughlin: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. We have initiated a variety of schemes which we have asked TECs to pursue. Since my right hon. Friend has occupied her present position she has made abundantly clear to TECs the importance that she places on their meeting the youth training guarantee. I notice that the hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) has not withdrawn the remarks he made on 20 November, reported at column. 568 of *Hansard*, but the figures are nowhere near those about which the Opposition have been scaremongering.

Miss Lestor: Would the hon. Gentleman perhaps like notice of what I hope to raise shortly when I come to see him or a member of his Department? In an area like Salford, an area of long-term unemployment, we do not have the industry that can offer people YT places; the places that were being offered have been withdrawn either because the firms have gone out of existence or have stopped taking in people. In that respect, many of the young people in my constituency expect to join their fathers and become long-term unemployed. That is disastrous for all of them.

Mr. McLoughlin: I know that the hon. Lady hopes to bring a number of her colleagues to the Department in the not-too-distant future. We are very concerned to ensure that young people who require youth training places are given places. There are various ways in which that can be done. We have made resources available. We have made it clear that we are prepared to consider the resource implications of particular TECs that are suffering from resources problems.

Autumn Statement

13. **Mr. Fabricant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will make a further statement on the impact on employment prospects of the autumn statement proposals.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: My right hon. Friend's proposals, aimed at building confidence, helping industry and strengthening the economy, will help to boost employment prospects.

Mr. Fabricant: Can my right hon. Friend confirm precisely how many new job opportunities she thinks that the autumn statement has created for unemployed people?

Mrs. Shephard: Priority has been given to protecting programmes with significant employment implications. Along with the relaxation of monetary policy measures, that should assist confidence and help to bring about a recovery.

Ms. Armstrong: Is the right hon. Lady aware that in my constituency since the autumn statement substantial redundancies have been announced in construction, particularly at Blue Circle Cement? Is she further aware that in my constituency we have had an horrific rise in the number of long-term unemployed, yet the Government seem incapable and unwilling to do anything about it? When will she make sure that the long-term unemployed have some opportunity to make some choice about the future?

Mrs. Shephard: The hon. Lady will know that I am always concerned about anybody who is facing unemployment or redundancy. That is why I was pleased to announce a package of 1·5 million employment and training places to help precisely the people about whom she is concerned, with special emphasis on those who are long-term unemployed.

Mr. Bowis: Does my right hon. Friend agree that one of the most immediate and specific job creation measures announced in the autumn statement was the agreement that the Jubilee line should proceed? That will bring enormous numbers of jobs to London and beyond it. Will my right hon. Friend therefore put in a quiet word to her right hon. Friends in the Treasury that such steps are good news for London and that the next step might be the Chelsea-Hackney underground line?

Mrs. Shephard: I admire my hon. Friend's ingenuity. He is very capable of putting a quiet word in with the Treasury, but nevertheless the Jubilee line extension is excellent news for employment.

Mr. Eastham: If the Secretary of State is really interested in creating jobs and employment, may I recommend that she looks at the document printed on behalf of the Engineering Employers Federation last week, which talks about a strategy for industry and is extremely scathing about the support that the Government have not given to creating jobs?

Mrs. Shephard: I did see the document to which the hon. Gentleman refers. The engineering industry, together with other manufacturing industries, will be delighted at the increase in capital allowances, the help given to exports and the removal of car tax, all of which help industry and were welcomed by it, following my right hon. Friend's autumn statement.

Bank Holidays

14. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when she expects to make an announcement on United Kingdom bank holidays.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Government are today issuing a consultation document on the future of the May Day bank holiday in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, having received a number of representations over the years suggesting that the holiday be moved to a new date. Any change could come into effect from 1995.

Mr. Evans: Does the Minister agree that the May Day bank holiday was introduced, without public consultation, at No. 10 Downing street, when beer and sandwiches were the order of the day? Is it not a fact that in 1976, with millions of people out of work, all that the lot on the Opposition Benches could do was to think of an excuse to have a day off, other than a strike day?

Mr. Forsyth: As usual, my hon. Friend speaks for Britain. Most people have been irritated by the way in which the May Day bank holiday can fall within a five-week period, which in some years can also include the Spring bank holiday and Easter. Unlike the last Labour Government, this Government will consult before reaching a conclusion.

Mr. Janner: Would the Minister not speak much more for Britain if he arranged for British people to have the right to a statutory minimum holiday, which people in every other European country have but we do not?

Mr. Forsyth: In that respect, we share the same view as that reached by the then Labour Government when they introduced the 1 May bank holiday—that holidays are a matter for employers and employees to agree among themselves.

Mr. Rupert Allason: Is my hon. Friend aware that his decision to move that holiday would be widely welcomed in the tourist industry? After making that decision, will he grasp the nettle and move Easter to a permanent date?

Mr. Forsyth: I confess to not being an expert on the method by which the date of Easter is calculated, but I certainly do not intend to embark on that route. I said that we were consulting, but my hon. Friend is shortening the consultation period somewhat by inviting me to reach a conclusion within two minutes of announcing the document. Consultations will close on 28 February and I shall see that my hon. Friend's views are taken into account.

Mr. Galbraith: Is it not a sad reflection on the Government that, with unemployment rising by the day, the only topic that they can talk about is when we get a public holiday?

Mr. Forsyth: This Government take into account the wishes of the people. The Government should respond to the inconvenience that has been caused by the May Day socialist holiday. As usual, Opposition Members put politics before people.

Employment Rights

17. **Mr. Watson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what study she has made of the employment rights for employees in the United Kingdom relative to those in other EC member countries; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: In 1991, the Department commissioned a study of race discrimination legislation in EC member states and it also regularly collects comparative information on employment rights. The results show that Britain leads on race discrimination law and practice and British workers enjoy an extensive range of employment rights that compares well with other EC countries.

Mr. Watson: That is a selective response from the Minister. Why will workers in the United Kingdom be denied the protection under the social chapter that will be given to their fellow workers in other EC countries when the Maastricht agreement comes into force? Workers in the United Kingdom have poorer working conditions, including hours of work, and are denied collective bargaining rights. Why do the Government think that the social chapter will damage industry and destroy jobs in this country? The other 11 EC countries do not believe that it will happen to them. What is the difference between the United Kingdom and the other EC countries?

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Gentleman must have been asleep during Question Time. On several occasions it has been said that a higher proportion of the British work force is in employment. We have more women in employment, and there are more opportunities in the job market. What my right hon. Friend achieved at Maastricht in getting an opt-out for the social chapter was to create the opportunity, as Mr. Jacques Delors said, to make Britain an investment paradise. I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman is against that.

PRIME MINISTER

Q1. **Mr. Rowlie Campbell:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 1 December.

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): I have been asked to reply.

As part of his European Community presidency duties, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is visiting Spain and Portugal for discussions with Prime Minister Gonzalez and Prime Minister Cavaco Silva in preparation for the European Council in Edinburgh.

Mr. Campbell: With 20 million tonnes of subsidised foreign coal coming into Britain and subsidised nuclear electricity coming from France—equivalent to 6 million tonnes of coal in the United Kingdom—will the Prime Minister consider subsidising the transportation of British coal to Europe and the rest of the world, thus saving miners' jobs and British Rail jobs?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman has, understandably, raised a variety of issues which are the subject of the review by my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade. I note that my right hon. Friend is present and will have heard what the hon. Gentleman suggested.

Mr. John Greenway: Will my right hon. Friend remind the Prime Minister to tell the Prime Ministers of Spain and Portugal that many people in the United Kingdom must make great sacrifices in the present economic climate and that they will not take kindly to any great increase in the European Community budget to fund expenditure in those countries?

Mr. Newton: I understand that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has referred to those matters in his conversations. I have no doubt whatever that he has once again made Britain's position clear—we will not be prepared to contemplate any adverse change in the British abatement.

Mrs. Beckett: Does the Lord President realise that when people get their council tax valuation figure based on 1991 prices, they are likely to feel that it is extremely unfair since, in most parts of the country, house prices have fallen sharply in the past year? In Greater London alone, house prices have fallen by about £11,500 since the valuations were carried out.

Mr. Newton: The hon. Lady will be well aware that, generally, valuations in London have turned out to be lower than we thought. Somebody living in a band A or band B property in the south-east should not need to pay any more than someone living in a similar band elsewhere. What people must fear is the Labour party's policy of returning to the rates.

Mrs. Beckett: Will the figures be a devastating reminder of the way in which the Government have let people down by pursuing policies that have destroyed the value of their only major asset? Does the right hon. Gentleman realise that there are likely to be millions of appeals against the valuations, which will mean that the chaos and injustice of the poll tax is likely to be surpassed by the chaos and injustice of the council tax?

Mr. Newton: The policies that the Government have pursued have brought about a halving of interest rates to the benefit of home owners generally in the past two years.

Mr. Hendry: Given that today is the Churches National Housing Coalition's lobby of Parliament, will my right hon. Friend take the opportunity to reaffirm the Government's commitment to policies for tackling homelessness? Those policies include the rough sleepers' initiative, the pilot foyer schemes and projects to bring empty shops and houses back into use, including 70,000 belonging to local authorities.

Mr. Newton: Yes. I acknowledge what my hon. Friend says. I am glad to say that the Government's policies are expected to deliver considerably more houses than the 153,000 over three years promised in the election manifesto. We expect the policies to produce 170,000 by 1994-95. In addition, an extra £86 million has been made available for the rough sleepers' initiative over three years. That initiative has already reduced the numbers sleeping rough by more than 60 per cent. I am delighted—as my hon. Friends will be—that the first property has been purchased today by housing associations using the £600 million for England made available in the autumn statement.

Q2. **Ms. Gordon:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 1 December.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Ms. Gordon: Does the Leader of the House realise that, despite what he said, Londoners have been hit by a triple whammy in relation to the council tax? First, house prices were forced up by an unsustainable boom, then they collapsed because the Government refused to reduce interest rates in a futile attempt to save the pound, and finally houses have been banded on the basis of unrealistic values. Will he ask his right hon. Friend to intervene to ensure that Londoners are not hit again by a second unfair tax, and to modify the son of poll tax?

Mr. Newton: I have already made the key point that I need to make in reply to the hon. Lady in response to the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett). The grant paid to authorities in London and the south-east—which has significantly increased in comparison with last year—takes account of the higher cost of providing services in that region. The hon. Lady should ensure that her local authority does not use the money in a profligate way.

Q3. **Dr. Goodson-Wickes:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 1 December.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Dr. Goodson-Wickes: Does my right hon. Friend agree that there is often an unfortunate link between lack of accommodation and lack of a job? Will he join me in congratulating the Young Men's Christian Association in my constituency which, following a Government initiative, has pioneered a partnership between the churches, the Employment Service, and the training and enterprise councils to break the vicious cycle and bring hope to young people?

Mr. Newton: I very much agree with my hon. Friend. I think that he is referring to what is known as—my hon. Friend the Member for High Peak (Mr. Hendry) mentioned it—the foyer project, which brings together in a strong partnership the expertise of people working in the spheres of employment, training and support for young people. It is an excellent initiative and I hope that we see more of them, along the lines of that described by my hon. Friend the Member for Wimbledon (Dr. Goodson-Wickes).

Q4. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 1 December.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Winnick: Does the right hon. Gentleman think that the Prime Minister is particularly proud of the fact that, since he has held his present position, unemployment has risen from 1·5 million to nearly 3 million—even according to official figures? What sort of Christmas message are the Government to give to all those people in our country who have been deprived of the right to work, to the homeless, to people who are frightened of losing their homes, and to all the other victims of the Government's wretched policies—people who cannot expect the Treasury to pick up their bills for them?

Mr. Newton: Apart from what I have already said about the Government's housing policies and the progress being made, I think that what my right hon. Friend would highlight the autumn statement and the prospects that it brings for improved economic performance.

North of England

Q5. **Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Prime Minister when he next intends to make an official visit to the north of England.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is making plans for a series of visits to all parts of the country and hopes to include the north of England among them.

Mr. Devlin: When my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister comes to the north of England, will my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House remind him that it is a region which benefits more than any other in Britain from European Community investment and inward investment from outside the European Community? In the light of that, will my right hon. Friend tell the Prime Minister that it is seen as urgent by many people in my region that the Maastricht treaty be ratified as soon as possible?

Mr. Newton: It is certainly the case that anybody who visits my hon. Friend's part of the country will see the physical advantages of the attractions which, under this Government, this country has had for overseas investment such as Nissan and Fujitsu and the huge progress that has been made in generating a new economic base up there. I have no doubt that my hon. Friend speaks for his constituency in wishing to see that process continued and strengthened by the ratification of the Maastricht treaty.

Engagements

Q6. **Mr. Ernie Ross:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 1 December.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Ross: Can the hon. Member tell the House whether or not the substantial privatisation contract awarded to Tarmac was in any way a pay-off for the substantial sums donated by that company to the Conservative party last year.

Mr. Newton: Yes I can, and it is not.

Q7. **Mr. Fabricant:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 1 December.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply. I refer the hon. Lady to the answer I gave some moments ago. *[Laughter].*

Madam Speaker: Order. Mr. Fabricant.

Mr. Fabricant: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the MO figure for money supply, the amount of cash flowing around in the economy, has increased by 3 per cent. this month over the same figure last year and, while not trying to allude to any botanic connection, would he agree that this is at least an encouraging sign for the economy?

Mr. Newton: May I first apologise to my hon. Friend. It was not actually, despite the evidence, a deficiency of my eyesight, but the fact that the first person in my sight line was the hon. Lady opposite, the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms. Walley).

On my hon. Friend's question, it is the case that the MO figures, mainly notes and coins in circulation, do reflect the growth taking place in retail sales and they add, I think, to the improvement that can be seen, in the fact that, after allowing for falls in interest rates, real disposable income of a typical family with a £30,000 mortgage went up by 20 per cent. in the two years to October 1992.

Mr. Mallon: I know that the right hon. Gentleman will share my view that the violence we saw in my constituency at the weekend and that ripped Belfast apart today is vile and reprehensible and cannot be allowed to exist in any civilised society.

Does the Leader of the House agree that what the terrorist groupings fear most is not more resources for security or more troops, but the creation of a new agreement among the people of Ireland which will strip the terrorist groups of any shred of legitimacy and confine them to the dustbin of history? Will he ask his right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to ensure that when there is a new Taoiseach in the Republic of Ireland, they will jointly lead a drive for peace and a peaceful settlement within Ireland in 1993?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman has spoken with warmth for virtually everybody—probably for everybody in the United Kingdom, certainly for the overwhelming majority. I shall take pleasure in drawing his remarks to the attention both of the Prime Minister and of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whose hard work to this same objective has been manifest over the past few months.

Q8. **Mr. Nicholls:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 1 December.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply. I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Nicholls: Has my right hon. Friend had the opportunity of considering the findings of Professor Rheinhardt Schmidt of Kiel university that of the top major companies in Europe, six are United Kingdom companies and that if facts like that are as obvious as far away as Germany, it is about time they were as obvious to the Opposition Front Bench here?

Mr. Newton: I have indeed seen that report, showing that the three top firms in what is, I believe, German-based research, are British and that six of the top 10 are British, including a significant number of our pharmaceutical companies. They deserve to be congratulated on their achievement. I should like to hear a bit more of that type of compliment coming from the occupants of the Opposition Front Bench, instead of their trying to run down our firms and industry.

Ms. Walley: While the Prime Minister is spending time in Portugal and Spain, may I ask the Lord President to urge him on his return, prior to his visit to the north of England, to call in at Stoke-on-Trent, my constituency, where he will see for himself the lack of Government support for manufacturing industry, particularly in relation to the pottery, ceramics and allied industries? May we have a Government commitment to examine the way in which investment can be made to that industry? Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that it is no good talking all the time about what can be done to get people retrained; we should be preventing them from becoming unemployed in the first place?

Mr. Newton: I shall draw the attention of my right hon. Friend to the hon. Lady's request. I must, at the same time, draw her attention to the fact that the autumn statement included a substantial range of measures designed to encourage manufacturing industry, and that one of our key manufacturing industries, motor cars, is showing great signs of being far more successful than it has been for decades past.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(3) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.),

EDUCATION

That the draft Education Support Grants Regulations 1992 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Boswell.]*

Question agreed to.

Points of Order

3.30 pm

Mr. David Sumberg (Bury, South): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I seek your help in urging a review of the way in which Standing Order No. 20 procedures are organised. It is clear after yesterday's disgraceful performance by the shadow Chancellor of the Exchequer, the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), that the Labour party is using those procedures to smear him——

Madam Speaker: Order. Standing Order No. 20 applications come to me. If there is any criticism whatever about the way in which they are handled, that criticism lies with me. If the hon. Member or any other hon. Member wishes to criticise the way in which such applications are handled, a substantive motion must be tabled, and I shall see that it is debated.

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I draw your attention to the Orders of the Day and Notices of Motions on today's Order Paper and, in particular, to the instruction that stands in my name. Indeed, it has appeared in my name on every Order Paper since the Second Reading of the European Communities (Amendment) Bill.

The instruction has not been selected, nor has new clause 22, which deals with the same subject—to empower the House to hold a referendum in Scotland to bring Scotland in line with the principle of subsidiarity.

Can you explain, how the House can meaningfully debate the European Communities (Amendment) Bill, which is based on the principle of subsidiarity, when excluded from such consideration is the only means available to apply subsidiarity to Scotland? Do you agree that the real world should, at least at times, impinge on our discussions in this place, especially as everybody in Europe knows that we cannot have European union without subsidiarity at every level, including in relation to Scotland? Why should we even refuse to debate the subject?

Madam Speaker: I can deal with the instruction which stands in the name of the hon. Member because it is within my remit to do so. The instruction, I must tell him, is plainly not in order. As he and the House know, I do not give an explanation in respect of the selection.

The matter of the government of Scotland, a subject of great importance not only to the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) but to the whole House, is not cognate to the European Communities (Amendment) Bill. So it is out of order, and I am therefore unable to call the hon. Member to move his instruction.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: There is no further point of order. I have dealt with the matter.

Mr. Walker: No, it is a fresh point of order.

Madam Speaker: If it is another point of order, I will hear it. I cannot hear further points of order on that matter.

Mr. Walker: You, Madam Speaker, will be aware that this unitary Parliament was created by the Act of Union in 1707 and that this Parliament cannot be bound by any decisions of previous Parliaments under our unwritten constitution. I seek your guidance on matters as they affect Scotland under the Act of Union, whether or not the Maastricht treaty, if it were to be enacted in the Bill before the House, would change substantially the relationship between Scotland, the unitary Parliament and our unwritten constitution. While it does not refer directly to what the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) has raised, it is an important aspect of the Union of the United Kingdom and it must be addressed before we proceed with the Bill.

Madam Speaker: That is a somewhat hypothetical matter and not one for me to deal with at this stage. The House must proceed, as it determined to proceed after Second Reading, with the Committee stage of the bill. We must leave it at that for the time being.

Coal Mines (Closure Review)

3.35 pm

Mr. Bill Etherington (Sunderland, North): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to specify the procedures to be followed when the closure of a coal mine is proposed; to require assessments of efficiency, profitability, contribution to import substitution, competitiveness with other fuels and related matters; to set criteria for the approval or disapproval of a proposed closure; and for connected purposes.

I wish to introduce the Bill to try to prevent any repetition of the disgraceful scenario following the announcement by the President of the Board of Trade during the recess which led to the infamous 13 October statement. I believe that such a Bill is long overdue.

The country was told in 1984, when the modified colliery review procedure was placed before the deputies' union, NACODS, that the procedure would be sacrosanct. Unlike certain Ministers and many hon. Members, on the Opposition Benches, I understand what "sacrosanct" means. It does not mean that, when things turn a little nasty, the procedure is totally ignored. The procedure has now fallen into disrepute, and I would like to see something replacing it on a statutory basis.

It was all very well for Lady Thatcher and the then Energy Minister, Mr. Peter Walker, to assure the House that the review procedure would be followed. As time went on, they went missing from the House. Statute law does not go missing; it continues.

Two issues make me certain beyond doubt that we need to take this matter out of the hands of the Department of Trade and Industry. On 12 October I wrote to the President of the Board of Trade, asking for some borehole information on the coal measures off the Northumberland and Durham coast, information going back to the late 1950s and the early 1960s. Today I have been informed by the Energy Minister that the Department of Trade and Industry has no such information and that if I require it I must approach the National Geological Survey or British Coal. This leads me to believe that the disgusting decision taken in the recess was taken without proper knowledge of the subject.

What makes me even more convinced that that is the fact that in answer to a question from me in the House the President of the Board of Trade stated that he could not understand why people were buying nuclear or gas-generated power if it was more expensive than coal. If that is his understanding of the subject, we badly need a review and we badly need to take it out of the House, the Department and the Ministry.

All I ask is quite simply that we go back to what we were promised by the Government in 1984. If that comes about, we will never again have the stupid and ridiculous state of affairs in which a Minister has to come to this House and state quite categorically that he needs three months' breathing space.

I say again to the President of the Board of Trade that the miners and those who support them have not been fooled by what has been said. We know that the decision to be announced in January or February will be based upon what public pressure can be brought to bear rather than upon the facts of the matter. It is no use Ministers coming to the House and asking for time if they do not intend to do something tangible in that time. Nothing leads me to believe that it was anything other than that.

I went to Wearmouth colliery last week. Perhaps one or two Conservatives know where that is, but I will tell those who do not. It is in the county of Tyne and Wear, formerly County Durham, and it is in Sunderland—not particularly noted for having a good football club, but a place that will be known to most people. I went down the mine at Wearmouth colliery to see a new face which it has cost £20 million to get to over many years. The face is in some of the best conditions that anyone, including me, will have seen in this country. It is in a seam of coal in undisturbed geological strata more than 8 ft thick. Yet that colliery, according to the President of the Board of Trade, was to be mothballed. I was supposed to be thankful for that. It meant that, out of the 21 collieries proposed for closure, it was somewhere between numbers one and four in the rating, so there were at least 17, and possibly 20, behind it. I am not satisfied with that, and there are many other people who are not satisfied with it. That is why I am asking the House to support the Bill.

I should like to pay a tribute here—I have not had an opportunity to do so before—to hon. Members on the Government Benches who supported the miners and those who support them by voting with the Opposition to ensure that a proper review was carried out. We shall be eternally grateful to that handful of Members. One of them has certainly suffered, and it may well be that others will do so, but they have our gratitude. Many hon. Members stated that they were voting only for the review and that their final vote would be based upon what was proposed by the President of the Board of Trade as and when the review was completed. We hope that those hon. Members will join us should we not get the result that we wish to get.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Bill Etherington, Mr. Don Dixon, Mr. Alan Meale, Mr. Dennis Skinner, Mr. John Cummings, Mr. Ronnie Campbell, Mr. Jimmy Hood, Mr. Eric Clarke and Mr. Michael Clapham.

Coal Mines (Closure Review)

Mr. Bill Etherington accordingly presented a Bill to specify the procedures to be followed when the closure of a coal mine is proposed; to require assessments of efficiency, profitability, contribution to import substitution, competitiveness with other fuels and related matters; to set criteria for the approval or disapproval of a proposed closure; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 22 January 1993 and to be printed. [Bill 92.]

Orders of the Day

European Communities (Amendment) Bill

Considered in Committee.

[MR. MICHAEL MORRIS *in the Chair*]

3.44 pm

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. May I express the thanks of those of us concerned about the Bill for the preparations that you have made, which I hope will mean that we do not have a repetition of what happened in 1972—[HON. MEMBERS: "Why not?"] We had 15 hours of points of order until 7 am.

The first three amendments on the Order Paper, Nos. 73 to 75 in the name of my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore), some hon. Friends and myself, have not, according to the provisional selection of amendments, been selected for debate by you, Mr. Morris. However, I wish to put to you , in as simple language as I can, some of the reasons why I hope that you will consider the matter before we debate the amendments that you have selected and will reinstate those amendments.

The European union created by the treaty has two components. First, the novel titles, I, V, VI and VII, which create a new entity known as European union, which is contained in articles A to F and title I; title V on foreign and defence, articles J to J(II); title VI on justice and home affairs, articles K to K.(9); and title VII, the final provisions L to S. The second component already partially exists—the treaties of Rome, Paris and Brussels relating to the coal and steel and Euratom treaties. They are in place now and are not new. The treaty will amend, update and strengthen those with various matters relating to subsidiarity, the European Parliament and economic and monetary union.

In the Bill, the Government have been remarkably economic with the words and those matters, which are contained in at least 238 articles in the treaty of Rome, are subsumed only under titles II, III and IV, despite the fact that the Bill provides for the whole treaty, which is particularly on European union—that is the long title. The items that I have specified appear only in subsection (k), which we are adding to the European Communities Bill. The Bill does not provide for consideration of titles I, III and V, which are important to the House in terms of something new in the treaty.

Therefore, we must ask by what method the House can ratify those important new elements of the treaty. According to the Foreign Secretary, who is not here—the Minister of State, the right hon. Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones) is present—those matters are an intergovernmental "outer building" and do not involve too much the Community's existing institutions. Indeed, under article C they are required to be a single institutional framework and at least 40 references are made to the Commission, the Council, the court or the Parliament in those new parts of the treaty, so we cannot separate them quite as much as the Minister of State and the Foreign Secretary decide.

In selecting the amendment of the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown)—one of his hon. Friends will no doubt move it—and the other amendments in the group, all relating to title I, articles A to F, you may allow us, Mr. Morris, at least to debate title II. Debates about foreign affairs, security, justice and home affairs may follow later.

But, Mr. Morris, you have selected the amendments on line 9 of sub-paragraph (k), which is the pipeline to the European Communities Act. That simply adds those matters to the automatic or near automatic obligation of the House and the United Kingdom to the obligations contained in the original treaty. It in no way allows us to deal separately with the major items that I have outlined. Even if they are debated, as they may well be, whether or not they go into sub-paragraph (k) or are left out, that is no way to find out whether the House approves them. All we are doing is making them automatically effective.

Therefore, I submit that if we are to ratify, which is surely what this is all about, the matters relating to European union and its foreign policy, justice and home provisions, which are important to everyone, we must have some free standing amendments.

The amendments in the name of my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney propose that we would give a specific debate to each of the titles and have a vote on them, just as we would on a statutory instrument, and approve them or not, as the case may be, to enable the Government to ratify the treaty. But at the moment we do not have that opportunity under the Bill or under the amendments.

There will not be a specific debate on those matters as there would be on a statutory instrument on, for instance, dog licences. The House would be able to decide yes or no on such a statutory instrument, but not yes or no to ratification of those important titles of the treaty.

There is an even greater reason why we must have separate debates on those matters away from sub-paragraph (k). Foreign affairs and security are matters for the royal prerogative. Having made inquiries, I understand that the Government do not necessarily require the Bill to ratify the European union articles of the treaty.

Under the treaty, all that the Minister has to do is to send a certificate of ratification to the Italian President. Therefore, we are not in a position to say yes or no despite the fact that we shall be handing over to other bodies the power of the royal prerogative itself.

Unless the three amendments in the name of my right hon. Friend, or something similar, are selected, perhaps at a later stage, the House will be deprived of debating the specific importance of the articles, of the surrounding edifice of the European union, in a manner which is less specific than would be the case under a statutory instrument for domestic legislation for a dog licence.

Unless we can do so, the process of ratification by our own constitutional requirements which the treaty provides will not have been followed because we shall not have the opportunity specifically to discuss and vote on those important matters relating to European union.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

The Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. I shall rule on one point of order at a time. We have plenty of time ahead of us.

The hon. Gentleman makes his point of order with his usual thoroughness and conviction and puts it in as

succinct a form as he was able, even though it was pretty long. I can provide him with an answer, but it will be rather short.

Amendments Nos. 73 to 75 provide that certain parts of the treaty are to be ratified only when the House has agreed to ratification. This is not a Bill to ratify the treaty. I repeat that: this is not a Bill to ratify the treaty. Therefore, amendments to put a limitation on ratification are beyond the scope of the Bill. Nevertheless, I may say, in respect of the hon. Gentleman's concluding words, that although I cannot anticipate amendments that may be tabled in future, of course I will consider any such amendments—but I am not promising anything at this stage.

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. I have three brief, genuine points of order. *[Laughter.]* I can assure right hon. and hon. Members who are laughing that nothing has made me more sick than sitting through all those European debates when Governments of both parties have deliberately restricted discussion. Why cannot we debate a referendum clause? Right hon. and hon. Members have made several attempts. I tabled such an amendment and I see no reason why you, Mr. Morris, as the Chairman of Ways and Means and being responsible to the British people and to right hon. and hon. Members who want to express a view, cannot give approval to debating amendment No. 70, for example, which does not involve any expenditure. It is just a means of giving everyone an opportunity, whether or not they want to take it, to express an opinion on a referendum.

Your Clerks, Mr. Morris, have been more than helpful, but is it the case—as I fear—that the Bill has been drafted in such a way as to prevent right hon. and hon. Members from expressing a view on whether there should be a referendum? Despite the restrictions imposed by not having a money resolution, would it not be possible to have a vote on amendment No. 70, which would give right hon. and hon. Members the right, not to express a view, as some of them want, but to say yes or no to whether the people of this country should have some say in handing over their freedoms and liberty without their specific permission? Could we not have a debate, on any clause or amendment, on whether or not there should be a referendum?

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

The Chairman: Order. I will deal with points of order one at a time.

I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, but there cannot be a vote on amendment No. 70, simply because it is out of order at this time—*[Interruption.]* Order. May I respond? I did not interrupt the hon. Gentleman. I cannot select any amendment that is out of order. That is the rule of the House. However, if the hon. Gentleman shows his usual ingenuity and continues with his usual degree of creativity—doubtless assisted by right hon. and hon. Members on his own side and across the Floor of the Committee—he may yet succeed. The hon. Gentleman must be clear that there is no money resolution associated with the Bill. I suggest that the hon. Gentleman keeps trying.

Sir Teddy Taylor: Further to that point of order, Mr. Morris.

The Chairman: No. I call Mr. Cryer.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. I draw your attention to clause 3 and to the proposed amendments to that clause, none of which has been selected. The list of selected amendments refers to a "provisional selection", and the remarks that you made a few moments ago, Mr. Morris, were very helpful.

When I saw the helpful Clerks in the Table Office after tabling amendment No. 89, I was informed that the fact that there was not a money resolution in the Bill did not debar an amendment such as mine making provision for a referendum. In the terms of that amendment, a money resolution is not necessary—but before the amendment could be implemented, the Government would have to table a Ways and Means resolution.

Have amendment No. 89 and the others on clause 3 been rejected, or will the published provisional selection be supplemented by further examination of amendments that have not been considered so far—including amendment No. 89? Or was your reply, Mr. Morris, to the hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) an intimation that my amendment is debarred because of the absence of a money resolution?

When I saw the Clerks, I was informed that my amendment was perfectly in order for selection and debate, even though the mechanism for implementing it was not available in the Bill. I share the view of the hon. Member for Southend, East that the House should have an opportunity to debate the question of a referendum—and if that proposal were carried, it would be up to the Government to provide the machinery and the Ways and Means resolution to put it into operation.

It would be an important denial of the debating powers of the House if such an amendment were not selected and considered. If the amendment is defective, clearly we shall have to devise one which is not, but when I submitted my amendment I was told that it would stand, and that it could be debated. My information was that the House could consider a referendum. If it does not do so, millions of people will question the validity of the House in ignoring that possibility.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

The Chairman: Order. One at a time.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

4 pm

The Chairman: Order. May I rule on the point of order that has already been raised? I am grateful to the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) for raising it, but I am afraid that the information that he was given on amendment No.89 was not correct. The amendment is out of order as it stands. I re-emphasise to the hon. Gentleman and to all hon. Members that the list is a provisional selection of amendments. We are starting on clause 1; the hon. Gentleman, understandably, is raising questions about clause 3, so he has a little time to get his amendment in order.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. May I make a general point about the difficulties involved in interpreting the meaning of the treaty? As you know, with domestic legislation the words that a Minister uses in advancing his argument about the meaning of a clause have now become

[Mr. Nicholas Budgen]

more important and binding, because, following a recent decision of the House of Lords, the Minister's words may be considered when the wording of the legislation is being construed. Furthermore, if by chance the House of Lords, or even the Court of Appeal, gives the words of a statute a meaning that was not anticipated, it is relatively easy —I do not pretend that it is very easy—for the Government to introduce amending legislation, and sometimes even to rectify with retrospective legislation any injustice which may have been done because of the misunderstanding about the wording.

Here we have an entirely different situation. We are not dealing with domestic legislation which will be interpreted by the House of Lords, and which is subject to possible amendment by a sovereign Parliament. If the treaty is ratified, it will be interpreted first by the Commission, which has the right of initiative, and secondly by the European Court.

It is important to understand that the Government have already made some extremely wide assertions about what the treaty does not do. At the Conservative party conference, the Prime Minister——

The Chairman: Order. I hope that the hon. Gentleman is addressing a matter to which I can attend rather than Government policy.

Mr. Budgen: Indeed, Mr. Morris. You have enormous power and influence over these proceedings, and as we struggle to understand the meaning of the treaty, the very raising—or even the half raising—of your eyebrow will cause the Government to jitter with fear. If you were to say that you thought that an external objective explanation of what the treaty meant would assist the House, I expect that thet Government would immediately accede to your suggestion.

I shall explain briefly why I think that that is necessary. For instance, at the Conservative party conference, the Prime Minister made five points about the treaty which I, as a pompous lawyer—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] If my right hon. Friend had made those assertions before any judge who happened to be even half awake, they would have been described as very brave.

My right hon. Friend was brave enough to say, for example, that the treaty had nothing to do with immigration. I invite the Committee to look at the treaty. The Committee will see that it deals specifically with immigration. After my right hon. Friend's splendid and brave speech, which was so well received by the Tory party conference, all of whose members had read the details of the treaty with great care, no doubt——

The Chairman: Order. The Tory party conference is not a matter for the Chair. I commend to the hon. Gentleman the publication HMSO 13409, which I imagine he must have in his possession. I am not of a mind now to call for an external and objective assessment. I move on, therefore, to Mr. Winnick.

Mr. Budgen: Further to that point of order, Mr. Morris——

The Chairman: Order. I shall come back to the hon. Gentleman.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

The Chairman: Order. I call Mr. Winnick.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Further to the point of order raised by the hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) and by my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer). As we are beginning our deliberations in Committee today—we know why we are beginning them—it is important to realise that the Bill is the most crucial legislation that could come before the House. I am sure that you take the point, Mr. Morris.

If the Bill is passed, the constitutional arrangement of the United Kingdom—we will argue this when we come to the details—will undoubtedly be changed. Many of us believe that the change will be for the worse, although I realise that that is not a matter for the Chair, but a matter for debate.

I cannot conceive of any other measure that will come before us for many years which could have such a crucial bearing on the future of this country. That is true whether one takes a critical view, as I do, or whether one takes the view that we should go down the federal road, which I believe to be the whole purpose of the treaty. I ask you simply this, Mr. Morris: what opportunity can we be given to say, either as a House of Commons or as a Committee, that the people of our country should be consulted?

You, Mr. Morris, have said that the selection of amendments is provisional. Those who have a view different from the view of those of us who are critical may share the belief that the British people should be consulted. If that is not the case, and if we are to debate measures that, in so many ways, will change the constitutional arrangement of our country and which will take substantial powers away from the House of Commons —there is no doubt that that will happen if the treaty comes into effect—what opportunity will the British people have to express their views?

The British people may come to the view that the treaty is right we do not know. In the 1975 referendum, the British people voted in the way that I did not want, but at least they were consulted. I choose my words carefully and I make no criticism of you, Mr. Morris. It will be a tragedy both for the House and for our country if we pass into legislation the provisions of the treaty concerning the United Kingdom without being able to say to the British people, "Here is your opportunity to speak."

The Chairman: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. I can say to him only what I said to the hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor). I suggest that the hon. Gentleman works with him. I recognise the importance of the issue. However, I have to be bound by the rules of the House, and matters have to be in order.

Miss Emma Nicholson (Torridge and Devon, West): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. May I ask you to guide the Committee? There seems to be a small but vociferous minority of Members who are attempting to impede the Bill. Will it be possible for you to remind the House that the Bill was passed with a substantial majority? Those of us who are members of other Committees, such as Standing Committees, very much desire to participate in this Committee and not merely to listen to impeding and blocking points of order. The Bill should go ahead with all haste.

The Chairman: The Chair does not feel impeded at the moment.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. There is something very sinister about this affair. I listened very carefully to my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), who kicked off with his point of order regarding certain amendments. I listened to a couple of other hon. Members talking about the need for a referendum. I also read the papers this morning. For the first time on this issue I was able to read briefings in almost every so-called quality newspaper about how the Chairman of Ways and Means would deal with hon. Members who happen to have an alternative view to that of the two Front Benches on the common market and on Maastricht. That is sinister.

You should understand, Mr. Morris, that you are sitting in that chair because of the democracy that is practised in this country. Under the treaty, in some circumstances it is likely that some of those powers will be eroded, yet those briefings suggest that the Chairman of Ways and Means is going to take action to stop Members of Parliament representing their constituents, 68 per cent. of whom in many of the surveys that have been conducted want to get out of the Maastricht treaty and do not want anything to do with it. However, when my hon. Friends and others try to call for a referendum, we are steamrollered because of the briefings that we have already read.

I regard that as a distasteful development and it should be stopped. It is high time that we stood up for the people of Britain, the majority of whom want to say no to Maastricht. The House of Commons, on occasions, is supposed to represent the views of the British people. I get the clear impression that, generally speaking, when the two Front Benches are in agreement, the Chair goes along with it. I am waiting for an answer in the negative to that.

I have been a Member for a considerable time, and it has always been the case that, when the two Front Benches agree, and we have the Liberal Democrats throwing their weight behind them, Back-Benchers' views are treated with disdain, even though we represent a massive majority of the people outside. I believe that we should discuss that amendment on a referendum, and I do not——

Mr. Budgen: On a point of order, Mr. Morris.

The Chairman: Order. I cannot take a point of order on a point of order. Mr. Skinner was just concluding.

Mr. Skinner: I did not ask you to give way. Whose side are you on? Typical of lawyers.

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): The hon. Gentleman has only just referred to Conservative colleagues as his hon. Friends.

Mr. Skinner: I never called him my hon. Friend—read the record. I am not that big a fool. The hon. Gentleman might be in the same Lobby as me on these occasions, but that is as far as it goes.

We are going to have a proposition for a referendum in the future. It is just conceivable that it might happen after Edinburgh. The game now is that the Government of the day want to go to Edinburgh without anybody being able to say that we have made a very important decision in the House of Commons to table an amendment on a referendum. I regard that as chicanery. It is high time that the Chair and the House of Commons, irrespective of the two Front Benches, understood that those of us who have a different view from that of the Front Bench, and believe that the common market has been an unmitigated disaster from beginning to end, are fed up with British families having to pay £18 every week to bail out that tinpot club. It is time that the voice of the British people was heard and not stifled by anybody, including the Chair—and no more briefings.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

The Chairman: Order. I am most grateful, but let me rule on this point of order. I re-emphasise that it is a provisional selection.

Mr. Skinner: Who did the selection?

The Chairman: I did the selection. The selection rests with the Chair.

I take full responsibility for that. I have to recognise that the House has given a Second Reading to the Bill. Finally, I say to all hon. Members that my door is ever open. Anyone who wants to come and talk about the Bill or amendments is most welcome.

4.15 pm

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. As I understand it, new clause 7, in my name and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd), escaped the difficulties that are inherent in the requirement for a money resolution. However, there were one or two small errors that needed to be corrected. As I understand it, it was for that reason that the new clause could not at that time, this morning, be included in the provisional list of amendments. Given the fact that suitable adjustments will be made, am I correct in thinking that we are getting close to the target and that the new clause, which I have retabled, is likely to be selected?

The Chairman: I shall look at any new amendments tomorrow.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. You very kindly invited some people to your room yesterday in order to avoid a frustrating points of order session, but this is not just a point of order. What we are discussing is the relationship between different parts of the constitution. You pointed out that the House has no power to ratify or not to ratify the Maastricht treaty. That is correct, because the Queen has the power and the Prime Minister exercises it. So you reminded us of our inherent impotence.

You then told us, Mr. Morris, that you were prepared to consider, and you did not rule out, amendments on a referendum, and you advised us to try at different stages to see whether we could get past the Clerks. That is no way to treat our constituents. I was elected 42 years ago on Friday. I am not prepared to wait until later to find out whether the people of Chesterfield have any role in a treaty which, if implemented, would change fundamentally their relationship with the Executive. I am not prepared to do it.

If you say that there are certain ways in which this can be done and that the Clerks will be empowered to help us do it, that is one thing, but why should we play games with the Clerks—"Line 2 is out of order and I cannot tell you why. Like Mr. Asquith, wait and see whether I select it." At the outset of consideration of the Bill, the British people are entitled to know whether they have any rights at all in determining whether the treaty goes through.

[Mr. Tony Benn]

I first advocated a referendum in 1968. It took me about seven years to persuade the Labour party; my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the Opposition voted for a referendum. Now I am afraid there has been some slippage which will need to be dealt with again. *[Interruption.]* Of course it will be dealt with. Does anyone honestly think that the Labour party will unite with the Tory party on the one issue on which the British people have no rights? Is the House saying now that the British people have no rights?

Whether there is a referendum depends on what the House decides, but I beg you, Mr. Morris, not to appear to be leaving it open as if it was a game with "Erskine May". It is not a game with "Erskine May". A fundamental question is involved. The Government do not object to a referendum, so long as it is in Denmark. If there is a Danish referendum and the Danes say no again, the Maastricht treaty goes down the pan anyway. So my constituents are being told that their future will be decided by Crown prerogative here and by the Danish people there. Politically it is not on.

I launched a petition for a referendum, and I am getting thousands of letters. I have another petition to present tomorrow. People of all opinions from all over the country want to have their say on Maastricht. The Liberal party is for Maastricht and for a referendum, as will be made clear when we come to it.

It is essential, Mr. Morris, if I may put it to you in my last word, that you make it clear that it is possible to find a form of words which does not fall foul of a money resolution and which will allow the British people to have a say. I put that to you with great passion and fervour. It is not my rights which are at stake but the rights of the people who sent every hon. Member here.

The Chairman: I shall make two points. First, the Clerks are not empowered to make decisions. Secondly, I have had to make those decisions and they have had to be based on the rules of debate of the House. I have more constituents than the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) and they are just as important as everyone else's. I recognise the strength of feeling, but debates in the House have to be in order. I hope that we can find an amendment that is appropriate and in order. I am encouraging those people who have done a great deal of work on that to continue with that work, and to hone the amendment so that it is in order.

Sir Patrick McNair-Wilson (New Forest): I seek your guidance on a narrow point of order, Mr. Morris. In the remarks that have been made so far it has been made clear that the Maastricht treaty is a legal document and it is therefore essential that the wording is precise in all its different forms. Before we debate clause 1, title I, might I draw your attention to page 88, article S of the treaty available in the House, which states:

"This Treaty, drawn up in a single original in the Danish, Dutch, English, French, German, Greek, Irish, Italian, Portuguese and Spanish languages, the texts in each of these languages being equally authentic".

However, on page 7, in article B, I do not find the English translation that I expected but two untranslated French words, "acquis communautaire".

Sir Nicholas Bonsor (Upminster): They are untranslatable.

Sir Patrick McNair-Wilson: My hon. Friend suggests that they are untranslatable. For the purpose of clarity, I took the trouble to obtain a copy of Collins English-French dictionary, because the word "acquis" has a number of possible meanings. It could mean "experience", "gain", "achieve", "be sure of", or "take for granted"—and those are just some of its meanings. A number of words of French origin are in common parlance in my constituency and in the House—for example, "laissez faire". Cooks talk about something being "garni"; and we talk about omelettes. I have no doubt that hon. Members could think of other possibilities. But "acquis communautaire" is not in common parlance.

If we are to discuss title I and to accord it the detailed consideration required by a legal document which has to be precise, can you, Mr. Morris, with your sweep of foreign languages, immediately translate it for me, or will you invite someone else to do so, before we discuss the matter, because it is of some importance?

The Chairman: The Bill is in English—as the hon. Gentleman will have noted—and I am not responsible for what is written in the treaty; nor are we debating it. I hope that he will bear that in mind.

Sir Edward Heath (Old Bexley and Sidcup): Are you aware, Mr. Morris—as I hope you are—that the House will support you entirely in condemning the outrageous allegations which were made against you and the Chair by the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner)? I have been here almost twice as long as the hon. Gentleman and I have never heard such allegations made; nor have I ever heard the Chair allow them to be made. Indeed, my experience has been exactly the opposite—that we Back Benchers know the extraordinary lengths to which your predecessors and the other occupants of the Chair have gone to to ensure that we get proper treatment. I pay tribute to them for that.

I hope that, when the hon. Member for Bolsover calms down, he will withdraw his completely unjustifiable allegations against you as the Chair. You are in the Chair and we shall support you in your decisions on the choice of amendments down for discussion. Those hon. Members who want to use your decisions as a means to make their speeches are not justified in doing so in any way. Finally, it is obviously your responsibility as well as in your power to consider any amendments that are tabled, but I do not think that it is within the power of the Chair to suggest that it may be possible for amendments to be tabled which will meet the needs of individual Members, so we shall support you in making your decisions, and support you to the full.

The Chairman: I examine amendments only once they are tabled. The Office of the Clerk is available to help hon. Members perfect their drafting finesse, which is entirely appropriate because the vast majority of hon. Members are not lawyers.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. It seems to be one of those afternoons in which we are all making statements about sticking out for this or that group, and interpreting what the British people want. Perhaps I could simply chuck in my lot. I should like to stick out for the decisions of the Labour party conference, which were distinctly and overwhelmingly in favour of

Maastricht. I simply tell those who have talked a great deal about conference decisions in the past that they should face it that—like it or not—there were clear decisions at the Labour party conference in favour of Maastricht——

Mr. Skinner: And on defence.

Mr. Dalyell: I concede that there were clear decisions at the Labour party conference on defence and, certainly, on Maastricht. My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) and I are not united on that issue.

Furthermore, if we are to interpret the national view, my interpretation—I will put it no higher than that—of the electors and the generality of the Linlithgow constituency is that they want the Maastricht Bill and closer ties with Europe.

The Chairman: That did not seem to be a point of order for the Chair. I hope that any further points of order will be specific, and ones for which the Chair has responsibility.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. I draw your attention to the treaty of union which created this Parliament. That treaty places certain items of Scottish life and activity into a matter of perpetuity.

Mr. Chairman: Order. I do not know whether the hon. Member heard Madam Speaker's ruling on that matter. That ruling stands and cannot be reopened now.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. My point of order is less controversial than the previous ones, but it is within your competence in the Chair to direct me on it. The great odyssey on which we have just launched ourselves will require Members of Parliament to have great sustenance during the many days ahead—the sustenance of information rather than anything stronger, I hasten to add.

Clearly, the rules of debate in Committee are different from those that normally pertain to debates on the Floor of the House. We want you to rule on the matter of the provision of information to us. As ever, the Government are greatly assisted by the civil servants who sit in the Box. They can pass pieces of paper and take writing material into the Box with them. That is in order.

Those of us who must battle against the serried ranks of the civil servants and Ministers can normally, in Committee, rely on our advisers sitting next to us to perform a similar function. However, when we are in the Chamber, our advisers sit under the Gallery. Normally, anyone who takes writing material into the Box or tries to write notes is quickly admonished. I wonder whether you could rule that it is in order for us to have our advisers under the Gallery and freely exchange written notes and material with them during the course of what I suspect will be an exceedingly long Committee.

The Chairman: The hon. Member knows the conventions of the House; he has been here long enough. It is not necessary for me to rule on the point of order.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. I wonder whether you could help the House and the people outside who are watching our affairs by explaining how you propose to proceed with the Committee. Several points of order have already been raised with you on the amendments that you have not selected. In my experience, the selection of amendments is rightly left to you and the Clerks, under strictly understood rules and regulations, and questions to you regarding amendments that you have not selected are strictly out of order. Is that the procedure that you are going to adopt in Committee?

Would it therefore be out of order to raise issues about amendments that have not been selected? I think that the Committee would be grateful for your ruling on that, so that we can proceed in an orderly fashion and know exactly when we shall get down to matters of substance.

4.30 pm

The Chairman: I shall follow all the normal procedures.

Mr. Peter Hain (Neath): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. As a relatively new Member of the House, may I seek your guidance on voting procedure on the amendments that you have selected? I do so as an ardent pro-European who believes that our future is in Europe and who voted yes in the 1975 referendum, but who feels that the Maastricht treaty is fatally flawed. Its monetarist economic framework will impose massive deflation and lead to mass unemployment and cuts in public spending.

I believe that if a leading amendment—for example, amendment No. 36 on the European central bank—is moved by my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the Opposition and voted on, the other amendments in the group do not necessarily have to be voted on. If, for some reason, there is no vote on the leading amendment, will you give consideration to votes on later amendments for example—amendment No. 101, tabled in my name and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Kingswood (Dr. Berry), as the amendments related to the central bank and budget deficits contain many complex issues?

The Chairman: Yes, I shall certainly consider that, but I did not think that we would reach those amendments this evening. I call Mr. Taylor.

Mr. Ian Taylor *rose*——

Sir Teddy Taylor *rose*——

The Chairman: Mr. Ian Taylor.

Mr. Ian Taylor: I am grateful to be called. On a point of order, Mr. Morris. Will you provide some guidance to the Committee? This is a three-clause Bill, and is very short. However, you have chosen to provide the Committee with a long series of grouped amendments on separate subjects, which is extremely helpful and will enable us to have a proper debate under clear subject headings. It will help the Committee and those people outside who are following the debate with great interest.

The House gave the Bill a thorough Second Reading and I believe—I seek guidance on the matter—that the measure has already spent more time on the Floor of the House than did the Single European Act during its passage through the House. Therefore, would it not be helpful if we made as rapid progress as possible through the various headings? It would be inappropriate to have further debates on amendments that you have not called, some of which—such as those relating to a referendum—many Conservative Members do not believe to be appropriate.

We believe that it is the duty of the House to scrutinise the Bill, and any further discussions on items such as

[Mr. Ian Taylor]

referendums will delay the Committee's ability to consider the helpful groups of amendments already tabled. Can we make progress?

Mr. Morris: I think that we are making some progress, and I re-emphasise the fact that the selection of amendments is my decision and mine alone.

Mr. Ken Livingstone (Brent, East): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. I apologise for leaving the Chamber for a moment, but I had a note that a constituent of mine who was in the Gallery was so distressed by your ruling against a referendum that she was reduced to tears and had to go home——

Mr. Morris: Order. I have given no ruling against a referendum.

Mr. Gyles Brandreth (City of Chester): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. Most of the points of order that we have heard so far do not appear to me—an absolute lay person—to have been points of order—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Morris: Order. I regret to say that there have been points of order, on which I have ruled.

Mr. Stephen Milligan (Eastleigh): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. The Committee appreciates the difficulty of your position in conducting the debate, and that it is entirely proper that there should be a full debate and the proper procedures should be adopted. Will you bear it in mind that in the previous debate hon. Members overwhelmingly expressed the view that they were in favour of the principle of the Bill, and that any attempt to frustrate the will of the majority of hon. Members should be rejected? Secondly, thousands of jobs across the country will be at stake if we have an unnecessarily prolonged debate.

The Chairman: I am most grateful, but that was not a point of order.

Mr. Marlow: As the Bill progresses, there will no doubt be a small minority of hon. Members who will put the point to you the point that has just been put—that there has been a Second Reading debate and that we should abjure further debate and ratify every amendment on the nod, but the fact is—you know it as well as I do, Mr. Morris—that since the Second Reading debate, the world has changed. The ERM has been blown out of the water, the Danes have voted down the treaty and we are in totally different circumstances.

The Chairman: I have already ruled that the point that the hon. Member for Eastleigh (Mr. Milligan) made was not a point of order, and it is still not.

Mr. Marlow: My point is different.

The Chairman: You can have a separate one in a minute.

Mr. Cash: On a point of order, Mr. Morris. You have selected amendment No. 93 which deals with title I, arising from which is a matter that raises a question of a money resolution, because article F and the amendment in the names of myself, the Leader of the Opposition and many other hon. Members, which would bring in article F, deals with the raising of resources, the means necessary for the Community to achieve its objectives. That seems to many of us to be quite clearly a question which relates to money that would be raised to pay for the objectives of the treaty. Therefore, we should like you to rule on whether that matter gives rise to a requirement for a money resolution if title I is accepted as part of the Bill.

The Chairman: The hon. Member is increasingly ingenious, but he is incorrect in his submission.

Sir Teddy Taylor: This is my second very brief point of order and there is no question of my doing anything more than asking things that matter. You, Mr. Morris, have selected amendments in large groups; one of them has 27 separate amendments. I ask a general question: would it be your intention, as some of us believe these are rather important issues, that something should be said on each amendment if the hon. Member who has tabled it wishes to speak, before consideration is given to a motion for the closure? It would honestly be, although I appreciate the very good reasons——

The Chairman: Perhaps I can help the hon. Gentleman. We shall have to see how we get on.

Sir Teddy Taylor: What is the answer?

The Chairman: With the greatest respect, I gave an answer; whether the hon. Gentleman was listening is another matter, but I repeat that we shall have to see how we get on.

Mr. Bill Walker: On a point of order, Mr. Morris. In your very generous selection of amendments—and I commend you on how they have been done—may I draw your attention to amendment No. 93 which is the leading amendment in the first grouping? In the debate on that amendment and on the others in that group shall we be able to raise the matters that are guaranteed for ever under the Act of Union between Scotland and England? Those are the words in the Act. I draw your attention to the fact that there are aspects of Scottish law—a separate legal system and a separate educational system. I am sure you know that in Scotland the ancient universities are guaranteed in perpetuity.

The Chairman: Order. One example is probably enough. Madam Speaker has ruled that such issues are not cognate to the Bill, and that ruling must stand.

Mr. Marlow: I have two brief points of order to raise with you, Mr. Morris, because we all want to get on. First, you will be well aware that this is a real cruncher of a Bill. It is enormous, and vast numbers of amendments have been tabled. The amendments, as is traditional, have been set out and put down in sequence in the Bill, and they have numbers. The new clauses at the back are fairly easy to refer to, because they are in numerical order.

I have no doubt that during the Committee stage on the Floor of the House, hon. Members will from time to time, as is their wont, refer to various amendments. There are about 84 pages of amendments, and interested hon. Members wishing to follow the debate will be scrabbling through trying to find a particular amendment to which reference may just have been made.

I suggest that it would be helpful, if it were possible, for us to have two lists of amendments, the traditional one, which is right and proper, and a further list that would be

composed of the same amendments but in numerical order. That would be very helpful to us and I see no reason why that should not be done.

The second point that I wish to raise with you, Mr. Morris——

The Chairman: Order. One point at a time, please. What I have tried to do in the provisional selection of amendments is quite clear. It should be within the ability of hon. Members to find their way round eight amendments, and hopefully, hon. Members will have done just a little preparation before coming into the Chamber.

Mr. Denzil Davies (Llanelli): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. In regard to the grouping of amendments, may I ask you to confirm that only the first of a group is moved but that there is no impediment or prohibition on any hon. Member speaking to other amendments in the group? May I further ask you to confirm that if, on other amendments in the group, an hon. Member wishes a separate vote to take place, he can ask for that to happen? My understanding of the general custom is that in most cases, such a separate vote is allowed.

The Chairman: The right hon. Gentleman is correct on his first point. On his second, relating to Divisions, an hon. Member can indeed ask. The decision whether there shall be a separate Division rests solely with the Chair.

Mr. Richard Shepherd (Aldridge-Brownhills): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. Almost the final words of the Explanatory Memorandum to the Bill are:

"The Bill will have no direct financial effect in the United Kingdom."

I am confused, if only because of the cohesion fund in the treaty and the fact that the British Government are now engaged in budgetary explorations, as President of the Community. So I cannot reconcile an assertion of that nature with what is contained in the treaty and what we are about to be asked to legislate for in the Bill. What is the ruling on the basis of an assertion of that nature, when the nation and the House know full well that financial implications for the country and taxpayers arise as a result of the consequences of the Bill?

The Chairman: I am grateful to the hon. Member for raising that point, but I must tell him that the Chair is not responsible for what is in the Bill. I suspect that the hon. Member might catch my eye and be able to question the Government, who will, no doubt, wish to refer to the point.

Mr. Benn: On a point of order, Mr. Morris. Returning to the referendum issue—*[Interruption.]* I return to it because it is important and the Chair has been helpful, but I raise what is an important point——

4.45 pm

The Chairman: Order. Is it a new dimension? I have ruled very clearly on the referendum issue. Many points are important. I hope that the right hon. Member is raising a new dimension; he is a senior colleague, and I shall listen attentively to his point of order.

Mr. Benn: I hope that you take seriously my points, Mr. Morris. I am not trying to delay or frustrate. Politically, the matter is important and I am trying to find a way round the difficulty.

As this is a provision for Community citizenship, why should not the Community pay the cost of the referendum, avoiding the problem of the money resolution? We are in entirely new territory now. Hitherto, there have never been resources to do anything in Britain, except from the British Government on the initiative of the Crown through the Treasury. Now we are in a new position and I am asking —I am sure that you will consider my request carefully, Mr. Morris—whether you will consider the possibility of an amendment being tabled saying that, before the Bill comes into effect, the Community shall be required to organise a referendum in this country at no direct cost to the taxpayer, because it would come out of the British contribution. I put that forward as a serious suggestion.

The Chairman: I am grateful to the right hon. Member for raising what is a new dimension. If he will submit a text, I shall look at it very carefully.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

The Chairman: Order. I note that most, if not all, of the hon. Members who are now rising have raised at least one point of order. Some have already raised two. I hope that they are now raising new points of order that have not been covered by any other hon. Member on either side of the House.

Mr. Bill Walker: On a point of order, Mr. Morris. Will it be in order, during the many debates that we are bound to have on the large groupings of amendments, for me to draw attention to the impact that amendments and clauses may or may not have on Scotland? I have particularly in mind matters over which Scotland now has control under its Scottish Office administration—its legal system and its education system.

The Chairman: Broadly, yes.

Sir Teddy Taylor: I raise my third—again, a genuine —point of order, Mr. Morris. *[Interruption.]* My other points of order were equally genuine, whatever some hon. Members may think.

We have found with other European treaties, and as a result of debates on European issues, a wide variation between what we thought we were voting for and what actually happened. That has not happened with normal domestic legislation. A good example of that was the merchant shipping legislation and its effect on Scottish fishermen.

Is it possible for you, Mr. Morris, as our chairman, to ask for written notes either from the Commission, which would seem the most appropriate, or from the European Court, for example, on issues that might show whether the United Kingdom would be under an obligation to join the ERM? I have read five different proposals and interpretations and I do not know which is right. The Government and Opposition do not know either, and we shall have to wait until we are told by the European Court. To save the time of the House and to prevent unnecessary and tedious debate, may I ask you to examine whether there is any procedure for you, as our Chairman, to ask for a ruling from the Commission or the European Court?

Mr. Budgen: On a point of order, Mr. Morris.

The Chairman: Order. It is clear that I am about to give a ruling. In any case, one at a time, please.

[The Chairman]

The occupants of the Government Front Bench will have heard what the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) said—the matter is certainly not one for the Chair—and I have no doubt that they will decide whether they can help him.

Mr. Cash: On a point of order, Mr Morris. I raise with you the question of the Queen's consent to the Bill. It is clear that the measure affects prerogative, and of course the Queen would be regarded as a citizen of the so-called union. In those circumstances, may I ask whether the Queen's consent has been obtained? I cannot recall that happening on Second Reading. I understand that in important or urgent circumstances, it may be given at any point during the proceedings.

Will you be good enough, Mr. Morris, to ensure that the Queen is not only asked, but is given an opportunity to be fully briefed on the implications of the legislation as respects her prerogative so that her consent may, if necessary, be given?

The Chairman: I am grateful to the hon. Member for raising that point, although I imagine that he will have read today's Order Paper. In case he missed it, I refer him to page 2484, where it says:

"European Communities (Amendment) Bill: Committee. (Queen's Consent to be signified on Third Reading)."

Mr. Bryan Gould (Dagenham): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. I seek your guidance on a point that arises on the first grouping of amendments but which may also arise on later groups. We are dealing in the Bill with a brief piece of domestic legislation, but we are looking through the measure to substantive provisions in the treaty. That is evident in the first group of amendments.

The lead amendment, No. 93, proposes that title I be added to the Bill—be included in the provisions that are incorporated in domestic law—but all the subsequent amendments, with the exception of No. 108, suggest that we add title I minus one or other of the articles in title I. That means that, unlike the provisions of a clause in a domestic piece of legislation, we are required to vote on the wider provision before voting on amendments to that provision.

In other words, if title I were clause 1, we would move and debate and presumably then vote on a succession of amendments to clause 1. Only then, when we had established the shape of clause 1, would we vote on the broad question of "clause stand part". That is a sensible and logical way of proceeding. By virtue of the way in which this group of amendments is constructed, however, we are required to vote—I assume, if the ordinary rules apply—on amendment No. 93; that is, on the overall question whether title I should be added to the Bill.

What I want to know from you, Mr. Morris, is what would be the effect of a decision in either direction on our ability to vote on subsequent amendments. I take the point that you made in response to my right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) a moment ago, but on the assumption that you were disposed to allow divisions on subsequent amendments, how would that be possible if we had voted either to add title I in its entirety or had voted not to add title I at all? What possibility would we have of voting on Amendments Nos 344, 345 and so on?

The Chairman: If the House chooses to add title I to the Bill, I shall have to consider the position. Otherwise I am quite happy with the selection of amendments that I have made.

Mr. Gould: Further to that——

The Chairman: Order. Sir Peter Tapsell.

Sir Peter Tapsell (East Lindsey): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. Is it the intention that votes will be taken immediately after a particular group of amendments has been debated? Also, would it be the intention that each one of those amendments, although grouped together, could be voted on separately when the time came?

The Chairman: The Chair will follow the normal procedure, which is that the votes will take place where they come in the Bill, except for the lead amendment. I have already dealt with the hon. Member's other point.

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): I should like your guidance on a similar point, Mr. Morris. I understand the necessity to group the large number of amendments under these headings, and in most cases I understand why one must wait until the amendment comes up, because often those amendments are somewhere later in the Bill. In the vast majority of cases now, however, the groups of amendments are at exactly the same place in the Bill as the one before, because of the narrow nature of the Bill. Will you therefore have discretion to call the amendments for a vote, if you accept them, in order, rather than wait for some subsequent time to vote on an amendment which is 10 or 13 amendments down the road, although they are all in the same place in the Bill? I understand why in normal Committee procedure one must wait: amendments grouped with others may come later in the Bill. In this case they are in identical positions, with all the amendments in the same spot.

For sheer simplicity and for the ease of understanding of hon. Members, is it in your discretion, if you accept amendments after the lead amendment and you allow us to have a vote on them, to call them straight away rather than wait for some esoteric moment?

The Chairman: Such discretion is not mine. We will follow the normal procedure as they come on the amendment paper. That does not remove the right of hon. Gentlemen to have a vote at the appropriate time.

Mr. Budgen: Further to the point of order made by my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor). Perhaps I could make a suggestion on which you, Mr. Morris, may be able to act. It would seem that the European Court cannot give an advisory opinion on anything except a proposed treaty between the Community and some external body; it therefore seems unlikely that the court can give us an advisory opinion. It is also perhaps unwise to obtain an opinion from the Commission because it is such a political body.

I am informed, however, that the Council has some 2,000 employees and a substantial legal staff in its employ, and I understand that it would be able to give an advisory opinion, particularly since, at the present time, the British Government hold the presidency. So I hope that you, Mr. Morris, will perhaps offer some word of advice to the Government.

May I take another point, before you rise, Mr. Morris——

The Chairman: Order. No. Those on the Front Bench will have heard the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. I am not in any way questioning your judgment and decisions in the Chair. I think that the whole Committee will agree that your response has been extremely helpful today in clarifying a number of areas where hon. Members on both sides of the Committee were somewhat confused about the relationship of the Bill to the treaty and other aspects, and how, for example, in response to the important point of order of the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), you explained how extraneous material which was encompassed in the treaty could perhaps, possibly by a vote, come to be part of the Bill, which some of us might regard as a difficult concept but none the less an important one for the Committee to consider. You have been very helpful and there have been a number of significant clarifications, so I am not questioning in any way your decisions in the Chair, Mr. Morris.

I note, however, that for over one hour and 20 minutes we have had points of order of varying quality, substance and depth. As one who, reflecting other hon. Members' wishes, would like to get on to debate the amendments in the very helpful combinations which you have selected and put them together—in clusters which are extremely rational—I feel that the sooner we can do so, with your approval and decision, the better. I sense that many hon. Members would like to make progress and start the debate.

The Chairman: I note that the hon. Members who are standing, with one exception, have had at least two points of order, if not three. I hope that they will find totally new territory—otherwise, I will propose that we start on the Bill.

Mr. Michael Connarty (Falkirk, East): I hope that it may be a new point of order, Mr. Morris. Having read all the amendments and new clauses, I find that no point has covered my concern about the definition of subsidiarity. As a new Member, I seek to know from you whether it is possible, even at this late stage, and having heard what other hon. Members have said about the difficulty of getting anything through the Clerks, to table a new clause relating to the definition of subsidiarity, which might clarify article 3B, which does not define subsidiarity in a way that anyone has found useful and merely obfuscates rather than clarifies. Would it be possible to bring in a new clause?

The Chairman: May I help the hon. Gentleman? There is plenty of time for any new clause. The Clerks are there to help me to ensure that the material that they bring before me is in order. That is their function, and they do it exceedingly well.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: I seek further clarification of the question raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd). I am not clear whether the Chair has the right to look at the question whether a Bill needs a money resolution. If, as a matter of fact, further financial resources are committed by the British Government under the treaty of union, is it a matter for the Chair whether the Bill will be valid without a money resolution? If not, how do hon. Members properly raise the issue in debate? It is critical for many reasons, not least because it is necessary to have a money resolution if some of the amendments are to be allowed.

The Chairman: I am not sure that I can help the hon. Gentleman a great deal. The Bill has had its Second Reading. It is on Second Reading that the hon. Gentleman should have raised such points. Further to that, those on the Government Front Bench will have heard him.

Mr. Skinner: You will know, Mr. Morris, that when an hon. Member who has no Government backing introduces a Bill, let us say, on a Friday, and manages to get it through Second Reading without a money resolution and, as a result of various changes in the course of proceedings, finally manages to get it through the House, there have been scores of occasions when the Government, because they have been satisfied with the nature of the Bill, have decided to allow a money resolution to be added. The Bill may not have started with one, but many times it has finished with one.

I suggest to you, Mr. Morris, that in this case any amendment which leads to the necessity for a money resolution could be treated in the same way as a private Member's Bill which starts off without Government backing. It is the same principle and it ought to be allowed on this occasion as well.

The Chairman: The hon. Gentleman is correct; a money resolution could be brought forward by the Government at any time; but it is not a matter for decision by the Chair.

5 pm

Mr. Marlow: There are points of order which are said to be helpful, but are not. This point of order is intended to be genuinely helpful, Mr. Morris. It is obvious to you that many hon. Members would like a debate on the subject of the referendum. It is obvious, if public opinion polls are anything to go by, that large numbers of people outside the House would agree. You have yourself signified that you would be happy if it were in order for an amendment to be put down which would allow the House to have a debate on a referendum. I am sure that you want to be as helpful as possible. There are in the House some of the best brains in the country—or people who think that they have the best brains in the country. Amendment No. 89, which is obviously out of order, because it has been so ruled, says:

"This Act shall come into operation on such date as the Secretary of State may"—

The Chairman: Order. There is no point in the hon. Gentleman reading out amendments that are out of order. I am happy to have any amendment on any subject so long as it is in order. On the referendum, I have made the position abundantly clear. I have made it clear three times underlined, and I cannot say any more on the referendum.

Mr. Marlow: May I finish my point of order?

The Chairman: I thought that the hon. Gentleman had finished, because he was about to quote something that is out of order.

Mr. Marlow: Can you help the House and those who think that they are the best brains in the country by saying what parts of that amendment are weak, so that we can put our brains together to strengthen it and fulfil the will of the House, and your will as well, Mr. Morris?

The Chairman: I cannot write the amendment for the hon. Gentleman; he must do his own work.

Mr. Spearing: On a point of order, Mr. Morris. A short while ago, in response to the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash), you drew our attention to the Third Reading of the Bill, where Queen's Consent to the prerogative was mentioned. There have been many attempts, both in Select Committee and in questions, to get a Government view on whether the monarch, the Crown, with or without family, with or without taxes, will be a citizen of the European union. Article 8 of the treaty reads:

"Citizens of the Union shall enjoy the rights conferred by this Treaty and be subject to the duties imposed thereby."

I infer that possibly the fact that the Queen's prerogative has been placed at the disposal of the House in this respect means that, if this treaty is indeed ratified and comes into effect, provided all nations concerned ratify it, the monarch, whoever that may be in the future, will be subject to the duties imposed thereby as a citizen of the union. The constitutional implications of that with regard to foreign affairs, security, the administration of justice and the courts' decisions are, as you will know, profound.

I do not necessarily expect you to answer immediately, Mr. Morris, but how can the House find out whether the monarch of the day will become a citizen of the union? If you cannot rule on that now, because you may not know yourself, can you indicate to the House how it can find out before we reach the debate on this most important matter?

The Chairman: The hon. Gentleman has been here a long time. He knows that it is not for the Chair to rule on the interpretation of the Bill.

Mr. Denzil Davies: Further to the point of order raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands). You said, Mr. Morris, that you had no discretion to take a vote on an amendment immediately following the lead amendment and that the vote had to take place in the order of the amendment on the amendment paper. I accept that, of course, but can you tell me why you do not have discretion and what rule prevents your having it?

The Chairman: The right hon. Gentleman knows that the amendments are put down in the order in which they are tabled—first come, first served.

Mr. Gould: May I ask you, Mr. Morris, for a slight elaboration of the ruling which you kindly gave in answer to the point of order I raised earlier? Am I to understand that if the lead amendment in the first group of amendments were carried—so that title I was added to the Bill—there would be no insuperable procedural or logical problem about subsequent Divisions on amendments to add title I minus one or two articles to the Bill? In other words, are you telling us that it would be, as is ordinarily the case, a matter entirely within your discretion whether to allow a Division on those provisions, or is there some further difficulty that we shall have to face?

The Chairman: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, but it is a hypothetical question. I would have to consider the matter if and when we reached that position, and it would clearly require very serious consideration.

Mr. Budgen: I am sure that you, Mr. Morris, and the House will agree that we all wish to pace ourselves in the consideration of the Bill and the treaty. I have no doubt that the House would like to ensure that we have proper consideration of all parts of the treaty, so that the last part is as well considered as the first. You may have noticed —I was not a party to these discussions—that it is alleged by my hon. Friend the Member for Great Yarmouth (Mr. Carttiss) that a very significant promise was given to him in order to obtain his support in the voting in the paving debate. It is said by some that it was merely an anticipation and explanation of the likely course of the proceedings on the Bill.

Please do not get up for a moment, Mr. Morris; just let me finish my point.

The Chairman: Order. The only reason that I get up is that the hon. Gentleman is talking about issues that are nothing to do with the Chair. I am sorry; I can only conduct the debate in the Chamber when we are discussing matters on which the Chair has responsibility. The Chair has no responsibility for the details of promises made by one hon. Gentleman to another on a paving motion. If it was a different point of order, the hon. Gentleman should not have started on that basis. I will give him one chance: let us have a point of order for the Chair and not something to do with Government policy.

Mr. Budgen: With great respect, Mr. Morris, I have no doubt that you wish to know how it is planned that these proceedings should be timed. It is a relevant question for you and for the House——

The Chairman: Order. I have no wish to know how they are to be timed.

Clause 1

Treaty on European Union

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): I beg to move amendment No. 93, in page 1, line 9, after 'Titles', insert 'I'.

The Chairman: With this it will be convenient to take the following amendments: No. 108, in page 1, line 9, after 'Titles', insert

'I (except Article F on page 8 Cm 934)'.

No. 313, in page 1, line 9, after 'Titles', insert 'I (except Article E)'.

No. 344, in page 1, line 9, after 'Titles', insert 'I (except Article A).'

No. 345, in page 1, line 9, after 'Titles', insert 'I (except Article B).'

No. 346, in page 1, line 9, after 'Titles', insert 'I (except Article C).'

No. 347, in page 1, line 9, after 'Title', insert 'I (except Article D)'.

No. 348, in page 1, line 9, after 'Title', insert 'I (except Article F)'.

Sir Russell Johnston: So we have begun at last, Mr. Morris.

It is worth recalling to the House that when the Danish referendum took place there was, two days later, a meeting of the Council of Ministers in Oslo at which all member states, including the United Kingdom agreed to proceed with ratification forthwith—something that we have notably failed thus far to do, although many other countries have so proceeded.

You said very early on in dealing with points of order, Mr. Morris, that this Bill is not about ratification. You emphasised that, and said that it is specifically not about ratification. In legal terms you are certainly right; I am the last person to argue with the Chair about that; but the consequence of not passing this Bill would be that the treaty would not be ratified, even if that is not in proper legal constitutional terms the real situation.

A limited number of amendments can be made without affecting the purity of the treaty. Many people have said that this short Bill can hardly be changed, and that, if it is, it will wreck the treaty and therefore Maastricht will fall.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Wouldn't that be wonderful?

Sir Russell Johnston: What the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) regards as wonderful and what I regard as wonderful are wide apart.

It cannot be said, however, that, if amendment No. 93 is passed, it will break the treaty. It can be argued—no doubt the Minister will do so—that it affects British domestic legislation. That is a different question, and I shall consider it, but it is worth stressing that the insertion of the titles does not change or breach the treaty or nullify ratification.

Interestingly, the same applies to the opt-outs that the United Kingdom has entered into. I am not sure whether it is proper to raise a point of order in the middle of a speech, but if, for example, the Committee decided that it wished to reinsert the social chapter which the Government have opted out of, it would affect other member countries, because they each would have to introduce a new short protocol in their own Parliaments reversing the opt out that they had previously agreed. It would not, however, affect the integrity of the treaty. I think that I am right in saying that. That point was not made in the many points of order, but we shall have to consider it. It certainly does not apply to title I or titles V to VII, which may be inserted without affecting the treaty.

We contend that hon. Members should have the right not simply to debate the treaty but to approve the title. We are arguing about ratification a la carte, whereby the Government choose the bits that they want to ratify. I think that Britain is the only country to have excluded Parliament's right to express an opinion or accept a part of the treaty. Most other member states introduced a simple Bill, to which the treaty was attached. That is not how we are proceeding, perhaps because of the nature of our legislative practice and the fact that, unfortunately, we do not have a written constitution.

The Minister will argue that title I is declaratory and therefore has no sense in law and that, as the other titles are intergovernmental, Parliament has no role. Ratification is a well-established process in international law. The 19th-century dictionary of diplomacy by Baron de Cussy defines it as

"the act by which the sovereigns in whose name a treaty has been negotiated and concluded, approve the provisions of this treaty and undertake to put it into effect."

The point about the sovereign is raised often enough by the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn). The days have long passed when, in reality, kings were sovereign in this respect.

Dicey, writing on the United Kingdom constitution, took the view

"that the sovereignty of Parliament is the dominant characteristic of our political institutions."

On the subject of making treaties—a power

"in the hands of the Crown and exercised in fact by the executive government"—

he took the view that this power is dependent on the will of Parliament, which may regulate it, abolish it or take a decision

"making the assent of the Houses of Parliament necessary to the validity of a treaty."

That, essentially, is the argument that I am advancing. As long ago as Aristotle, it was argued that sovereignty in a democracy belonged to the citizens.

5.15 pm

Without wishing to enter into the arguments about a referendum, it must be noted that Ireland, Denmark and France held referendums on ratification—referendums on the whole treaty. When pressed by Members who support referendums, among whom I do not number myself, the Prime Minister said:

"It has always been my view that these matters are best dealt with by the House because we are ultimately answerable to the electorate for the decisions we take."—[*Official Report*, 4 November 1992; Vol 213, c. 292.]

That is fair and I agree with it, but, if that is true, surely the House has a right to express its view on the whole treaty, not just part of it.

Amendments Nos. 108, 313, and 344 to 348 are being taken with amendment No. 93. Those amendments accept the insertion of the title, with the exception of a particular article in it. Amendment No. 108 which stands in the name of the Leader of the Opposition, excludes article F, which deals with the European convention on human rights. The other amendments, which all stand in the name of the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash), who appears to have departed and is probably writing more amendments somewhere, deal with each of the various articles.

I should be interested to hear the argument advanced by Labour Front-Bench spokesmen, because there is some suggestion that, if the House passed title I, including article F, it might have the effect in law of Britain having ratified the convention on human rights, which we have not formally ratified although we shadow it, rather as we did the mark. I should have thought that it was desirable to ratify—a point that was made in the Dimbleby lectures only a couple of nights back. I agree with that.

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton): Last night.

Sir Russell Johnston: I accept the hon. Gentleman's correction; he obviously knows which day it is, which is a positive step forward for all of us. I can assure him that, by the time the Committee stage is over, he will not know which day it is, but I suspect that few other hon. Members will either.

Article A of the title establishes European union, with the United Kingdom as part of it. That is an important decision, and many hon. Members passionately oppose the idea. Under that article, the Government became very excited about the union being "federal", and fought ferociously to get the word excised. Ultimately, they succeeded, and instead we have a union in which decisions are taken as closely as possible to the citizen—the famous word "subsidiarity", which appears in article B.

I should have thought that the establishment of European union is an extremely important matter and should not be slid round. In the Government booklet that

[Sir Russell Johnston]

was produced miraculously in November to describe what they would do during their presidency in July, little reference is made to European union. It says a little on page 11 but is concerned mostly with the single market and says how exciting that all is.

The creation of European union is profound and exceedingly important, particularly as it is supposed to be organised to demonstrate consistency and solidarity in the future. I should have thought that the House should debate and decide on that issue.

Article B includes the first reference in the Maastricht treaty to issues such as promoting

"economic . . . union, ultimately including a single currency".

It also includes

"the eventual framing of a common defence policy"

and the "acquis communautaire", about which the hon. Member for New Forest (Sir P. McNair-Wilson) was so excited earlier. He is now bobbing up and down with even more excitement.

Sir Patrick McNair-Wilson: I am not that excited, but will the hon. Gentleman translate "acquis communautaire" for the benefit of the House? It may be common parlance in his constituency and all his constituents may know immediately what it means, but why is it not translated in the article?

Sir Russell Johnston: Few matters are discussed more often in my constituency than the acquis communautaire. Asking me to translate it is rather like asking me to give the English for "spaghetti" or "blitzkrieg"——

Mr. Skinner: Or "bullshit".

Sir Russell Johnston: No, that is different. It is an English word with which the hon. Gentleman is deeply familiar.

The acquis communautaire, as the hon. Member for New Forest knows perfectly well, is the corpus—another foreign word—of Community law. It is the body of Community law, if the hon. Gentleman prefers. The expression "acquis communautaire" has therefore become an accepted description.

Mr. Dalyell: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that, had we had a common defence policy, we might not have been involved in many of the mistakes, which are ever more evident, of the Gulf war?

Sir Russell Johnston: I remember long ago when we debated devolution in the House and the hon. Gentleman fought those proposals night after night. He had a good technique, which was to pick any policy—it did not matter which one——

Mr. Dalyell: It did matter which policy. I was very selective. I am extremely choosy about policies.

Sir Russell Johnston: The hon. Gentleman would find out from experts in the subject whether the matter might be worsened by devolution. Experts being experts, they would usually say that that was possible. The hon. Gentleman would then make a long speech demonstrating that it was probable.

The hon. Gentleman picks the Gulf war as a matter on which attitudes may go one way or the other if we had a common defence policy. I thought that the Gulf war was necessary. If we had a common defence policy, I believe that we would have taken decisive action earlier in the former Yugoslavia, but that is a matter of opinion. One can never guarantee that structures, however more beneficial they are than existing ones, will necessarily produce the right political answers, although I hope that they would.

The essence of my argument is that matters as fundamentally important as article B, even if expressed in a declaratory fashion—as they are—should be emphasised in the House and made clear to the public at large, and Parliament should approve them specifically. If we declare that we wish to see the eventual framing of a common defence policy, the whole country is obliged to be committed to it through the treaty.

Mr. Jim Marshall (Leicester, South): The hon. Gentleman argues for including article B in the original Act of Parliament. He will be aware that article B, in a declaratory form, includes the three pillars of the Maastricht treaty: bringing the original treaty up to date; the pillar on home affairs; and the pillar on foreign affairs and security. He will know that the Government chose that form to exclude home affairs, foreign affairs and security from the European Community's competence. Would the amendment, which would include that in the original Act of Parliament, bring home affairs, foreign affairs and security within the competence of the Commission?

Sir Russell Johnston: No, the amendment would not have that effect. I simply contend that what already exists in the treaty as a declaration of intent should be approved of by Parliament. The amendment does not change the treaty in any respect. A number of other countries have approved the entire treaty.

Mr. Marshall: I realise that the hon. Gentleman and I have both been in Paris this week—perhaps he took an earlier flight than me—but he misses the point. The Government are keen to exclude foreign affairs, security and home affairs from the European Commission's competence, which is why they chose the three-pillar approach in the Maastricht treaty. Would the hon. Gentleman's amendment to the original European Communities legislation bring foreign affairs and security and home affairs within the competence of the European Commission?

Sir Russell Johnston: As far as I know, the answer is no —not because I do not want them to be brought within the competence of the European Commission and institutions, because I do, in respect of both foreign affairs and defence. However, the inclusion of article B in the Bill would not have that effect, any more than it has by being in the treaty signed by the Government.

Mr. Denzil Davies: This may be a point for the Minister, but I understand that the Bill creates within the United Kingdom certain Community rights and obligations. As title I does not need to be incorporated because it demands no rights or obligations internally in the United Kingdom, what is the point of including it in the Bill, as the hon. Gentleman wants to do?

Sir Russell Johnston: For the very reason that I have already explained, but perhaps the right hon. Gentleman was dozing. As far as I know, the Parliament of every other

Community country has approved the whole, not just part, of the treaty. Even if we are talking about declarations of intent rather than specific legislative requirements, we have a right to express a view.

5.30 pm

Mr. Davies: If the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, it is he who has been dozing. We are not talking about ratification. Ratification is for the Crown. The treaty can be ratified according to United Kingdom law. Other countries may ratify treaties differently. This Bill is not about ratification but about incorporating certain rights and obligations in the internal law of the United Kingdom so that courts can enforce them. I ask the hon. Gentleman again: on that basis, what on earth is the point of incorporating title 1?

Sir Russell Johnston: We had that argument at the beginning of my remarks. You, Mr. Morris, made it clear at the beginning, when dealing with various points of order, that the Bill does not have the legislative effect of ratifying the treaty. The hon. Gentleman is correct:. I know all about that. It is also true that, if the Bill is rejected by the Committee, it will have the political effect of the treaty not being ratified.

Mr. Benn: Will the hon. Gentleman help us on one point? He is a fully declared federalist. He said so, and he would be in favour of the Bill including title 1. Can he confirm again the view expressed so powerfully by the leader of his party, that the Liberal Democrats support the most federal development of Maastricht and, anyway, the Maastricht treaty as it is before us, and favour a referendum on the matter? There is all the difference in the world between people who favour a union but say that the public should have no say in the matter, and those who favour a union but say that they recognise its importance and think that the public should decide for themselves.

Sir Russell Johnston: There are two different questions there. One is whether one approves of federation; the other is whether one approves of a referendum. I take the latter point first. The leader of the Liberal Democrats has frequently expressed his support for a referendum; he has for a long time been consistently on record in that regard. However, that is not the official past conference policy of the party, and there are others within the party, including myself, as I said about 10 mintues ago, who do not necessarily agree with him or with the right hon. Gentleman that referendums are necessarily the best way of making decisions.

When one considers the Danish referendum and the fact that opinion polls have demonstrated that some 20 per cent. of the Danish population who voted in the referendum did not know what Maastricht was two weeks before the vote took place, one sees that that is not the wisest way to take a complicated decision.

I know perfectly well that there are strong and consistent arguments in favour of referenda. There are hon. Members who regard referendums as a desirable general part of the constitution, rather as is the case in Switzerland, which is the one country which uses referendums as a regular form of making decisions. But there are others who, for more substantial reasons, believe that representative forms of government are a better way of reaching such a complicated decision.

The Chairman: Order. The amendment is not about referendums. It is appropriate to make a passing comment on referendums, but it is not in order to develop the arguments for or against referenda.

Sir Russell Johnston: I am grateful for your ruling, Mr. Morris.

Mr. Marlow: The hon. Gentleman has just said that 80 per cent. of the Danish electorate knew what the Maastricht treaty was. The Maastricht treaty is being debated by the Committee. Would the hon. Gentleman like to give an opinion on how many right hon. and hon. Members know what the treaty of Maastricht is?

I have good news for the hon. Gentleman. Christmas has come early. He said that he would like the Community institutions to be involved in foreign and security policy, and probably home affairs and immigration. Article J.9 says:

"The Commission shall be fully associated with the work carried out in the common foreign and security policy field."

Article J.7 says:

"The Presidency shall consult the European Parliament on the main aspects and the basic choices of the common foreign and security policy and shall ensure that the views of the European Parliament are duly taken into consideration."

If the Bill is approved, the hon. Gentleman has won the match. It is there.

Mr. Jim Marshall: On a point of order, Mr. Morris. I realise that you have just said that referendums are not to be included in the debate, but I draw your attention to title I, article F, which says:

"The Union shall respect the national identities of its Member states, whose systems of government are founded on the principles of democracy."

You and the House, will know that, in a number of member countries referenda are an accepted and legitimate means of making decisions. If people refer to referendums in other countries and in Britain as well, that would be covered by title I, article F.

The Chairman: I do not think that the hon. Gentleman heard my ruling clearly. I said that it was perfectly proper for referendums to be alluded to or referred to, but not to have a substantive debate on a referendum.

Mr. Marshall: Why not?

The Chairman: It is not relevant to the amendment that we are debating. If the hon. Gentleman was in the Chamber earlier, he must have heard all the points of order about referendums, and if he was not, he should have been.

Sir Russell Johnston: I am grateful for your ruling, Mr. Morris. I think that you intend that we should refer to it en passant.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): Or de temps en temps.

Sir Russell Johnston: Yes.

I was referring to article B and there is no point in referring in detail to the other articles. I have no doubt that we shall hear from the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) on article F. I find it difficult to understand why he would wish to exclude article F if he deserted title I. I should have thought that he, like myself, is in favour of the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton): So that the hon. Gentleman does not go down a blind alley, I should say that that amendment was designed, as so many other amendments have to be designed, to allow a debate on the subject of the European convention on human rights, no more no less.

Sir Russell Johnston: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman.

I wish to make only three more substantial points.

Mr. Richard Shepherd: Is it the hon. Gentleman's position, and that of his party, that the article could be brought into effect by prerogative power? As has been pointed out, it seeks to establish a union and citizenship. How could that be effected by prerogative power, when the very last paragraph of article F says:

"The Union shall provide itself with the means necessary to obtain its objectives and carry through its policies."

I am interested in whether the hon. Gentleman is moving the amendment because he believes that that title I cannot be achieved by prerogative power.

Sir Russell Johnston: I am arguing that the title, which I quite accept is declaratory and sets out a number of desirable objectives—

Mr. Shepherd: But it is legally binding.

Sir Russell Johnston: Yes, but it is difficult to make an objective legally binding. An objective is an aim, a hope—a desire to move in a particular direction. In this day and age, Parliament ought to be able to pronounce upon the matter, and I thought that the hon. Gentleman would agree.

Mr. Shepherd: My intervention was made in the spirit of inquiry, because I think that I will vote for the title's inclusion in the Bill. I was merely trying to establish the basis on which that proposition was being advanced. I asked the hon. Gentleman whether it was appropriate, whether it was justiciable by the European Court—in which case it would be legally binding on us—and whether the Government maintain that, through the use of the prerogative power, they can effect such a provision.

I am also interested to know why the hon. Gentleman does not think that article F—this point was seized on by my right hon. Friend the Minister of State—does not require a money resolution.

Sir Russell Johnston: I explained my position, and I am glad to hear that the hon. Gentleman has been convinced by my oratory and is likely to vote for the inclusion of the title. The aims set out in the title and the implications of establishing European union directly concern every one of us, and should be the subject of approval by Parliament.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): The initial provision in article A makes reference to the development of a union, yet the Liberal Democrats favour federalism. Are not the title's provisions a step towards a unitary system? Subsidiarity itself is a centralised notion that dictates that certain aspects can dribble down and be devolved, whereas federalism specifies particular responsibilities for national Governments and the federal body. Are not the Liberal Democrats' principles being eroded by the title? Other right hon. and hon. Members might want to vote for the amendment, but it is difficult to understand why the Liberal Democrats proposed it.

Sir Russell Johnston: Although the word "federal" was removed by the Government in negotiation, the way in which the majority of our Community partners view the nature of an evolving union and the notion of subsidiarity is significantly different from the way in which the British Government view them. Chancellor Kohl talks about subsidiarity and union in terms of federalism.

In that regard, I will quote from our debate last June, when the hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) put the point extremely appositely:

"If we had a federal state in Europe today, we should have more sovereignty guaranteed for the House than we have at present."—[*Official Report*, 26 June 1991; Vol. 193, c. 1076.]

The hon. Gentleman repeated himself in December, saying:

"our federal position would be a step ahead of what we have now. At least when a country is federal it knows what belongs to it and what belongs to others."—[*Official Report*, 18 December 1991; Vol. 201, c. 360.]

I agree. I know that what was established at Maastricht is not yet a federal state, but I am convinced that it is moving in that direction.

Mr. John Butcher (Coventry, South-West): The hon. Gentleman knows that the word "union" evokes strong responses from Ulstermen and a different response from Scotsmen. The meaning of subsidiarity to a German may mean devolution for Scotland, unwanted devolution for the regions of Britain, and an unwanted disassembly of the Union for the people of Ulster.

We are addressing a constitutional point, and the hon. Gentleman has a good record of examining such questions. He has been consistent with his party's policy on devolution, so does he believe that the objective—to use his word—is the German style of devolution/federalism/subsidiarity, or the citizenship of a monolithic state? The hon. Gentleman is opening up a key question.

5.45 pm

Sir Russell Johnston: I believe that the Community could not hold together if it became a monolithic state, given the diversity of its peoples. Almost inevitably—although perhaps more slowly than I would wish—one will see the development of federal institutions. The Community is already a sort of incomplete federation.

As to the different meaning of words to different people, one Conservative Back Bencher sensibly turned to his dictionary. If one looks up the word "federalise" in the "Oxford English Dictionary" one finds the following explanation:

"unite in a federal union . . . to decentralise; to take from the central authority and hand over to federal bodies in the state, or to federal states in a union."

That is the OED definition, but the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs seems anxious to rewrite that excellent book.

Mr. Cash: The hon. Gentleman may have read the evidence given on 5 February by Paul Taylor, senior lecturer in international relations at the London school of economics to the Foreign Affairs Select Committee, in which he clearly stated, in relation to the Maastricht agreement:

"The expression a European union is a term that was included in the preamble and which appears at a number of other places, but which in practice appears to signify little that would not have been indicated by the term federalism in this context."

In other words, Mr. Taylor was saying that there is no distinction to be drawn between the arrangements provided by the treaty and a federal system.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones) *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Cash: My right hon. Friend, in his usual jocular manner, thinks that is wrong, but I look forward to hearing him explain—which I do not think he will find it easy to do—how the arrangements for which title I and the rest of the treaty provide—particularly having regard to the central banking arrangements for the whole of Europe—can easily be distinguished from a federal system.

Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will distinguish between the arrangements in this country—with a central bank at the centre of gravity for Europe as a whole, with unelected, unaccountable bankers having the degree of power that they will—and the word "federal".

Sir Russell Johnston: I will decline the hon. Gentleman's invitation, and take this rare opportunity to agree with almost everything he said. I thought that his definition was very accurate, and it is exactly what I would like to see.

Sir Teddy Taylor: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for quoting me as an authority, and I glad that he agrees with me. I was seeking to make the point that a federal state would be a fundamental advance on what we have now and on what is in the Maastricht treaty—not the creation of a federal Europe in which they belong to something and we belong to something, but the creation of a unitary European union in which there would be central decision making and hardly anything guaranteed for national institutions.

Does the hon. Gentleman agree that those of us who are inclined to support his common-sense amendment to allow Parliament to debate title I would not in any sense be supporting that title? We would simply be saying that such a provision should be discussed by right hon. and hon. Members and not be a device used by some—perhaps erroneously—to have the Bill presented in such a way that amendments are not selected and issues are not properly discussed?

Sir Russell Johnston: Having heard the hon. Gentleman speak many times, I have a pretty clear idea of what he does and does not believe, so I do not accuse him as he suggests that other people may.

In my definition, subsidiarity is federalism, because it is written down, entrenched and guaranteed—and the hon. Gentleman asked me whether an institutionalised federal state would represent an advance on Maastricht. Yes, of course it would. We have never said that we regard Maastricht as an end point—far from it—but in the present circumstances we consider that it represents a notable advance, and that its rejection would have a severe adverse effect on the political situation in the Community and beyond, in the eastern countries and in the European Free Trade Association.

Sir Patrick McNair-Wilson: The hon. Gentleman was generous enough to congratulate me on using a French dictionary to try to unravel "acquis communautaire". As he has just mentioned subsidiarity, I wonder whether he could show me an English dictionary which contains a definition of that word.

Sir Russell Johnston: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman could try the Library. I am sure that the people there would help him.

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

Mr. Bernard Jenkin (Colchester, North) *rose*——

Sir Russell Johnston: I must, bring my speech to a conclusion. I am not in the business of extending the debate. The hon. Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin) has not intervened so far, so I shall give way to him.

Mr. Jenkin: Is the hon. Gentleman saying that the Government's victory in negotiating the words "federal vocation" out of the treaty has made no difference to the meaning of the treaty? Given his view that the treaty takes us towards a type of federal union, does he suggest that the Government, albeit inadvertently, seek to sell the treaty on a somewhat false prospectus?

Hon. Members: Say yes.

Sir Russell Johnston: I could pretty nearly say yes—but, among other things, the hon. Gentleman referred to the Government's "victory". I wish that Conservative Members—and all hon. Members—would stop using such warlike language about negotiations within the European Community. Every time a Minister returns from Brussels, we are told, "We defeated them," or, "We beat them," or, "We did them down." One sees the image of Spitfires whirling in salute above. That is not the way forward. Perhaps one of the reasons why the Government have not been so successful in many areas of negotiation is because they approach matters in too confrontational a way.

The hon. Member for Colchester, North said that I believed that the rest of Europe wishes to move the Community towards the creation of a federal Europe. That is not my idea alone; I am sure that many independent observers would accept it. I realise that the British Government do not wish to move in that direction. They have made that quite clear, so they are not deceiving anyone. What emerges will be the result of interplay between the various political forces. That will determine the outcome for us.

The Liberal Democrats' goal is a democratic, accountable, federal Europe, embracing all the countries that wish to join and respecting their national and cultural identities.

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Russell Johnston: Oh, all right.

Mr. Mitchell: Mine is a more friendly intervention. I shall revert to the earlier argument, because I believe that my right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) had a more correct assessment of what we are doing. Would the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) care to wade a little further into his pile of "acquis liberale" by telling me what will happen if we accept the amendment?

Paragraph 2 of article F of the treaty says:

"The Union shall respect fundamental rights, as guaranteed by the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms signed in Rome on 4 November 1950".

[Mr. Mitchell]

If we incorporate title I, as the Liberal Democrats' amendment suggests, would the European convention on human rights be incorporated into British law, as many of us feel would be appropriate?

Sir Russell Johnston: I do not think so, although I would wish——

Mr. Mitchell: Then what is the point?

Sir Russell Johnston: What is the point of what? I have already explained at length to the hon. Gentleman why I think that the title should be approved by Parliament—because it contains a series of declarations of considerable seriousness, on which Parliament should have the right to express a view. That does not mean that the provision goes as far as I would wish. I should certainly favour our recognising the European convention on human rights.

Mr. Barnes: As hon. Members who believe in open government and freedom of information, surely we must get the meaning of the word "federalism" correct, and understand what subsidiarity implies. Is it really being said that subsidiarity is a subterfuge being used to move us towards federalism? I stand for federalism, and I should like the Bill to provide for it, but that is not what we have been offered.

We are offered something else, which is described as subsidiarity, so subsidiarity must be clarified. If that cannot be done in such a way as to turn subsidiarity into federalism, subsidiarity should be recognised for what it is—an attempt to persuade us to accept moves towards a unitary system, and a union.

Sir Russell Johnston: I believe that the hon. Gentleman would agree that the Government have a record of centralising control within the United Kingdom. Does he also agree that, when they use the word "subsidiarity", they mean subsidiarity from Brussels to Whitehall? The Government want subsidiarity to stop at Whitehall. But my definition would mean subsidiarity from Brussels to Edinburgh and Liverpool, and to the various regions of England, Scotland and Wales. That is what we mean in connection with federalism, too.

Of course we know that the Government's definition of subsidiarity and their concept of decentralisation are different from mine—and doubtless different from those of the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes).

Mr. Barnes: The Liberal Democrats are supposed to be a democratic party.

Sir Russell Johnston: We are.

Mr. Barnes: A democratic party must opt clearly for a principle by which the various positions begin to become clear. The word "subsidiarity" has never been used in legal or constitutional documents, nor to explain democratic positions. It was used in a papal encyclical, and operated within structures such as the Catholic Church. The word was applied to fascist Italy, to define the rights of the individual.

The document in question contains the mildest of trickle-down provisions; some things might be dealt with at a lower level, but most things would be done at the centre. That is like someone going to the monarch, or to the tsar, with icons, and hoping that he will not be killed. What comes down to the lower level is entirely dependent on the centre.

Sir Russell Johnston: I take note of what the hon. Gentleman says, and I am sure that the Minister does, too.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): It is the long-standing policy of the Liberal Democrats to seek the incorporation of the European convention on human rights into our domestic law, and that policy has been openly supported by the Master of the Rolls, Sir Thomas Bingham, in his annual address to the Bar Council, and —as recently as last night—by Lord Chief Justice Taylor, in his Dimbleby lecture.

Does my hon. Friend agree that, unfortunately, because the Government do not intend to include in the Bill matters which do not give rise to Community rights and obligations—in particular, the provisions of article L of title 7—which excludes from the consideration of the European Court of Justice all matters which do not directly arise from the original treaties of the European Community, even if we adopt title I into the Bill as the amendment proposes, we shall still not be able to incorporate the European convention into British law? That is regrettable, but unavoidable in light of the Government's policy, which has no doubt been imposed on other colleagues in the Community.

Sir Russell Johnston: I agree with everything my hon. Friend says. I also referred to the Dimbleby lecture in that connection. I have made the case as clearly as possible——

6 pm

Mr. Marlow: The hon. Gentleman's advice on this issue will probably be very valuable and much more so than that of many other hon. Members.

It has been made clear to us that the Committee is not about ratifying the Bill: it is about incorporating parts of the treaty into United Kingdom legislation. In the amendment, the hon. Gentleman seeks also to incorporate title I into British legislation. I am tempted. I have a great deal of sympathy for what he is trying to achieve, and I may well support him in the Lobby later.

I ask the hon. Gentleman to advise the House. Let us suppose that we do not support his amendment. Let us suppose that even the Government oppose the amendment and it is defeated. Let us suppose that other amendments that seek to incorporate other parts of the treaty into British legislation at a later stage are also defeated. How, then, is the whole of the treaty ratified? Through this process, we are legislating only part of the treaty. How, therefore, is the rest of the treaty ratified?

Sir Russell Johnston: The short answer is that, because the Chair very properly decided that the amendment should be selected—the Chair has also selected other amendments concerning other missing titles—the House has the opportunity to express an opinion on whether it wishes titles to be included or not. The opportunity exists. We know that, in strict terms, the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) is right. We are not ratifying; we are talking about the parts of the treaty which have a direct consequence on British law. As the hon. Gentleman well knows, the fact is that, if we defeat the

Bill, the effect will be that we do not ratify. I know that that is a paradox, but it is true, as the hon. Gentleman knows. I repeat that we should include title I of the treaty.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I hope that it will be helpful to the Committee if I seek in the first instance not only to reply to the points made by the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston), but to seek to place in context the important debate that we are about to have. If I am lucky enough to catch your eye later, Mr. Morris, I shall seek to respond to points made subsequently by the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson), who will no doubt speak on the amendment he has tabled, and to the points raised by other hon. Members.

The House owes a debt to the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber for tabling the amendment because it enables us to have a debate that is essentially about the structure of the treaty. It is important for us to have that debate and it is timely that the Committee should open with it.

I hope that the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber will be persuaded by my remarks, and by what subsequently takes place in Committee, that the wisest course would be for him to withdraw the amendment. That is my objective. Curiously enough, the finger was put by the hon. Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Marshall)——

Mr. Jim Marshall: I hope that it was not my finger but the intellectual power of my comments that influenced the Minister.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The hon. Gentleman, aided and abetted by the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies), went to the heart of what, as I hope that hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber will accept after the debate, is the weakness of the argument.

There are two sides to the amendment. The hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber replied frankly when the hon. Member for Leicester, South said, rightly, that the purpose of the structure of the treaty—this is at the centre of the Government's negotiating position and I believe that the Opposition are not unsupportive of that position—is to separate out common foreign and security policy, and interior and justice policy, and to make them separate intergovernmental pillars and not part of the treaty of Rome. The hon. Member for Leicester, South asked whether that was not the purpose of the whole treaty.

The hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber replied, perfectly frankly—this is the position of the Liberal Democrats and will come as no surprise to anyone—that he indeed wanted to bring those areas of intergovernmental activity into the treaty of Rome. He wants a single structure—what we here have come to call a federal state. I realise that in the course of the Committee we shall have some interesting debates about what the word "federal" means. It means different things in different countries. That is what the Liberal Democrats aspire to.

There is a certain amount of sense in what the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber seeks to do. I do not want Conservative or Opposition Members to be confused about the matter. In seeking to move title I on to the face of the treaty, one is taking a step towards a single-structured treaty. That is what the hon. Gentleman wishes to see. I hope that none of my hon. Friends will be deceived by that.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor *rose*——

Mr. Benn *rose*——

Mr. Garel-Jones: I will give way, but I want first to complete this part of my argument so that the House well understands what we shall be asked to vote on when the Question is put.

The hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber and his party are clear about the matter. It must, therefore, have come as some surprise to the hon. Gentleman to find that the amendment enjoyed the support of my hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd). I will explain why I believe that my hon. Friend will give that support and why he will even gain support from my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) whose intentions on the Maastricht treaty and on the Bill are well known to the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber and to the Committee. My hon. Friend's intentions are perfectly proper, but they are not the ones that the hon. Gentleman seeks.

Mr. Benn: Whether the amendment which seeks to incorporate title I is in the Bill or not—that is all that the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) proposes—the Government intend to ratify title I. There is no objection to the words. It appears that the Government do not want too much of the attention of the House of Commons and of the country to be drawn to title I by incorporating it in the Bill—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."] Of course. If title I is in the Bill, everyone can see it.

People do not study treaties, including the aims and objectives. Acts of Parliament do not get studied very much, but at least they are looked at. Treaties are never looked at. I hope that the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber will not be persuaded to withdraw the amendment. If he does withdraw it, the Government will go ahead and ratify the treaty.

The second point raises matters of tactics for the Edinburgh summit. What gain have the Government got from putting the Bill on today? When the Edinburgh summit meets next week, every other European Minister will see that the British Government do not want the objectives of the Maastricht treaty put before the British Parliament. That is what this is about—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."] Of course it is.

If the Minister had said that the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber was right and that the Government would ratify the objectives, he could at least go to the summit as a "good European". However, in fact, the first thing that he will have to say to the others is, "You are ratifying and we are ratifying, but we did not want our Parliament to incorporate the objectives in the legislation." By moving the amendment, the hon. Gentleman has exposed the deception and the strategy of the Government in trying to deny to the British public the enormity of what they are doing. On a matter of language, I do not know what "la reine la veult" means, either, if the Bill has to receive Royal Assent in Norman French which, to the best of my knowledge, is no longer in the Oxford English dictionary.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The right hon. Gentleman is making a point that seems to be entirely misleading both to himself and to the Committee.

Sir Teddy Taylor: Tell us why it is misleading.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I will seek to do so.

Sir Teddy Taylor: Do it now.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I will seek to do so.

Sir Teddy Taylor: I will listen very carefully.

Mr. Garel-Jones: If my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East will contain himself for a few seconds, I will seek to do so.

The right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) will be aware that the purpose of the Bill is to bring into British law those elements of the treaty of Maastricht that involve an amendment to the treaty of Rome, as amended by the Single European Act. Fortunately for the Committee and for its procedures, it is possible for us, in doing that, to have much wider debates and to debate those other elements of the treaty of Maastricht which do not necessitate a change or an amendment to the treaty of Rome as amended by the Single European Act, such as the intergovernmental activities of the union. There will be a number of debates—I dare say that they will be very long and detailed—when the Committee considers all those aspects of the Bill, too.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: The point that I was going to make follows on from what was said by the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), with whom I wholly agree. Will my right hon. Friend please confirm that European law overrides British law when there is a conflict? In so far as title I has any legal validity in the courts of the land, it will be enforced by the courts of this land whether or not it is incorporated in the Bill. Therefore, what on earth is the point in preventing the Committee from debating the legal consequences of title I? What is the point of keeping it out of the Bill when the legal effect will be identical, whether it is in the Bill or whether it is enforced through European law?

Mr. Garel-Jones: If the Committee will allow me to make the remarks that I am about to make, I hope to be able to answer my hon. Friend. As a quick reply—I hope that I am allowed to make a detailed explanation of the point—may I say that my hon. Friend will see in the response that the Government have put to the Foreign Affairs Select Committee that the common provisions of the treaty are not justiciable by the European Court of Justice by virtue of article L of the treaty. The common conditions that we are discussing are not justiciable under the European Court of Justice. I shall try to make progress, but I will, of course, take interventions.

Mr. Marlow: My right hon. Friend is being very tolerant, and I am grateful. If title I is not justiciable, what is the point of it and what effect does it have?

Mr. Garel-Jones: Title I describes the objectives of the treaty. It places the treaty in context, both those aspects of the treaty that are amendments to the treaty of Rome and those aspects of the treaty that are not part of the treaty of Rome. I welcome the amendment because it goes to the heart of the structure of the treaty and the Bill. It is important that we understand that from the outset.

Mr. Denzil Davies: We all understand that title I is not justiciable by the European Court because it is not incorporated into the treaty of Rome. It is quite different to say, however, that, if the British Government ratify title I, as they will have to if they ratify the treaty, the British Government are then bound vis-a-vis all other Governments by what is in title I. If title I is a federal blueprint—I do not know whether it is or not—the British Government are ratifying a federal blueprint.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

6.15 pm

Mr. Garel-Jones: If the right hon. Member for Llanelli and my hon. Friends who are seeking to intervene will allow me to make some progress, they will realise that I am seeking to address the very questions that the right hon. Gentleman has put to me and that my hon. Friends wish to put. So far, I have not been able to get beyond the first paragraph of what I wish to say. I am perfectly happy to take interventions, but I should like to place my answers to the right hon. Gentleman and to the mover of the amendment in context.

It is important that we understand that the treaty structure—this is the point that the hon. Member for Leicester, South put to the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber—was a significant negotiating success for the United Kingdom at Maastricht. It provides the separate intergovernmental pillars for co-operation on the common foreign and security policy and in home affairs outside the treaty of Rome. In those matters, the EC institutions will operate under different rules. For example, the Commission will not have the exclusive right of initiative. There were those—the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber is of this view—who wished——

Mr. Butcher: On a point of order, Mr. Morris. We now have a difference of view on whether title I would be justiciable. It is a very important matter because, if we are to incorporate something into law which will be justiciable, and if that is therefore to be part of our constitution, now written as opposed to basically unwritten, we should not proceed with the discussion of the amendment, given that it now sets a precedent—we should know the answer to this—for the proposal by the Government to exclude whole chunks of the treaty from the Committee's consideration unless covered fortuitously by amendments that you accept.

This is not a spurious point of order. We really need to know before we proceed further whether, having passed article 1, whether we discuss it or not, a European Court judgment could give flesh, meaning or obligations to this Parliament arising from its approval.

The Chairman: Obviously, there are powerful arguments at bay and they must be discussed on the Floor of the House, and they should proceed. I certainly cannot rule on them at this stage.

Mr. Butcher: Further to that point of order, Mr. Morris. The Minister of State has given an assurance—of course, we have to accept in good faith that that is his interpretation—but there are serious doubts whether article L insulates us from decisions by the European

Court which bind the House of Commons and bind us constitutionally and which can have a significant effect on the way in which we view citizenship in this country.

I put it to you again, Mr. Morris, that this is a very serious point. If we approve article 1 without that discussion and without a judgment from the Law Officers we may have future discussions on many other parts of the treaty, not knowing the constitutional basis on which they might be implemented in this country.

Mr. Cash: On a point of order, Mr. Morris.

The Chairman: I rule on one point of order at a time. The hon. Gentleman should know that by now.

The arguments are all of substance throughout the whole process of the Bill. Some may seem more important than others, but arguments have to be deployed and then we have to come to a conclusion. The Committee votes either for the amendment or against it. It is not for the Chair to advise one way or the other. I do not think that I can help the hon. Member for Coventry, South-West (Mr. Butcher) any further.

Mr. Cash: On a point of order, Mr. Morris. Would it be convenient for the Attorney-General or the Solicitor-General, perhaps in rotation, to attend our debate? These are matters not exclusively of English law. We are now told that they are part European law and part English law. It seems to me that the Minister of State is having a little difficulty in explaining himself. It might be helpful if the Attorney-General or the Solicitor-General could be brought in to bail him out.

The Chairman: Order. Ministers will have heard that; it is not a matter for the Chair.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I am not experiencing——

Mr. Benn *rose*——

Mr. Garel-Jones: If the right hon. Gentleman will allow me, I want to make a little progress. I will seek to deal with a number of questions, including the one which my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) has just raised on a point of order. I do not want to be discourteous to the Committee by refusing to take interventions, but I want to try to answer the points made by the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber and to address the questions which hon. Members wish me to address. We are in Committee and there will be no difficulty for hon. Members to intervene. They may intervene freely on each other. I hope that it will be helpful to the Committee if I put these remarks on the record now. When I have done so, hon. Members will no doubt raise a number of points.

Mr. Dalyell: On a point of order, Mr. Morris. I agree with almost nothing that has been said by the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash), and indeed take a different view from some of my hon. Friends, but may I support the hon. Member for Stafford on one matter? There is a serious argument for having a Law Officer present.

The Chairman: I have heard what the hon. Gentleman has said. I have already ruled that that is not a matter for the Chair.

Mr. Garel-Jones: There are those in Europe who wish all co-operation between Governments and member states to fall under the treaty of Rome within the framework of the existing Community rules and under the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice. That is in essence the position which the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber seeks to defend. I think that is why he has sought to incorporate title I into the provisions of the Bill. There is a reason why he should not do so, but that is a respectable reason, well understood by hon. Members.

There are also a number of people in Europe who share the federal views held by the Liberal party. That is why, in the course of the negotiations leading up to the treaty, the Dutch Government sought to introduce a unitary text that would indeed have made all these matters areas where the Commission had the sole right of initiative, and would have made all the areas that we will discuss in Committee justiciable by the European Court of Justice.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: My right hon. Friend has drawn the attention of the Committee to article L. He must give his full attention to what article L(a) says. Is he telling the Committee as a legal fact that title I of the treaty is not a provision amending the treaty establishing the European Economic Community with a view to establishing the European Community?

Mr. Garel-Jones: Yes, Sir. The pillared structure that I was referring to represents a significant change of direction for the Community. For more than 30 years, since its foundation, the Community has developed in a centralising way, drawing more and more areas of policy and action under the central framework of Community institutions, operating under Community rules and enacting Community legislation. The introduction of the pillared structure of the treaty on European union represents moves away from that centralising trend and into more flexible forms of co-operation under the umbrella of European union. It is the distinction between co-operation in the Community and co-operation in the European union that lies at the heart of the treaty and therefore at the heart of the Bill.

Mr. Rowlands: Will the Minister point to anywhere in title I which makes those distinctions? Is there anywhere in title I a reference to intergovernmental institutions? We read that the objective is the framing of a common defence policy, leading to common defence. That is not a pillared structure. Is there any reference in title I to a pillared structure and to the intergovernmental provisions of the treaty?

Mr. Garel-Jones: Title I refers at different points to the whole treaty; therefore, it makes reference to the treaty of Rome and the amendments to it and it makes reference to the intergovernmental aspects——

Mr. Rowlands: Where?

Mr. Garel-Jones: The hon. Gentleman has just referred to one himself—defence. More importantly, it distinguishes which areas are aspects of the amendments to the treaty of Rome and which aspects are intergovernmental.

Mr. Cash *rose*——

Mr. Garel-Jones: I want to make more progress.

Mr. Rowlands *rose*——

Mr. Garel-Jones: I want to make more progress. I am about to address the very points that the hon. Member for

[Mr. Garel-Jones]

Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) is putting to me. If he will allow me to make a little progress I will give way to him and to my hon. Friend.

It is important that I reply first to the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber and seek to place the debate in a context that will help other hon. Members who have tabled amendments. The treaty falls into distinct parts. Title II contains amendments to the treaty of Rome.

Mr. Rowlands: What about title I?

Mr. Garel-Jones: I will come to title I in good time.

Titles II, III and IV contain corresponding amendments to the treaties establishing the European Coal and Steel Community and the European Atomic Energy Community. Titles V and VI provide for intergovernmental co-operation in common foreign and security policy and justice and home affairs respectively.

Hon. Members will recall the debate about the treaty structure before Maastricht—temples versus trees. That debate concerned whether Community rules in the treaty of Rome should apply in all areas of co-operation. Co-operation in separate intergovernmental pillars will not take place under the Community's normal rules. That is clear from article E. The Community institutions will operate according to the conditions laid down in the relevant sections of the treaty. For example, article L specifically excludes intergovernmental provisions from the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Mr. Garel-Jones: Not at this point. I shall certainly give way later.

Mr. Cash: On the point about article L——

The Chairman: Order. The Minister has made it clear that he is not giving way.

Mr. Garel-Jones: For example, article L specifically excludes intergovernmental provisions from the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice unless member states unanimously confer on it jurisdiction to interpret a specific convention adopted under title VI. Community legislation cannot be adopted under the intergovernmental provisions of titles V and VI. In those areas member states will co-operate as members of the union. The union is a wider concept than the Community, embracing both intergovernmental co-operation and co-operation under the treaty of Rome. Title I——

Mr. Cash *rose——*

Mr. Garel-Jones: I am answering the point about title I.

Mr. Cash: The Minister is not.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Since I am about to embark on the answer, it shows remarkable anticipation by my hon. Friend to say that I am not answering the point; perhaps my hon. Friend will allow me to do that.

Title I, "Common provisions", and title VII, "Final provisions", apply to the treaty as a whole. Effectively they establish the treaty's structure. The structure of the treaty is reflected in the Bill. The purpose of the Bill is to make effective as part of the corpus of the Community treaties in the law of the United Kingdom those provisions of the Maastricht treaty which amend the European Community treaties previously enacted here by the European Communities Act 1972 and its successors.

We must give effect in our domestic legislation to the Maastricht treaty in such a way as to create a framework within our domestic law for recognising Community rights and obligations which arise from the treaty. We had to do the same with the treaty of Rome in 1972, and we did so by means of the European Communities Act. That is the framework of domestic law that we have followed ever since—notably in 1986, when the 1972 Act was amended to incorporate the Single European Act.

6.30 pm

I fully understand the motives of the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber, who moved amendment 93. As a European federalist, he wished to begin chipping away at the pillared structure of the union, which is what moving title I into the body of the Bill would do. If one is a European federalist, there is a point in that—most of my hon. Friends are not. As I shall explain in detail later, the purpose of the Bill is to incorporate into British law those narrow amendments to the treaty of Rome that we need to operate in the House and to operate our legal system in Britain. The amendment has the disadvantage of creating an anomalous situation in United Kingdom domestic law.

Mr. Benn: In respect of title I, the Minister properly says that those are largely objectives and are not justiciable. The end of title I says that the union—the new organism that we are setting up—

"shall provide itself with the means necessary to attain its objectives and carry through its policies."

Those words can mean only one thing. We are setting up European union and—with the assent of the Government when they ratify the treaty—the European Community will have the right to do things to us and to other countries. It is no good saying it is not justiciable. If the instruments of union take on board that remit, the question is whether it is legal in Britain and what remedy we have got. By ratifying the treaty, the Government are giving birth to a new executive which is even more powerful than the Crown. I think that that requires a proper answer.

Mr. Garel Jones: It is policies as defined in the treaty.

Mr. Rowlands: The hon. Gentleman repeated that title I establishes, describes and reflects the structure of the treaty. I asked him before, and I ask again, where in title I there are any references to the intergovernmental pillars. He referred me to the defence policy provision. Let me remind him that that is

"to assert its identity on the international scene, in particular through the implementation of a common foreign and security policy including the eventual framing of a common defence policy, which might in time lead to a common defence".

There is nothing intergovernmental or pillared about those words—they are all about federalism and the union of the European Community.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The answer to the hon. Gentleman's question is contained in the third paragraph of article A:

"The Union shall be founded on the European Communities, supplemented by the policies and forms of co-operation established by this treaty."

Intergovernmental union is one of the forms of co-operation that is established in the treaty.

Mr. Cash: Is my right hon. Friend arguing that the provisions of title I do not give rise to international legal obligations, irrespective of whether they are within the treaty of Rome and are therefore European Court of Justice applicable? Secondly, has he passed his notice that article L comes under title VII, which is not part—or sought to be made part—of the domestic law of the United Kingdom? The situation is therefore curious, as my hon. Friend invokes the provisions of article L, which will be dealt with exclusively by prerogative, to endorse his arguments for yet another prerogative power, when everyone knows that both provisions are international legal obligations, irrespective of whether they are in the treaty of Rome—unless he wants to deny that they are obligations. Will he comment on that?

Mr. Garel-Jones: Any international treaty that the United Kingdom subscribes to is an international treaty —

Mr. Cash: It is a legal obligation.

Mr. Garel-Jones: My hon. Friend will correct me if I am wrong, but I said that it was not justiciable by the European Court of Justice.

Mr. Dalyell: Is the Minister aware that mine is probably the friendliest—or the least unfriendly—face that he is looking at on the Opposition Benches? That puts me in a position to say that if Ministers are going to talk about the incorporation of law—we have just heard that that is the main object of what we are discussing—it is at least wise that a Law Officer should be present to clarify such matters. I have some experience of constitutional Bills—although not experience that my hon. Friend the Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) would entirely approve of —and, having spent 47 days on a devolution Bill, I ask, will the Government take it from me that it is a wise precaution to have a Law Officer present at an early stage because it makes a difference? This is not an insult to the Minister, but he will get into dreadful trouble if he does not do that.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I understand the friendly way in which the hon. Gentleman puts his case. He will understand that any legal matters that I seek to explain —if my hon. Friends will allow me to do so—are explained on the advice of the Government's Law Officers. If specific matters arose and the Treasury Bench felt that an intervention by a Law Officer would help the Committee, we would invite one of my right hon. and learned Friends to assist the Committee.

Mr. Dalyell *rose*——

Mr. Denzil Davies *rose*——

Mr. Garel-Jones: I give way to the right hon. Member for Llanelli.

Mr. Davies: As I understand the right hon. Gentleman's argument, title I refers to a separate pillar, which is not justiciable—the nasty European Court cannot consider it and nor can the Commission; it is intergovernmental. In that case, why does the treaty refer to the "acquis communautaire", which is the corpus or body of EC law which has been built up until now and which will continue to be built up? Title I is made subject to all that.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The right hon. Gentleman will be aware that title I refers not only to the intergovernmental aspects of the treaty but to the whole treaty. That is the point that I am seeking to make. We are seeking to give effect to the Maastricht treaty in our domestic legislation, to create a framework within our domestic law, recognising Community rights and obligations which arise from the treaty. That is what we did when we introduced the Single European Act.

Mr. Dalyell: I shall intervene once again and then I shall be quiet. As a Member of the House for more than 30 years, I do not think that it is merely a question of parliamentary amour propre. I ask the Minister, gently and seriously, what more pressing business the Attorney-General could have than to be present on the Front Bench while we are discussing such matters. Former Attorneys-General would have been here automatically. My second Attorney-General was Sir John Hobson. *[Interruption.]* Yes, one could say that. Another was Lord Dilhorne. At least they would have been present on the Front Bench. Apart from anything else, this is playing down Parliament. There could be no more urgent occasion for the Attorney-General to support his hon. Friends.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I accept what the hon. Gentleman has said, both because he is a senior Member of Parliament and because I know that he said it out of the affection that he and I have for each other, and that he did not mean any disrespect. I assure him that not only has everything that I say been agreed and cleared by the Law Officers but that if I or other Ministers felt that it was necessary for my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General to be here, I would certainly ensure that he came to give his advice.

Sir Richard Body (Holland with Boston): I am trying to offer some perfunctory advice. The hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) and others will remember that a Law Officer was present throughout the proceedings on the original Bill 20 years ago, and we made remarkable progress as a result. At that time the former Solicitor-General, now Lord Howe, was in charge of almost all the amendments and therefore was well equipped to answer some of the finer points that we seem to be making this afternoon. I ask my right hon. Friend to bear that in mind. I am trying to be helpful. Perhaps we would make more progress if a Law Officer were present throughout the proceedings.

Mr. Garel-Jones: My hon. Friend the Member for Holland with Boston (Sir R. Body) is a senior Member of the House, and I will bear in mind what he said. It is true that in 1972 my hon. Friend and the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) were present when we discussed the accession of Britain to the Community and our adherence to the treaty of Rome—I am not seeking in any way to minimise the importance of that debate—which was a momentous decision. Nevertheless, I take the point that my hon. Friend made.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Garel-Jones: I want to make a little more progress if I may. I have not finished my response to my hon. Friend. I listened respectfully to what he said, If, at any time, the Treasury bench feel that it is necessary for my

[Mr. Garel-Jones]

modest efforts to be supplemented by the presence of my hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General, I will certainly ask him to advise the Committee.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: I do not think that my right hon. Friend understood the point that I was trying to make in my previous intervention, which would explain why he did not answer it.

Article L(a) says that the European Court of Justice will have jurisdiction over the

"provision amending the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community with a view to establishing the European Community,".

It appears that title I does precisely that. Does my right hon. Friend not share my fear that the European Court of Justice, when asked whether it has the right to intervene in such matters, will take a pro-European—pro-federal—stance, as it always has, and will decide that the interpretation of that clause enables it to decide matters which arise out of title I?

Mr. Garel-Jones: I shall make a general point first.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: I want an answer.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Underpinning what my hon. Friend said was the belief—I think well founded—that a number of judgments that the European Court has made in the past 30 years tended, in their thrust, to be centripetal. One of the outcomes of the way in which not only the treaty but article 3(b)—which the Committee will examine in some detail in due course—has been structured is that the court's judgments will be influenced in the future. I am not alone in my belief that the court's judgments are likely to be more centrifugal during the next 30 years than they have been in the past.

I turn to the specific issue raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor). As he will have observed, the wording that he referred to in article L is identical to the wording in article A of the common provisions. The European Court is able to act in those matters contained in the treaty of Rome, as amended by the treaty that we are discussing—to quote from the Bill—"so far as they relate to those Titles."

So far as the titles relate to the provisions in the amended treaty, the European Court will act as a result of the articles in the treaty, not as a result of the common provisions.

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

6.45 pm

Mr. Garel-Jones: I want to make a little more progress before I give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow).

We need to legislate domestically to incorporate those EC treaty provisions which can have a direct effect in the United Kingdom on Acts under which provisions may be adopted, and we must be able to make subordinate legislation to give effect to EC obligations. That means predominantly and overwhelmingly the provisions of titles II, III and IV plus the protocols which will become an integral part of the EC treaty. That is why those three titles are referred to in clause 1 of the Bill.

The position on the preamble to title I, the common provisions, and the position on title VII, the final provisions, are different. The titles do not give rise to Community rights and obligations, but the preamble in the common provisions may play a role in interpreting other provisions in titles II, III and IV under which rights and obligations can arise. Thus the obligations are created elsewhere in the treaty. However, the preamble to title I may relate to the relevant provisions in some way. Article B is a good example as it sets in context the operational provisions elsewhere in the treaty.

The final provisions in title VII confer no powers to adopt Community Acts, but they clearly have an effect on the way in which the Community will operate. After all, the provisions are in many respects the same as the final provisions in the treaty of Rome, suitably amended for incorporation in a treaty on union. The arrangements for enlargement, article N, or further treaty amendment, article O, clearly fall into the category of being related to the treaty of Rome.

To return to the issue raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster, article L clearly relates to the treaty of Rome since it delineates the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice, including within that treaty. Therefore, the article needs to be within the scope of the Bill. By contrast, article D in the common provisions, which refers to the make-up of the European Council, does not. To a large extent, it reproduces the equivalent article in the Single European Act—article 2 in title I—which was not included within the scope of the Single European Act. There is no reason to depart from that precedent.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Garel-Jones: I want to make three points relating directly to the issues raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster, and then I shall give way to my hon. Friends, starting with my hon. Friend the hon. Member for Northampton, North.

The Bill covers the common provisions, the preamble and titles I and VII, only as they relate to titles II, III and IV. Thus, the structure of the treaty is reflected in the Bill. To incorporate all the provisions from the intergovernmental pillars and the common provisions into the scope of the Bill—which amendment No. 93 seeks to do—would create a legal anomaly at the heart of the domestic legislation required to give effect to Community obligations.

To all intents and purposes, it would drive a coach and horses through the domestic legal framework that we have developed over the past 20 years for our Community membership. It would create confusion and is absolutely not necessary in terms of United Kingdom law. Indeed, it could be taken to mean that the intergovernmental agreements on, for example, asylum and immigration might have a direct effect in the United Kingdom, bypassing the House of Commons; it could be a first step in that direction.

Furthermore, it would give a false impression of the nature of the treaty provisions, suggesting that they are capable of having an effect that the terms of the treaty do not allow. It would mean that the United Kingdom moved in a more federal direction than the treaty of Maastricht seeks to do—a matter of concern to some of my hon. Friends. It would ultimately ignore the treaty's structure—with the clear differences between the treaty of Rome and intergovernmental provisions—that the Community and the union reflect, as negotiated at Maastricht.

Mr. Marlow: The Bill seeks to bring various parts of the treaty into United Kingdom law. Title I is not at present one of those parts. My right hon. Friend the Minister has said that title I is not justiciable by the European Court, but he also said that it would have impacts on other aspects of the Bill, some of which are to be incorporated in United Kingdom legislation. Will my right hon. Friend tell the Committee in detail how title I would be used, by whom and to influence what?

Mr. Garel-Jones: Title I is descriptive. It describes the framework within which the treaty operates. Because it seeks to describe the breadth of the union's action, it describes some elements that are within the treaty of Rome and some that are without. Therefore, the Bill uses the words

"together with the other provisions of the Treaty"—

elements in the common provisions and others—

"so far as they relate to those Titles, and the Protocols adopted at Maastricht on that date and annexed to the Treaty establishing the European Community".

Mr. Walter Sweeney (Vale of Glamorgan): Instead of reading from his prepared brief, will my right hon. Friend answer one simple question? Why cannot we have a full debate on clause 1, which I am sure the British public expect us to do? If we do not have a full debate on it, the public will suspect that we are trying to sweep something under the carpet. May we please have an answer?

Mr. Garel-Jones: I do not know whether my hon. Friend has been present all afternoon—perhaps he has—but I hope that it has not escaped his notice that we are in the process of debating that issue. When I have finished speaking, a number of hon. Members will speak, no doubt I shall intervene in their speeches, and the Committee's debates will be illuminating, not just for the Committee, but for the country.

Sir Russell Johnston: I thank the Minister, who is being generous in giving way. He said that, if title I were included, it would create an anomalous legal position, but he did not tell us in what way. The only example that he produced was something to do with immigration. Surely, if the position is as anomalous as he said—he also said that it would "drive a coach and horses" through the provision—he should be able to give umpteen examples. However, he has been somewhat delphic so far.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I shall try to be a little more helpful to the hon. Gentleman. As he will be aware, the Single European Act sought to amend the treaty of Rome where necessary so that legal decisions could be taken in the United Kingdom—to give legal force in the United Kingdom to provisions of the Single European Act. That is how we have proceeded in the United Kingdom when faced with such treaties. We are seeking to incorporate into British law those aspects of the Maastricht treaty that require amendment to the European Communities Act 1972.

The amendment seeks to incorporate into the Bill—and therefore directly into British law—those elements of European activity that we have specifically sought to separate from the treaty of Rome to ensure that the Commission should not have the sole right of initiative and to ensure that such matters are not justiciable in the European Court of Justice. In one sense, the effect of the amendment would be that our domestic British law was more federal than the treaty of Maastricht.

Mr. Rowlands *rose*—

Mr. Garel-Jones: That was the very point that the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney was seeking to make when he intervened—and I agree with him. I shall not give way to him.

Mr. Spearing: I think that the Minister will agree that, although he may take a different view on the request that I made to the Chairman on a point of order, it is germane to what we are now discussing. The Minister is seeking to tell us that the writ of the European Court is excluded from his famous intergovernmental pillars. However, article L specifically gives three instances where the Court of Justice writ will run—the foundation treaties under L(a), article K.3, 2(c) relating to possible conventions on justice and home affairs, and the final provisions of the treaty, L to S, which are intergovernmental.

We are discussing article E—under title I—which specifically mentions the Court of Justice. It states:

"the Court of Justice shall exercise . . . powers . . . on the one hand"—

the title then mentions the foundation treaties of Rome, Brussels and Paris—

"and, on the other hand, by the other provisions of this Treaty".

The other provisions must be outside the trunk, and be part of the intergovernmental section of which the Minister is so proud. Why is the second part of that section in article E? If the Court of Justice has nothing to do with title I, why is article L so phrased as to give it that power?

Mr. Garel-Jones: I believe—no doubt the hon. Gentleman will correct me if I am wrong—that I answered the question on article L when I said that I recognised that there were a number of articles, such as articles O and N, that referred directly to the treaty of Rome. The common provisions and the provisions at the tailend of the treaty are, in one sense, hybrid because they refer to provisions within and without the treaty.

Several Hon. Members *rose*—

The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Will the Minister indicate to whom he is giving way?

Mr. Garel-Jones: My hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, South-West (Mr. Butcher).

Mr. Butcher: In his first comment on article L, my right hon. Friend said that title I would never be justiciable by the European Court. In a second comment, which he said that he had cleared with the Government's legal advisers, he said that in some circumstances title I might be justiciable by the European Court. My hon. Friend earlier spoke of incorporation in the corpus of the law of Europe. I appreciate entirely his willingness to help us in this interrogative process, but surely other Committees provide a precedent—I turn to the Chairman for advice on the matter. I believe that in other Committees judgments of the Law Officer have been circulated. That would be particularly helpful, as it is the first time that the Committee has heard the interpretation on which hinges so much of our subsequent discussion. We are now at the heart of the issue of what is and is not to be justiciable in the treaty, whether through the Government's bilateral arrangements outside the treaty or within it.

[Mr. Butcher]

The Committee is not entirely sure whether title I ever will be justiciable. There is a hint that it may be, and if it is so, other parts of the treaty may be affected. We should get this clear before we proceed, because so much of the Government's case has depended on it hitherto.

7 pm

Mr. Garel-Jones: I think I have answered that already.

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): Is the Minister not undermining title I when he says it is only descriptive? Is it not definitive? Does it not go right to the heart of the matter and is not merely descriptive?

Mr. Garel-Jones: No, I do not agree with the hon. Gentleman. What we——

Mr. Benn: The Minister will appreciate that there is no filibustering going on; we are trying to explore a central question. What he is saying is that there are two sorts of law—parliamentary law and a prerogative law. My understanding is that whatever the provision may be under which laws can be made in Britain is irrelevant. For example, if the country goes to war, it does so under the prerogative. It is no use saying that, it is not justiciable in domestic courts, that because we are at war and the courts will recognise it. If we sign a treaty, it is the law.

Surely the European Court is bound to take account of the fact that, with the solemnity of the royal prerogative, the Prime Minister has ratified, in the name of the Crown, title I. We cannot go to the European court and say, "I'm awfully sorry but that is not quite the sort of law you thought it was". Similarly, if there is any prerogative power in this country, that is also the case. We cannot question who the Archbishop of Canterbury is, because it has not been in legislation; it is a prerogative power of appointment.

Without meaning to—that is why I desperately wish he would take our advice and have a Law Officer here—the Minister is pretending to the House, quite innocently, that there are two sorts of law, one which is justiciable and the other which is not. In fact, all law is justiciable because we are bound by all law, by prerogative, by statute, by custom and practice, and by judge-made law. All are capable of interpretation and appeal to any court that has any rôle in the matter.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I have done my best to explain this to the right hon. Gentleman once—in fact, more than once.

Sir Richard Body *rose*——

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. Before the hon. Gentleman puts his question to the Minister, may I remind the House that, while I appreciate this is an important debate, many of the interventions are very long and are not directed to the Minister. If hon. Members bear that in mind, progress will be much sharper.

Sir Richard Body: I appreciate that we must make progress, but perhaps before the Committee sits again tomorrow my right hon. Friend will make inquiries of the Law Officers about this because the European Court of Justice does interpret legislation differently from our own image. I do not know about Scottish courts but that certainly applies to English courts. In the English courts, there is what is called the golden rule, whereby the judges can look only at the section itself, and interpret that, whereas in the European Court of Justice on numerous occasions, in interpreting a section, the judges have gone back to the preamble of the Bill to assist them in interpreting the section—in other words, doing something which our own courts do not do.

Perhaps my right hon. Friend will ascertain whether he is absolutely right in what he has just told the Committee, because he may find that the advice he has received is mistaken and that what he says applies to the English courts but not to the European Court of Justice.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The advice I have received, of course, is from the Attorney-General himself, the legal adviser to the Government. The Bill is drafted in order to be compatible with our domestic legislative framework and with our domestic precedents and domestic practice. That is the principal reason why the Government will be unable to accept amendment 93——

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Garel-Jones: I am perfectly happy to discuss the many questions which hon. Members will raise in the course of the debate arising out of the general structure of the treaty. That is the debate which the amendment has prompted. I am happy to discuss the issues which it raises so far as the distinction goes between the treaty and the union and the way it is reflected in the legislation. To the extent that the provisions of title I need to be incorporated in the Bill, they are so incorporated. Therefore, I hope that the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber will not press the amendment. If he does, I must invite the Committee to vote against it.

Mr. George Robertson: May I start, not by following the Minister's somewhat beleaguered speech but by making my own speech in which I shall try to look at the issue from a slightly different angle from that of the Minister. I may come to a similar conclusion, but I hope for different reasons.

I welcome the way in which the Chairman of Ways and Means has structured this debate, because it is very welcome. Once we are beyond this group of amendments it might be slightly more comprehensible to anybody who looks in from the outside world. We are also grateful for the split that took place to the proposed group of amendments on the general provisions which has allowed us to have this interesting and valuable debate on title I.

Opposition Members—I am sure that this applies to most others—want this debate on this lengthy Committee stage. I underline the fact that the length of Committee stage is determined by the Government and the Prime Minister's promise to the hon. Member for Great Yarmouth (Mr. Carttiss) and not by any intention by the Opposition or, indeed, by the other side of the House to prolong the debate beyond what is necessary.

The debate will be exhaustive, but so it should be. The provisions of this treaty are enormously important and penetrate into very intimate parts of British life. It is right that the House gives proper debate and scrutiny to what has been agreed on the country's behalf and to what, if the House so consents, will be incorporated into British law.

The Government will find the experience uncomfortable. The Minister, I think, has tasted only a sample of what is to come during the weeks and months ahead. I

have to say that, for some crime of which I have not yet discovered the nature, this is the second European Communities Amendment (Bill) on which I have been an Opposition spokesman. I can scarcely imagine what the crime was. It may have escaped my notice, but it must have been extremely serious for me to have to go through this again. As we went through the expressions that pass for English but sound very foreign, the expression "deja vu" came to my mind.

The amendment in the name of the leader of the Liberal Democratic party suggests that we should incorporate title I of the Maastricht treaty into the Bill. I judge it by a number of tests: why should we put it in? Is it necessary that we should put it in? Is there a benefit from putting it in today?

I have given considerable thought to the amendment, because I knew that it was likely to be the first one of the Committee stage; it was a laborious exercise, embarked on not easily, but by way of punishment.

There seemed to be immediate attractions to including title I in the Bill. One that struck me was the fact that the definition of "subsidiarity" in title I was better than the definition in article 3B, to which we shall come in due course. The subject of subsidiarity has been mentioned by a number of hon. Members. The subject is close to the hearts of those of us from north of the border, because the Government seem enthusiastic about subsidiarity in the European Community but reluctant and grudging towards subsidiarity and decentralisation in the United Kingdom.

Article 3B is indeed complex. I cannot see that it is constructed in such a way that subsidiarity will be real —my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) makes the point endlessly—because it refers to it purely in terms of the exclusive competencies of the Community. On the other hand, subsidiarity is dealt with differently in title I, which refers to decisions being taken "as closely as possible" to the citizen.

I hope that when the Minister replies to the debate, he will confirm that what we are discussing is a formulation on subsidiarity that is attractive to the British Government, and that when we come to consider article 3B, that might be taken as being a part of title I and will be considered relevant to the provisions of titles II, III and IV which will be incorporated in the Bill. As I say, that seemed an attractive aspect of title I which suggested that perhaps we should support the Liberal amendment.

Mr. Spearing: I will not follow my hon. Friend into discussing the advantages or disadvantages of subsidiarity, which he rightly says applies only to outside exclusive competence. Has he realised that the amendment would move title I into line 9 on page 1 of the Bill? The Liberals are using the series of amendments to discuss the merits or demerits, and some of the content, of title I. Indeed, my hon. Friend is doing just that.

Does my hon. Friend not realise that the place in the Bill where the amendment would appear—this was relevant to the point of order that I raised at the beginning of the proceedings—would add the obligations, be they justiciable or not, of the European Communities Act 1972, but would not add them to the Bill in respect of ratification? So although it might be good to debate the subject, the consequences would probably not be all that great.

Mr. Robertson: My hon. Friend anticipates me, because, perhaps laboriously, I was about to explain that while there seemed to be attractions to incorporating title I, we should not support the Liberal amendments, as those immediate attractions would not necessarily apply. In other words, I come to the same conclusion as my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South but by a different route.

Mr. Marlow: Will the hon. Gentleman be kind enough to have a crack at the point that I put to the Minister, who has not yet had time to answer it? Titles II and III will become part of British law, and we know that. Title I will not become part of British law and it will not be justiciable by the European Court. On the other hand, it will have an impact on our law, as has been pointed out. What will that impact be, how will it be used and to what instruments will it apply?

Mr. Robertson: If the hon. Gentleman wants to have a crack at his right hon. Friend, he should not try to use me to do it. His right hon. Friend is paid much more and, being a Minister, has more expert advice than is available to me—*[Interruption.]* If not expert advice, the advice available to him is more extensive than that available to me.

I am sure that the Minister will eventually get round to answering the point that the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) put to him, and to all the other awkward questions that Conservative Members are raising. I am a mere humble toiler on the Opposition Benches, forced by the inadequacies of the Short money to work these matters out for myself. I am sharing with hon. Members in all parts of the House the results of my cogitations. I put them forward for their perusal, and I shall be interested to hear whether they agree with my conclusions.

The second superficial attraction of title I is the area to which an amendment of mine, No. 108, would apply— *[Interruption.]* I am grateful for the help of Conservative Members, but I gather that I need not move that amendment. It seems that my information, about that and other matters, is superior to that of the Minister and his hon. Friends.

That amendment is concerned with article F of the European convention on human rights. There seems to be a superficial argument for saying that if we incorporated title I in the Bill, by the back door we should have achieved the legal implementation into this country of the European convention on human rigths. In an environment in which the Government are hostile to taking that course, there is a superficial argument for taking that step——

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

7.15 pm

Mr. Robertson: I must get on, because I am anxious to limit my remarks to less than the hour that seems to be the average for speeches so far.

Mr. Butcher: The hon. Gentleman has referred to certain changes that may occur by the back door as a result of incorporating title I. Does he believe in Scottish devolution? There is an interpretation of subsidiarity that suggests that, if one takes decisions as closely as possible

[Mr. Butcher]

to the people in relation to national institutions, one gets regional government, otherwise known in Scotland as devolution.

Mr. Robertson: If applied, the principle of subsidiarity leads to decentralisation, in the United Kingdom and throughout Europe. I believe in decentralisation. I do not believe in a unitary state in Europe. Europe can develop properly according to a principle which happens to be called subsidiarity—for the purposes of the treaty and the jargon of the moment—but it is a healthy and efficient principle which we should apply in the European Community. Britain would also be the better for having that principle applied to the way in which we take decisions.

Are the superficial attractions of title I real? The Chairman of Ways and Means made it clear at the outset that we, in the Committee of the whole House, are not engaged in the ratification of the Maastricht treaty. That may be a difficult concept for people outside to appreciate, but it should be fully comprehensible to hon. Members. We do not ratify treaties. We apply to British law, by separate legislation, whatever is necessary to implement the treaties that have been signed by royal prerogative.

I have complained about that method of legislating over the years. In the 10 years that I have been a Labour spokesman on foreign affairs, the only opportunity that I have had to debate major treaties signed on behalf of this country in the sphere, say, of arms control, has been when a statutory instrument has occasionally trickled down to the House giving diplomatic immunity to inspectors appointed under those treaties.

I had been in the House for only a year when Labour was last in power, but I have always made the point that something should be done about the Ponsonby rules and the way in which the House deals with treaties. Some of my hon. Friends, and certainly some Conservative Members who have been in government, could have done something about that over the years. Perhaps this is not the time to start complaining about it. We are taking the Maastricht treaty and removing from it those elements that require legislation in this country. We should ensure that the minimum legislation necessary is put into effect in British law.

We should not be trying to put into effect in British domestic law more than is absolutely necessary under the terms of the treaty. What we are concerned with here are purely and simply the rights and obligations imposed upon this country by the treaty signed at Maastricht. That would appear to include titles II, III and IV, but not the other titles, except in respect of certain key areas some of which have come up already in the debate and others of which I hope will be fleshed out.

Mr. Cash *rose*——

Mr. Robertson: In a spirit of pure nostalgia, because we have gone through these debates so often, and since the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash), known as "the loose change of European politics", is someone who cannot possibly allow a speech to go by without contributing to it, I will give way to him.

Mr. Cash: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will be able to answer my question in that case. Does he believe that those parts of the treaty that are not included for the purposes of the Court of Justice are titles that give rise to international legal obligations? In other words, title I would give rise to international legal obligations. Is that right or not, because the hon. Gentleman is making quite a lot of play of this?

Mr. Robertson: I am not making play of that at all. The Law Officers—one floated into the Chamber a short while ago and floated out again—who are paid large amounts of money, who have immense qualifications, who, it would appear from the bill they gave the Chancellor, charge rather a lot of mo[illegible] for them—[illegible]d who will no doubt give the Minister a [illegible]tonight simply for floating through the Chamber, asking how he is getting on and telling him that their invoice will be in the post, so to speak—can bend their minds to that question.

A real question has been posed this evening: what international legal obligations have been entered into under the Maastricht treaty? That, however, is not what we are principally involved in with this amendment. I am sure that the hon. Member for Stafford will be able to persuade his colleagues to give that clarification, even if they send him a bill for it.

Sir Russell Johnston: If I understand the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) correctly, he is saying that we must not have too much unnecessary legislation, and that the Bill contains what is necessary for the adjustment of domestic law. In other words, he seems to be saying that, if title I is included, it will not make that much difference, whereas the Minister is saying that, if it is included, it will make an awful lot of difference. Which is right?

Mr. Robertson: I will come to the next part of my argument. The hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) and I have shared so many debates that he thinks he can read my mind, but I am enunciating a principle that applies to this legislation and which I think is a good principle—that from these treaties that the Government care to sign we should put the minimum legal requirement into the legislation and we should not enter into anything else that is not required. I will come to the point of title I and whether it breaches my principle and whether it might create even more serious problems for the objectives that I have set out. This is where I come to the issue of the pillar structure.

The hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber and his party did not agree with the pillar structure; they wanted the European tree, with all decisions to come through the one institutional structure, with the right of the Commission to be involved in it. But that is not what was eventually agreed at Maastricht. The structure agreed there was precisely what I and my party officially wanted —that the elements within the treaty that require to be part of the European Community pillar, the EC pillar, should be that way, but that aspects such as foreign and security policy, with all its implications, and home affairs and justice should be separate, intergovernmental pillars.

Who knows what the future will bring about? Things may develop by way of negotiations, by way of the next intergovernmental conference, but we have to live with what we have now. I favour it; I think that it was the right outcome, and 12 Governments agreed that it was the best outcome in the circumstances.

In that respect, it is no different from the Single European Act that I and the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber sat through in 1986, because that created an institution called European political co-operation; it was not part of the European Communities (Amendment) Bill that we discussed at such length at that time, because it was decided that it would remain an embryonic intergovernmental process that might perhaps build up eventually to a common foreign policy machinery. It has become that, but, as yet, the Community governments have not agreed that it should still be part of the full pillar.

That is what we have at present: three major pillars that will co-exist. It appears that title I, if folded into the Bill, will complicate the structure that has been created. I disagree with the way in which the Minister seemed to suggest that title I was the pillar structure and that, by folding it in, we would complicate what was coming afterwards; that is the impression he gave. What title I does, especially in Article C, is to talk about a general principle that does not relate to two of the pillars and, in not relating to them, will complicate not European Community law, which can live with complications and blurred edges, but British domestic law, which works on the basis of minimum legislation where it is required by any external treaty such as the Maastricht treaty.

I worry, therefore, that it will complicate the situation and will in practice lead to something which I do not believe the Liberal party would consider healthy and which my own party certainly does not consider healthy; encroachment on the principle of automaticity. Over the years, I have listened to my right hon. Friends the Members for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) and for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) going on about section 2 of the European Communities Act 1972. Section 2 is the one that they wanted suspended because it provides for the automatic implementation in Britain domestic law of European Community law as established through the principles of the EC treaty of 1972, subsequently amended by the Single European Act.

That automaticity is extremely important. It has given a status to European Community law in this country which is of great and sometimes controversial importance, as we found in the matter of the Spanish fishing boats. We choose; the Government in the first instance, when they sign the treaties, and eventually the House, when it considers the treaties in detail, make a conscious, precise and limited decision about what areas will be subject to the automaticity rule, because to do so is to give supreme importance to any law that is determined at European level in the British domestic context.

Mr. Benn: I have listened with great care to what my hon. Friend has said about section 2, but I hope that he has not missed the point, which is that laws that are brought into effect automatically under section 2 are laws assented to by the royal prerogative itself. The whole point about section 2 is that it has a domestic relevance quite apart from Europe; for the first time since 1649, a Minister can make a law that applies in Britain without the consent of Parliament. So it has changed the balance of power in Britain vis-a-vis Ministers, hon. Members, and electors. That is an issue which my hon. Friend should also address.

Mr. Robertson: I was not around in 1642. Nor was I around in 1972, but my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield was. It is a long time since then and a lot of changes have taken place, but no change has taken place in the important principle that he has just enunciated. He is right to say that it is a very important principle. In some ways it has been unnoticed. He was in the Cabinet for many of those years and had the chance, if he wanted, to change it, if change was possible. Perhaps it was not possible because the decision had been taken in 1972 and subsequently endorsed by a referendum that my right hon. Friend invented for the British people.

7.30 pm

I am making the point now that we want to be as sparing as possible about the areas in which that royal prerogative will be exercised. That is a principle with which I am sure my right hon. Friend would agree absolutely. If we are to be sparing we have to be careful about what might come out of an amendment such as amendment No. 93, putting title I into this Bill. We could be opening the door to automaticity of the law as determined at the European level in the other two pillars being put into British law.

The Minister made an attempt at an explanation, but was not allowed by his hon. Friends to finish it. It is possible that, under the intergovernmental pillar on home affairs and justice, a new law, perhaps on a common immigration and asylum policy, could be agreed by all 12 Governments in the Community. Under the pillar structure as it stands now, that would require separate legislation in each of the 12 countries before it could be implemented. If, however, it came under the single pillar of construction, the decision taken by Ministers sitting behind closed doors in the Council of Europe, perhaps by majority vote, would have automatic effect in British law.

I am not saying whether that is right or wrong. Some people would say that a common European immigration policy would be a good thing. I do not agree with that, but anyway it should not at this stage be susceptible to the possibility that it could automatically become British law.

Mr. Maclennan: I wonder if the hon. Member is right in his acceptance of the Government's view that these pillars are as separate as he makes out. It appears to me that under article C of title I, to which he referred, there are powers, exercisable by the Commission and indeed by the Council, which enable the institutions of the Community, as opposed to the union, to act in pursuance of the objectives described in title I but utilising the powers they enjoy under the treaty of Rome as amended in other articles. That appears to me to be the meaning of "building upon the 'acquis communautaire'".

It also appears to be what is intended by the granting of power to the Commission to ensure consistency in respect of external relations. If the institutions of the Community, in exercise of these powers under title I, introduced regulations, directives, or whatever, would these not be self-executing in this country under the provisions of the European Communities Act 1972? And, if that is the case, why should not title I itself be incorporated in the Bill?

Mr. Robertson: This is probably the only place where one can tangle with lawyers and not receive a bill. I am therefore grateful for the opportunity to cross my amateur sword with these great legal brains. But if the hon. Gentleman reads the last sentence of article C, he will see: "They"—

that is, the Council and the Commission—

[Mr. Robertson]

"shall ensure the implementation of these policies, each in accordance with its respective powers."

Of course, there are bloodings involved, quite deliberate bloodings, between the Council and Commission in relation to the pillars, but as they stand at the moment they are still discrete. The Council does not have the single and unique right of initiation when it comes to proposals, and the automaticity rule does not apply. Further and separate legislation would still be required in these areas so long as these pillars exist.

That might start not to be the case if title I were folded into the Bill and title IV, the pillar on home affairs and justice, were there. It is a door which is beginning to open and I do not believe that the Committee would want it to open at this stage, although certain hon. Members might want to go in that direction.

Mr. Denzil Davies: Does my hon. Friend not agree that the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) has a point, and it is the same point as my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) made in an intervention? It is arguable that, once title I is ratified under the prerogative, no internal legislation is needed. A court of England and Wales, and probably a court of Scotland as well, would enforce any directives coming under title I despite the fact that there is no legislation here, because, as a result of the prerogative, it is part of English law. That is the real worry and the real problem.

Mr. Robertson: Here we have another QC telling me——

Mr. Denzil Davies: I am not a QC; I am a Member of Parliament.

Mr. Robertson: I know that my right hon. Friend is a Member of Parliament. We will wait and see whether the Law Officers of the Crown can give us absolute clarification, but, in terms of what I have been able to read and the information provided to me by the House of Commons Library, it seems that the interpretation that I place upon it is correct.

These common provisions, like the common provisions of the Single European Act, which were never included in their entirety in the European Communities (Amendment) Act 1986, may well have some force in law, because they have a status; they have been ratified. But because they are not specifically inserted into United Kingdom law, they remain in a completely different situation from those aspects that would fall under section 2 of the European Communities Act 1972. The advice that I had from the House of Commons Library was:

"It would perhaps be inconsistent to include Title I in the EC (Amendment) Bill and not the CFSP"—

common foreign and security policy—

"and Justice and Home Affairs Titles, V and VI, which also do not require UK legislation for implementation."

Perhaps I am going on too long, and undoubtedly other hon. Members will do so, but it is an extremely important subject. I am trying to help my hon. Friends and hon. Gentlemen by developing a thought process which is of some significance, I believe, in interpreting what is happening.

I did not think that the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber, when he went down the road of amendment No. 93—all these amendments were tabled in June this year—was likely to be enthralled with the idea of folding in title I as an absolute matter of principle. I simply suggest to him that perhaps it is opening doors that he does not want opened. It is taking the House and the country in a direction on which they have not yet made a decision. Therefore it might be appropriate for him to withdraw his amendment. If he chooses to press the amendment, the official Opposition will not vote for it.

Mr. Cash: We have had a long discussion about whether title I should be inserted in the Bill. I believe that we have covered most of the ground that needs to be covered on that point. It does not seem to me that it will make as much of a difference as the Government have implied, for this reason. It is an international legal obligation either way. The fact that it is not within the precincts, as it were, of the Court of Justice has certain consequences, but in terms of what is contained in title I, articles A to E, if one asks oneself how this will affect the daily lives of the people of the United Kingdom, the whole thing takes on a completely different dimension.

I am rather surprised that, so far, no discussion has taken place about what is contained in title I and the impact that it will have on our constituents. Whether it is to be justiciable under article L, which itself is a prerogative power, or whether it is to be under the Court of Justice in part, is a good esoteric argument and has certain quite important implications. This is not a game, but a provision in a legally binding treaty, which we have solemnly signed and which, under the Ponsonby rules, will be ratified by prerogative at the end of the Bill.

The Minister of State kindly wrote to me some months ago when I asked the same question about the Ponsonby rules as the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing). The bottom line is that, if this is a prerogative treaty, it comes into effect but parts of it need to be enacted to fall within the provisions of the European Communities Act and the competence of the European Court. This is all very interesting stuff, but I am interested in what impact it will have on the British people.

I tabled a number of amendments to article A. I was extremely grateful to The Chairman for listening to my representations yesterday and for agreeing to select the amendments, which I hope will give an opportunity to explain to the people of this country and perhaps to some other people the real implications of the treaty. If amendment No. 93 were made, the courts would have an opportunity to consider some of the issues in due course, but judging from the way in which the argument has developed, there appears to be little prospect of that. The article is important; it will still affect people, it will still be binding on our Government and it will still be implemented. Therefore, it will have a direct effect on the daily lives of the people of this country.

There is little information on article A in the Government's pamphlet "Britain in Europe". I have read it pretty carefully, but it makes no reference to European union. That is the usual sleight of hand that we have become used to. There has been no White Paper, despite there having been one in 1970, or statement of Government policy on what the treaty involves. Article A says:

"By this Treaty, the High Contracting Parties establish among themselves a European Union, hereinafter called 'the Union'."

That sets up a legal union that is binding upon the people of this country and, as I said in a book that I wrote recently entitled "Against a Federal Europe", is indistinguishable from a federation.

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): Is my hon. Friend saying that the term "European union" has suddenly appeared out of the blue under the treaty, or am I right that the treaty of Rome talked about the
"ever closer union of the peoples"
and the Single European Act, passed by the House, talked about
"transforming relations as a whole among their states into an European Union"—
capital "E" and capital "U".

Mr. Cash: I shall quote Stuttgart, Hanover and all the rest. It is in the treaty of Rome and the preamble. The phrase is "ever closer union". I remind my hon. Friend that, in the debate last June on the Luxembourg draft, the Foreign Secretary gave the same quote as my hon. Friend, but I produced the draft. It appeared that I was the only hon. Member to have it, because, unfortunately, it was put in the Library only at 1.30 pm that day. There has been a considerable attempt to ensure that people do not know what is going on.

The words "ever closer union" are not what we are debating. We are debating the words with which I began:
"The High Contracting Parties establish among themselves a European Union".
That is what it means. It is a legally binding provision.

Mr. Bill Walker: Will my hon. Friend cast his mind back to the debate on the Single European Act, when Unionist Members such as myself—I was a Unionist before I was a Conservative, which was not odd in Scotland—asked Ministers what union meant. We were proved right: union was what was meant in the preamble to the Act. Greater union has followed, as we have seen in decisions taken by the Commission and the European Court. When anyone questions whether we understand the meaning of the union, we point out that we were questioning what it meant some time ago.

7.45 pm

Mr. Cash: Absolutely: these matters have been going on for hundreds of years, but the bottom line is that the treaty creates a legally binding union within Europe, which is quite different from the treaties that are normally transacted between countries.

Mr. Edward Garnier (Harborough): My hon. Friend has made a number of assertions without supplying any evidence for them. Will he provide us with the details that underscore the assertion that he has just made?

Mr. Cash: If my hon. Friend reads the treaty, which clearly specifies the nature of the union, he will find the answers to the questions that I have just put.

Mrs. Currie: Come on: my hon. Friend is fudging.

Mr. Cash: No, I am not fudging.

Mr. Budgen: Is not the difficulty that the European Court of Justice takes into account the title and preamble, whereas the House of Lords does not, and that we simply do not know whether my hon. Friend's assertions or those of the Government are correct? Unless the Government invite one of the institutions of the Community to give objective advice on how the treaty is likely to be viewed by the European Court, we are stumbling in the dark.

That is disgraceful, because the Government have made many scandalous assertions about the treaty—for example, that it had nothing to do with immigration, one which they have subsequently retracted.

Mr. Richard Shepherd: And that it was decentralising.

Mr. Budgen: And that it was decentralising. If the Attorney-General is too busy, we want some objective advice from the European Community. Otherwise, we shall be thrashing around in the dark. My hon. Friend is doing his best, but many other Members are completely unequipped.

Mr. Cash: I am delighted to be able to respond not only to my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) but to my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough (Mr. Garnier). According to the Government, the original treaties aimed to achieve an
"ever closer union among the peoples of Europe";
but, according to article A, "the High Contracting Parties" become ever closer and establish an actual European union.

The Government's position is based on the following proposition: whereas previously the peoples of Europe were engaged in trying to achieve an ever closer union among themselves, they now establish the European union itself. That clearly shows what is being done under these articles, yet, even though the European union is established by the first paragraph of article A, the second paragraph contradicts that assertion by stating that the
"Treaty marks a new stage in the process of creating an ever closer union among the peoples of Europe."
Logically, if the union had already been established, as article A, paragraph 1, says that it has, the process of creating an ever closer union is superfluous as one cannot get closer than union itself. The process has reached its conclusion with the establishment of the union, which means that the process has ceased, although the second paragraph suggests that there is some way still to go.

That raises the next question: is the European union of article A, paragraph 1, the
"ever closer union among the peoples of Europe"
aimed at under earlier treaties and continued by article A, paragraph 2 of the treaty? Apparently not. The ever closer union is to be a union among the peoples. That is established under paragraph 1, which states that it is to be a union among the "High Contracting Parties".

Mr. Garnier: I am becoming deeply confused by my hon. Friend's argument. Paragraph 1 of article A says:
"By this Treaty, the High Contracting Parties establish among themselves a European Union, hereinafter called 'the Union'".
According to my hon. Friend's argument, that suggests something central. Paragraph 2 says:
"This Treaty marks a new stage in the process of creating an ever closer union among the peoples of Europe, in which decisions are taken as closely as possible to the citizen."
My hon. Friend did not read out the latter part of that paragraph, which suggests moving away from the centre. How does he deal with those two paragraphs set together?

Mr. Cash: They can be dealt with simply as follows. Paragraph 2 of article B deals with
"the establishment of economic and monetary union, ultimately including a single currency",

[Mr. Cash]

which presupposes the central bank arrangements that follow later. For practical purposes, nothing is more centralising than a central bank. Furthermore, the implications of that are that decisions on economic and monetary affairs, made by unelected, unaccountable bankers, will be taken away from the citizen. Those are the bases upon which people enter polling booths and vote in general elections. *[Interruption.]*

Therefore, if we are to set up a central bank under those arrangements, as part of economic and monetary union and a single currency, we shall take away from the citizen his most important right—his right to vote. All decisions on economic and monetary affairs, which are currently the basis on which people vote in general elections, will be handed over to unelected, unaccountable bankers.

Mr. Budgen: May I help my hon. Friend? While my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) was saying in her usual charming and tactful way that my hon. Friend's argument was poppycock, the Attorney-General entered the Chamber. Had he put his mind to the matter, he could have given us his view about the meaning of those articles. We are all floundering around trying to understand, and getting extremely angry. We require an objective analysis, if not from the Attorney-General, better still from one of our new masters from Europe, who could tell us how he will proceed by high command in Brussels.

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. I remind the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West that he has repeated himself two or three times. The point that he has just made was exactly the same as those that he made in previous interventions. It is becoming tedious repetition.

Mr. Cash: A further question arises under article C, which says:

"The Union shall be served by a single institutional framework which shall ensure the consistency and the continuity of the activities carried out in order to obtain its objectives".

The creation of that single institutional framework is also part of the creation of that legal union, so we have central banking arrangement, which are about as centralising as anything can be and remove power from the citizen because decisions on economic and monetary affairs are taken by unelected bankers. That is clear to anyone who takes the faintest interest in the matter. We also have the creation, under article C, of a single institutional framework.

Clearly, a legal union being created. It is not simply a question of ever closer union, as my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough was trying to assert, but the creation of a union in itself.

Mr. Jim Marshall: Although I am opposed to the treaty, the more I hear the hon. Gentleman's arguments against it, the more I am tempted to support it.

The hon. Gentleman is misleading the House by seeking to imply that institutions will be created in a way that gives increased competence to the Commission. The point of the institutional framework developed at Maastricht was to limit the Commission's competence specifically in home affairs and foreign and security policy. That being so, how can the hon. Gentleman square that circle with the arguments that he is now developing?

Mr. Cash: The Commission's powers are already set out under the treaty of Rome. Further competences are granted to the Commission under the Maastricht treaty. Indeed, some 64 new majority voting arrangements will be associated with the Commission. The idea that the Commission will not gain new powers under the treaty simply shows that the hon. Gentleman has not read the treaty carefully. Even within the so-called "separate pillars" of foreign and security policy, the treaty says that the Commission will be fully associated with those tasks.

Clearly, the Commission will have an enhanced role. It may not be the role that it originally wanted, but that is not the point. It will have an enhanced role both within the provisions relating to the treaty of Rome and with regard to the so-called "separate pillars".

Mr. Jim Marshall: I am sorry, Mr. Lofthouse—I hope that my intervention does not become repetitious. I hear what the hon. Gentleman says. He accuses me of not having read the treaty, but I assure him that I have. I sometimes think that he has not read it, for he is led by his own point of view.

Within the two intergovernmental pillars, the Commission has a right to attend meetings of Ministers. That is fair, and limits the Commission's responsibility by making crystal clear the Commission's competence and Ministers' field of responsibility. The hon. Gentleman misunderstands the fact that Ministers at intergovernmental meetings have a right to call on the expertise of the Commission in seeking information that they may need to reach correct decisions. That does not imply increased responsibility for the Commission but ensures that the Council of Ministers is adequately prepared to make correct decisions in the light of the union.

Mr. Cash: Article D specifies the new arrangements for the European Council and for bringing together heads of state. The President of the Commission is included in that. It is not simply a question of bringing him along as an amateur observer: he is given a completely new status under the European Council.

Mr. Garnier: My hon. Friend has just made a number of assertions without providing us with the evidence for them. Where in article 1 does it say that the President of the Commission has a new status?

8 pm

Mr. Cash: Article D clearly states:

"The European Council shall provide the Union with the necessary impetus for its development and shall define the general political guidelines thereof."

It goes on to say:

"The European Council shall bring together the Heads of State or of Government of the Member States and the President of the Commission."

At the moment, the European Council operates in an informal manner and under the arrangements——

Mrs. Currie: It does not.

Mr. Cash: Yes, it does. My hon. Friend obviously has no understanding of the basis on which these things operate.

At the moment, the arrangements are not within the precise legal framework which is prescribed by title I; otherwise, there would be no need for the provisions in the first place. They are being incorporated in this way to give

them that status within the framework of the Maastricht treaty which they did not have beforehand. Surely that is the reason for doing it.

Mr. Ian Taylor: My hon. Friend, who is an expert in these matters, knows only too well that the European Council has given proper status in the Single European Act. If one goes further, the arrangements for foreign policy which took place as a result of the changes in the Single European Act took place in European political co-operation, in which the Commission was also intimately involved. It did not have the power of initiation. There is nothing more intergovernmental than the European Council which, by definition, is a meeting of the Heads of State and Prime Ministers. My hon. Friend voted for the Single European Act. Now what is he worried about?

Mr. Cash: The short answer is that the Single European Act was a good Act, because it was based upon political co-operation. I voted for it because I believed that it was important to try to improve the quality of political co-operation within Europe, and because of its potential for increasing trade within Europe. Those were good reasons for voting for it. It is also true that it contained enhanced powers for the Commission. But the difference between the Single European Act and the Maastricht treaty was that the former was primarily about co-operation and trading, whereas the latter is primarily about the manner in which we are governed. That is the fundamental difference between the two.

That is why I emphasised the centralising process of the central bank. It is that which transfers powers which at the moment belong to the British voter. It is important that people should bear that in mind when they are considering the assertions that the treaty is a decentralising process. It is not.

Mr. Ian Taylor: These are extremely important points. My hon. Friend, having voted for the Single European Act, needs carefully to consider his position. Under the Single European Act, the Commission's position was strengthened. The former Prime Minister, Lady Thatcher, was keen that that should happen, knowing that, in order to achieve the objective which my hon. Friend supports, which is the opening up of the single market, it was important for the Commission to have strong powers of initiation.

The interesting thing is that, in many defined ways, the Bill tries to restrain and clarify the Commission's powers and, by injecting for the first time the concept of subsidiarity, redresses some of the balances which went wrong as a result of the Single European Act. If my hon. Friend supported the Single European Act during its passage here, it is puzzling to Conservative Members why he is not an enthusiastic supporter of the Bill.

Mr. Cash: My hon. Friend's argument is a little disingenuous on that point. He tries to make out that there is no difference in substance between the Single European Act and the Maastricht treaty; that it is yet another gradual movement, a little canter down the road. It is nothing of the kind. There is a massive and complete difference between the two measures. The Single European Act was much maligned but necessary. The Bill deals with completely different subject matter, and greatly enhances the centralising tendencies of the Single European Act.

On 3 April 1992, speaking to the Berkemann forum, Chancellor Kohl said:

"In Maastricht we laid the foundation stone for the completion of the European Union. The European Union treaty introduces a new and decisive stage in the process of European union which, within a few years, will lead to the creation of what the founder fathers of modern Europe dreamed of following the last war—a united states of Europe."

The Government, in their booklet "Britain in Europe", say that they do not want and will not have a united states of Europe, but that is the objective to which the German Chancellor has been moving as expressed in that Berkemann forum speech. The problem is that on European union we are at loggerheads with the Germans, as we are with other member states.

If one travels around Europe as many of us do, and asks about the nature of the treaty in which we are involved—I see the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) nodding his head, because he knows that it is true—everywhere people say that this is a European union which they want and like, and that it is either a federal or unitary system depending on what language they care to use. But for practical purposes, this is a European union. That is what they want, and that is what Chancellor Kohl said when he spoke on 3 April 1992.

Someone is not coming entirely clean on this, because the bottom line is that we cannot have it both ways. The truth is either what Chancellor Kohl is saying or what is being presented to us. I look now at my hon. Friends the Members for Esher (Mr. Taylor) and for Harborough, who try to claim that this is not a European union. They say that it does not have the characteristics that I have attributed to it, a belief which is clearly shared by other member states.

The hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber knows that that is true. He wants a federal or unitary Europe. My right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath) made a speech the other day when he came clean. He said that that is what he wants too. The plain fact is that that is what lies at the heart of the whole problem.

Sir Richard Body (Holland with Boston): Does my hon. Friend agree that not only has Mr. Kohl expressed his views but Mr. Bangemann, Vice-President of the Commission, has put it succinctly? Perhaps my hon. Friend will say whether he agrees with Mr. Bangemann that the Maastricht treaty is a "fundamental step" towards a federal union?

Mr. Cash: Yes, that is precisely the language which is used, but which is camouflaged in these debates because there are a number of people who do not want the British people to know the truth. That is the problem.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): The hon. Gentleman is right to criticise the Government. Last week, the Government were described as being like a gatecrasher going into a party backwards and pretending to everyone that they were on their way out. Article B sets out fully the objectives. The problem is that the Government do not have enough guts to say where they stand on the matter. They prevaricate, because they are trying to satisfy hon. Members such as the hon. Gentleman and everyone else, instead of coming clean. The problem with the Government is that they know where they are going but they are trying to get there by subterfuge.

Mr. Cash: I find great difficulty in understanding the Government's position, which is one reason why I voted against the Government on the paving motion and on Second Reading. There is a great deal of disinformation, of which the pamphlet "Britain in Europe" is a prime example. It tells only half the story. It does not even refer to the fact that we are to be engaged in a European union.

As I have said repeatedly, we have not even had a White Paper. What on earth is going on? White Papers on important matters are pouring out of the Government all over the place. But when we come to something as massive as the change in the nature of British government on the scale that is envisaged and is carried out—we are talking about a treaty which has already been signed by the Government—there is no White Paper to explain the treaty to the British people. No wonder that, when *Women's Own* asked the good ladies, in a poll, whether they could define the ecu, nine out of 10 replied that they thought it was a bird.

Mrs. Currie: My hon. Friend does not have to be so patronising.

Mr. Cash: Not at all. The reason for confusion is that there is no White Paper stating precisely what the treaty is all about. I have been calling for one for several years. At the bottom line, if the public are to be asked to make a choice, and if right hon. and hon. Members are to be asked to vote on such a question, they should have enough information to know precisely what is the Government's policy—not just the verbiage in the treaty, with which my right hon. Friend the Minister of State tried to deal earlier. There should be a declaration in a White Paper as to the treaty's objectives, policies and implications.

As to the type of union into which we are being taken, I invite the Committee to consider the provisions in the 1970 White Paper. That is another story, and is part of the process of disinformation, stealth, or whatever one likes to call it. Some would call it being more than economical with the actualité.

Mr. Garnier: When my hon. Friend is next under the dryer reading women's magazines, will he care to check whether the poll did not in fact relate to Emu rather than to the ecu? Also, he supported the Single European Act because it was good for British trade. Is he now saying that the Maastricht treaty is deleterious to the interests of British trade?

Mr. Cash: I am, and with good reason. One has only to look at the exchange rate mechanism. The International Monetary Fund has said that it does not think that it would be a good idea to go ahead, and so has the Bank of International Settlements and many distinguished economists—including 60 in Germany alone, who recently signed a letter to that effect.

A recent issue of *Management Today* published the results of a poll to which 3,000 business men replied, and 68 per cent. of them said that they would vote against the treaty in a referendum. That was their verdict. Only two weeks ago, I attended a Confederation of British Industry meeting in my constituency at which another hon. Member was also present, thinking that he would stage a bit of a coup against myself as a Euro-sceptic. He told those CBI members, "CBI policy is the exchange rate mechanism, plus a single currency. Will you vote on that?" Only one person put up his hand in favour of a single currency.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way, and apologise for being absent when he rose to speak. I dare say that I will have many other opportunities in Committee to hear his interventions.

My hon. Friend will recall that the preamble to the Single European Act includes this statement:

"Moved by the will to continue the work undertaken on the basis of the Treaties establishing European Communities . . .and to transform relations as a whole among their States into a European Union in accordance with the Solemn Declaration of Stuttgart of 15 June 1983".

Did my hon. Friend think that was a good thing, at the time that he voted for the Single European Act?

Mr. Cash: I have no difficulty with that, because the preamble referred to "a European Union". The question is the distribution of the functions prescribed by the union that we are asked to consider. I well remember that, in April 1990, when my noble Friend Lady Thatcher, then Prime Minister, was threatened with Britain's expulsion from the Community if the Government were not prepared to sign up to a union, she rightly asked, "But what union? What does it involve, and what will it contain?" Now we know.

Mr. Garel-Jones *rose*——

Mr. Cash: My hon. Friend the Minister, who seems anxious to return to the Dispatch Box, will remember that, at meetings of the Conservative manifesto committee, in March and February 1991, I put to him the same question that he now raises about the nature of the union. I said that if, by the end of that year, the Government signed a document containing functions that were inimical to Britain's interests, and that was the union they wanted, I would oppose it. That is what I am doing now.

8.15 pm

Mr. Garel-Jones: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's confirmation that he was prepared to subscribe to the objective of European union in respect of the Single European Act. I presume—it is useful to establish such matters as we move into what may be a lengthy Committee stage—that, unlike my noble Friend Lord Tebbit, my hon. Friend does not regard the Single European Act as a mistake, but continues to support it.

Mr. Cash: I do. I will go further and say that I am delighted that the hon. Member for Sheffield, Central (Mr. Caborn), who is Chairman of the Select Committee on Trade and Industry, has taken up a suggestion that I made to his predecessor last year—that the single European market should be investigated in respect of abuses that work against the interests of British business.

I return to the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough (Mr. Garnier) in respect of the Single European Act. He has not long been a Member of Parliament, but I am sure that he knows from his constituents that there are problems with the working of that Act, such as stock exchange transparency, subsidies paid by various countries to some of their companies, and so on. A whole catalogue of issues must be sorted out.

I am delighted that, within the framework of the Single European Act, the Select Committee will take the

opportunity to investigate and reveal abuses. I like to believe that I played a small part in helping the Committee to examine those questions.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the words from the preamble to the Single European Act quoted by the Minister reflect one of the great follies committed at the time? Those words were then used to coerce or to push forward that which is now in the Maastricht treaty. If any lesson has been learnt from 1986, it is that we should carefully study such things as the preamble and title I to the Bill.

Mr. Cash: I repeat that, when reference is made to "a European Union" but no description is given, that is a load of Euro-waffle. When it comes to what will be included, I was interested to get hold of a copy of the Luxembourg treaty. The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) will remember that day in June 1991. He may have had a copy of that treaty as well, but very few people even knew that one had been deposited in the Library. We then began to realise that the intention was to take us down a route exemplified by the Maastricht treaty.

Mr. Jim Marshall: We return to the question whether or not the preamble will be used in the courts to justify further decisions by the European Court. My right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) referred to the Single European Act. Does the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) agree that similar sentiments were expressed in the original treaty of Rome, and that the European Court has been using them ever since? To give the Government their due—although I am tired of doing so—at least, by article VII, the Government are seeking to limit the European Court's future right to extend the European Commission's sphere of influence.

Mr. Cash: That returns us also to the question whether or not one interpretation is more valid than another. I do not happen to agree with the hon. Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Marshall). He was keen to suggest that this was some kind of damage limitation exercise, but I view it as a deliberate attempt by other member states to centralise and therefore to accumulate more power at the centre of Europe. That case is easily made on the basis of the documents before us.

Mr. Garel-Jones: My hon. Friend seems to be saying that he prefers a vague undefined concept of European union, as in the Single European Act, to a definition that specifically separates out important areas of political endeavour and makes them intergovernmental. He was content to sign up to an undefined union, but now he finds a union defined in such a way as to reinforce intergovernmentalism unacceptable.

Mr. Cash: Even I am pretty surprised by that little intervention. The phrase "a European union" in the preamble meant nothing. Because it has no functions attached to it, it was completely different from the Maastricht treaty, which goes into the functions that are allocated between the member states. That is the fundamental question.

Mr. Rogers: Does the hon. Gentleman not think it rather odd that the Minister should invoke article B of the Maastricht treaty to establish that we now have a union with defined parameters, yet that, at the same time, the Government should try to obfuscate and generally mislead the British public, because they have not the guts to say what the treaty is?

Mr. Cash: I agree that there has been a good deal of obfuscation. I shall not go into the question whether there is a deliberate attempt to mislead, but in the 1970 White Paper to which I referred earlier, there was certainly a clear statement that the veto would continue, that the European Community would not develop into a federation and that we should retain our essential sovereignty. Some people may think that that was a long time ago—but there has never been any denial of what was said then. In one of our more recent debates, I asked the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup whether, as he is now calling for federalism—or a unitary system, or whatever—he would repudiate the words in his White Paper. He gave me no reply, because clearly that White Paper was misleading, and it took in many people.

That is the basis on which the process has tended to move, and I believe that the same thing is happening with the present treaty, too. The British people are not being told the truth; they are not being told exactly what is involved.

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): In the past few minutes, we have heard much about the beauties of the Single European Act. Does my hon. Friend believe that the raft of directives and regulations might be in any way connected with the fact that Europe's present share of world trade is only 20 per cent., compared with 25·5 per cent. 10 years ago? In the light of those statistics, does my hon. Friend believe that the Single European Act has had all the effects that were expected when it was passed?

Mr. Cash: That is one reason why I hope that the Select Committee inquiry will iron out some of those questions and bring out the truth to the British people.

For example, we are constantly told that the fact that 50 per cent. or 55 per cent. of our exports go to Europe is a wonderful thing. But the trade deficit is £12 billion against us. Another dimension then arises. I believe that much of that disparity and that deficit has come about because of the abuses of the single market, which I hope that we can sort out. That does not necessarily mean that we should not trade with Europe. Europe needs to trade with us as much as we need to trade with Europe.

Mr. Cryer: More.

Mr. Cash: All right, even more—I agree.

Also raised in connection with the Single European Act is the strange untenable proposition that, if we do not sign the Maastricht agreement, we shall be excluded from the Single European Act and the treaty of Rome. That is poppycock. Those are treaty obligations of the kind which we are now being asked to sign. They are binding upon the other member states and ourselves, just as the present treaty would be.

The Single European Act and the treaty of Rome are not options that can be tossed overboard if we decide to accept the threats about what will happen to us if we do not sign. Nor does the coercion effectively being imposed on Denmark mean that that country can be excluded from the Single European Act and the treaty of Rome. That cannot happen. If it did, the other member states would be in breach of their treaty obligations.

[Mr. Cash]

Those obligations are not like the title I obligations, which, as I have said, are of a prerogative nature. They are international legal obligations under the aegis of the Court of Justice and therefore they take on the character of being justiciable before that court. The other member states cannot simply turn round and say, "We do not like the way you behave. Although the unanimity rule under article 236 says that all member states have to complete their constitutional requirements and have to be unanimous, we shall fudge it all. We shall manage to make a new arrangement with Denmark, but we shall exclude you from the treaty of Rome and the Single European Act."

Sir Patrick McNair-Wilson: In that context, as we are the largest payer towards the European club—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."] As we are the second largest payer, there can be no question of our being excluded. Until other people want to write cheques for the cost of the organisation, we are an essential part of it.

Mr. Cash: I am delighted that my hon. Friends have been dealing with the practical questions of the treaty's impact on the daily lives of our constituents. It is all very well to talk in esoteric terms about whether title I is in or out, and for what reason—but the real point is that we are dealing with people's lives. The question arises: who governs? The basis of our democracy is affected. Those are the matters of concern to our constituents.

I shall take the exchange rate mechanism as an example. Economic and monetary union is referred to in article B of the treaty, which says:

"The Union shall set itself the following objectives to promote economic and social progress which is balanced and sustainable"—

I shall deal with that idea in a moment—

"in particular through the creation of an area without internal frontiers, through the strengthening of economic and social cohesion"—

I thought that we Conservatives had done a little damage to that idea, but it does not seem to have escaped inclusion in article B. The passage continues:

"and through the establishment of economic and monetary union, ultimately including a single currency in accordance with the provisions of this Treaty".

We have seen what happened when, for reasons which escape me, people decided that it was a good idea, on a piece of paper, to attempt to make totally divergent economies converge. That was done—on a piece of paper—and it was called the exchange rate mechanism. When it started in 1979, it was a voluntary arrangement between the governors of the various banks throughout Europe. There may have been some spurious merit in attempting to secure some co-ordination and co-operation, to which I have no objection.

However, then along came Mr. Delors, and turned it into a plan for part of an economic and monetary union. When the ERM collapsed on black Wednesday in September, interest rates rocketed up and caused immense damage throughout the land. The system was based on an absurd dogma, which had created massive havoc, panic and fear throughout the country. None the less, we find that we are still expected to sign up to it, in the form of article B. I shall consider our opt-out in a moment.

The article says—we are signing up to all this stuff and we are part of that union—that the objective of the union is the establishment of economic and monetary union, ultimately including the single currency. What is the connection between that and our so-called "opt-out"?

Let us consider the protocol, which clearly states that the process of stage 3, which is applicable to all member states including ourselves—the protocol is immediately adjacent to our so-called opt-out—is irreversible, irrevocable and comes into effect on 1 January 1999. I shall come on to stage 2 in a moment. The protocol says that we cannot exercise our veto in respect of any other member states.

It is said that we are to be at the heart of Europe and that it is better to influence from within than from without. If we connect that with the fact that we have also agreed that the process will be irreversible and irrevocable, and that we shall not veto it for the others, we are effectively saying that we have accepted the gravitational pull. The position is even worse than that. Under article 8 of the protocol of the European Monetary Institute under stage 2, our Governor of the Bank of England will join the EMI. He and the EMI members will not be allowed to take instructions from member states.

Mrs. Currie: Will my hon. Friend give way?

8.30 pm

Mr. Cash: No. My hon. Friend must be patient.

The point is that article 8 cuts across section 4 of the Bank of England Act 1946, which clearly states that the Chancellor of the Exchequer on behalf of this House elected and accountable—he now has to answer some questions here and there—has the power and the right to be able to issue directions to the Governor of the Bank of England.

Under stage 2, the position changes the moment that we get into the European Monetary Institute. That is a completely different kettle of fish and that is the way in which our Government are being changed by stealth. Nobody refers to that.

Mrs. Currie: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Cash: I will not—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] Not for the moment. I will give way with pleasure in a minute. I want to complete my point first. There is not a word in the pamphlet about the matters to which I have just referred. There is nothing about the protocol's irreversibility and irrevocability. There is nothing about the EMI and the fact that it cannot take instructions from member states. That is the essence of the power that is being created, generated and centralised. Anybody who attempts to argue otherwise should simply look at the treaty.

Mrs. Currie: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his courtesy. He has now been talking for almost an hour. We have all got the message that he does not like title I.

My hon. Friend's problem, on which I should like him to comment, is that the outside world sees his position as strange. The Bill does not include title I, yet all six amendments that he has tabled seek to put title I into the Bill. If he thinks that title I is so awful, what is he doing proposing all the amendments that seek to put title I into the Bill? Is he just trying to filibuster and to delay the Bill?

Mr. Cash: I absolutely and totally deny that. That is a terrible slur. I am sure, Dame Janet, that you do not want to construe my hon. Friend's remark as an indirect

criticism of the Chair. The interesting point is that the amendments were selected by the Chair, for which I am deeply grateful.

I will answer the question simply. If my hon. Friend looks at the amendments to which she has just referred, she will see that they say, "insert I"—that is, title I—and that it then says "except". The exceptions are articles A, B, C, D and F. The object of the exercise is to demonstrate why I do not want the provisions in the Bill. The reason is precisely the devastating impact that I believe they will have on the people of this country and on my constituents.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockport, South): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Cash: Of course. I always give way to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Devlin: My hon. Friend said earlier that he was really concerned about how Maastricht would have an impact on the man and woman in the street in Great Britain. I will quickly draw my hon. Friend's attention to what is actually in the Bill. Article 2 says:

"The Community shall have as its task, by establishing a common market and an economic and monetary union and by implementing the common policies or activities referred to in Articles 3 and 3a, to promote throughout the Community a harmonious and balanced development of economic activities, sustainable and non-inflationary growth respecting the environment, a high degree of convergence of economic performance, a high level of employment and of social protection, the raising of standards of living and the quality of life, and economic and social cohesion and solidarity among Member States."

How many of my hon. Friend's constituents, of my constituents or of any other constituents would object to anything in that? That is what is actually going into the Bill.

Mr. Cash: I will tell my hon. Friend quickly if I may, Dame Janet. The British people in a series of opinion polls have already made it abundantly clear that they do not want economic and monetary union. There is a massive majority of about 68 per cent. That is the basis on which my hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) seeks to filibuster. I am sorry to have to say that to him. What he has referred to comes under title II. We are dealing with title I.

Sir Teddy Taylor: Does my hon. Friend agree that one difference is that the people of Britain no longer want to be taken in by all this twaddle about all the wonderful things that are happening? They remember that previous Bills said that the ERM would bring growth and stability. It was said that the CAP would bring fair prices for the housewife. The British people will not be taken in by all this nonsense and twaddle, unlike the minority of our pro-European hon. Friends.

Mr. Cash: May I add to that point, Dame Janet? To come back to what the objectives of the union are supposed to be, article B says that one objective is

"to promote economic and social progress which is balanced and sustainable".

What is balanced and sustainable about the ERM and the collapse of sterling? With the tremendous gravitational pull and with all the machinery that is being cranked up to the EMI, what will be the effect of taking the ERM into economic and monetary union and into the central banking arrangements that are at the heart of the treaty? When the ERM collapses—all the Parliaments will have committed voluntary euthanasia, as we are being asked to do now—the whole damn thing will collapse. There will then be massive instability and there will no balance in Europe.

The EC may say, "We will compensate for such a collapse by the social cohesion contained in the articles" —that is, the transfer of resources and the cohesion fund. Let us look at the Delors 2 package and the way in which our Government are now trying to wriggle out of the competencies that were granted under Maastricht and for which they now say that they will not pay. We then begin to realise that the proposal will ruin the trust between the peoples of Europe because the people of Spain, of Portugal and of other countries will have been led up the garden path—[HON. MEMBERS: "And the Irish."] The Irish have been led up the garden path with the £6 billion that they were supposed to get.

Those countries will find that Germany does not have the money to pay for the fund, because Germany is preoccupied with its own affairs. The people in other parts of Europe are equally strapped for cash. We are the second highest net contributor, yet we are now apparently a qualifier for the cohesion fund.

It is crazy. We are supposed to be going into a system of convergence—the ERM—which has already been demonstrated to be completely incapable of working. Under our autumn statement, we do not have the faintest opportunity of being able to comply with the convergence conditions prescribed by Maastricht. That is compounded by the fact that convergence is also part of our "European policy" for the rest of Europe, so it cannot work. We qualify for the cohesion fund, yet we are net contributors. Now the Germans say that they will take away £2 billion of our rebate. That is an absolutely crazy situation.

The plain fact is that we are being asked to accept provisions that will create civil disorder in parts of Europe. With the budgetary arrangements proposed and with the monetary policies that the unelected, unaccountable bank will have the independence to be able to enforce, the poorer people in other parts of Europe will find that their public service sector and borrowing requirements will be slashed. Those countries will not have the slightest chance of being able to pay the fines that the Government propose should be imposed on them. As a result, the poor will get even poorer.

That is another of my fundamental objections. It does not apply only to Europe; it applies to the third world. The last line of the book that I recently wrote said:

"while the third world starves."

Several hon. Members *rose*——

The Second Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. If I stand, other hon. Members sit. I wanted to make the observation that I know that this matter has caused some excitement, but I do not expect a lot of sedentary interruptions. Is the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) giving way?

Mr. Cash: I am giving way to my hon. Member the Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin).

Mr. Devlin: Going back to amendment No. 93, which is about whether title I should be part of the Bill, I am not sure whether my hon. Friend is speaking in favour of it or against it. I should like him to clarify that point. The treaty has written into it article 3B, which is the subject of the Bill, whereas title I is not part of the Bill. Why is my hon.

[Mr. Devlin]

Friend opposing the treaty, given that it is the first one which prescribes a role for national parliaments, if he is so keen to preserve that?

Mr. Cash: The answer is simply that it is not in the treaty. We have only to look at the Government's own handouts to know that the declarations are not part of the treaty. I was at the assize last year, and I was darned glad that that matter will not be imposed upon us, because there was a vote after two days of idiotic discussion. People were brought from all over Europe at absolutely fantastic expense. Even my hon. Friend the Member for Stamford and Spalding (Mr. Davies), who is a bit of a Europhile, said to me, when we had a bite afterwards, that even he did not believe that that crazy state of affairs could possibly have existed.

The assize passed 240 amendments to a treaty which nobody had been told was even going to be given to us, all in the space of about two hours, by pressing buttons. Nobody had the faintest idea what was going on. That is another good reason why we should keep well away from those aspects, and I am delighted that they are only in a declaration.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I hate to interrupt my hon. Friend's flow, but I assume that he is speaking to his amendments Nos. 313, 344, 345, 346, 347 and 348. Will he tell the Committee why he wishes to include those articles in the scope of the Bill, thus, as it were, supporting the federalist amendment?

Mr. Cash: I am more and more astonished by my right hon. Friend's interventions. The matter is very simple. Because it was not included by the Government, we had to include title I in order to be able to knock out all the noxious provisions. It is precisely for that reason that we are now considering the articles and demonstrating their inadequacy and the reasons why we do not want them. That is precisely what is going on. There is every conceivable reason for doing so. I understand that those on both Front Benches have already decided that they will not vote on this matter, or at any rate they will vote against the Liberal Democrats' amendment if they decide to press it to a vote.

Mr. Garel-Jones: With respect, I do not think that my hon. Friend has answered the question. If he is saying that he wants to move the articles into the Bill to provide a peg for a debate, I would understand that. If he said, "This is a probing amendment on which we can debate the various articles," I would understand that. But his amendment would not eliminate the articles; it would include them in the Bill. If it is not a probing amendment to stimulate debate, which, Dame Janet, you know is the practice in Committee, my hon. Friend should tell us why he wants to do what he purports to want to do in the amendments.

Mr. Cash: The amendment also gives us the advantage of being able to demonstrate why the articles should not be included. Furthermore, it is a matter of international legal obligation. I am continually trying to get out of the Minister of State whether he regards title I as an international legal obligation. So far, he has not been prepared to give me an answer. I should be glad if he would—perhaps he will do so later. We are not discussing a casual piece of paper, and the Minister of State knows it. It is the binding material for the treaty as a whole. That is the basis on which the matter is being considered. It is not being put in the Bill because the Government want to do it by prerogative. They are doing that by prerogative, but they are not coming clean.

8.45 pm

The provisions are fundamental to the Maastricht treaty. Whether they are justiciable under article L in certain respects is debatable. They are international legal obligations which are of profound importance. That is why it is important that these matters should be probed, discussed and considered in full depth. That is what we intend to do.

Mr. Knapman: My hon. Friend is making an excellent speech. I am sure that he wishes to make further progress. Could he refer again to the business of convergence? Is my hon. Friend suprised not to have had an intervention saying that convergence policies are a good thing? Is that possibly because at the weekend we found that, in Ireland, mortgage rates have gone up to 18·5 per cent., it was suggested that, if the Germans do not drop their interest rates by 1 January, Irish interest rates will go up to 40 per cent., and that overnight money has gone to 100 per cent? Is it perhaps that these are not the right few days to suggest that convergence policies are bringing the stability that some of us are told is the effect of such policies?

Mr. Cash: My hon. Friend the Member for Stroud (Mr. Knapman) has hit the nail on the head—that is true. Hon. Members do not want to raise that point. They started by talking of trying to turn the debate back to title I and trying to turn it into a technical debate. The one thing that they do not want in any circumstances is for the people of this country to know the practical implications of this matter. That is what they do not want, but they will get doses of it as we proceed.

Mr. Jim Marshall: I am grateful that the hon. Gentleman has come back to that point. When he was talking about economic convergence, he put the classic monetarist argument that if convergence principles were implemented at the moment, they would lead to increased unemployment throughout Europe. That is why many Opposition Members are opposed to virtual convergence. What attracts me to article B is that, if one could have real economic growth throughout the Community, it would be much easier to reach the convergence principles, but that would be based upon growth and increased public expenditure.

Mr. Cash: I have much sympathy with the objective that the hon. Gentleman is seeking. We all want jobs and prosperity for the people of Europe. We do not want another war, and we do not want the difficulties that we experienced over 100 years. But the problem is that the treaty is completely out of date. The people who are advocating those policies are carrying the intellecutal baggage of the 1950s. Since the collapse of the Berlin wall, we have moved into a completely new Europe. Merely grafting on so-called new solutions to what appear to be old problems will create disunity in Europe and not the European union that some are claiming in the provisions that we are discussing. It will not be diversity; it will be disunity. The trust between the peoples of Europe will be ruined.

Also, there will not be an equal union; there will be an imbalance. We can only take German interest rates as an example and the way in which they have been manipulated to the disadvantage of the rest of Europe, on the one hand, and the way in which the French have behaved with regard to GATT and nearly destabilised and might yet destabilise world trade on the other hand.

The French may yet destabilise the whole of world trade. That is not communautaire. That is not operating on the basis of the provision to promote economic and social progress which is balanced and sustainable. That is pursuing nationalistic, not even national, policies which are unfortunately a very sad and tragic reflection on their internal political systems.

For us to be drawn into the chaos that that will induce will be bad for us. That is another reason why we should make sure that we do not accept the treaty. It would lead to political instability. Let us consider the landscape of Europe for a moment. There are problems in Yugoslavia. There are problems in eastern Europe where the Germans have taken up 85 per cent. of all foreign investment; they also own half the Russian debt. There are disturbances in Georgia, problems in Kosovo and problems in Macedonia.

In that maelstrom it is proposed to impose a system of convergence which everyone knows will not work. The Westminster Parliament will be emasculated and our constituents will lose the right to make choices in general elections. As a consequence of convergence, the Community will create the very instability which it claims that it is seeking to avoid. That is one of my most fundamental objections to the treaty.

Furthermore, all this raises the question of the rule of law in Europe. Some influential people, including Ministers, have suggested that the system of law may collapse. We are told, "You do not have to worry about all this, because for practical purposes it will all collapse anyway." That is a disreputable argument. If individual member states lose their freedom and rule of law by the creation of a union, and a new rule of law, imposed under the European Court of Justice and other international obligations, collapses, that will be an act of massive political irresponsibility.

If the whole thing collapses, what will we put in its place? There is no secession clause. There is no way out. Therefore, somebody will have to enforce the system. I should like to know who that person or persons will be. The system will have to be disciplinary. That could be the beginning of a new fascism—something we should be fighting against.

Mr. Livingstone: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that that is the core of the mistake? No one denies that those who are eager for European unification see tremendous economic benefits. There could be unification if Europe were achieving convergence. The idea that locking us into these structures will create convergence is nonsense. There are completely different levels of speed and development. When the whole thing does not start to work, the common defence policy will become the arm which imposes the order when the European Court finds that it cannot uphold decisions by the Council of Ministers that nations should cut their spending and their budgets. That is the danger.

Mr. Cash: I agree with the hon. Gentleman's analysis.

Another strange, mysterious theology developed since the 1940s and 1950s is that these provisions will contain Germany. They will not do anything of the kind. Just as we found with the exchange rate mechanism, the economic muscle of Germany will prevail. We only have to look at the trade balances of Germany and other member states.

What I am saying is in no sense anti-German. Many people in Germany have made a massive contribution to peace in Europe since the 1940s, but when a country has such economic muscle and is effectively banking many other countries, it will be the most powerful. We have heard that France is virtually on the point of surrendering to the deutschmark. If Germany has control over the institutions and majority voting—other member states will be inclined to vote with Germany because effectively it controls their economy—far from containing it, we will have handed power to Germany on a plate.

That is the one thing we must not do with Germany. We must contain Germany by a balance of power and not by a spurious, academic, theoretical, theological attempt to contain it by pieces of paper. I remember Munich—at least I remember that it was the waving of a piece of paper——

Mrs. Currie: On a point of order, Dame Janet. I apologise, but many of us want to speak. Many of us would like to speak to the amendment that is before us. My hon. Friend has been speaking longer than anyone else in the debate. He would not have to put up with so many sedentary interventions, to which you rightly drew attention, or interventions if he would sit down and let somebody else speak.

The Second Deputy Chairman: Hon. Members will understand that unless an hon. Member engages in tedious repetition, I do not have power to decide on the length of a speech.

Mr. Cash: I am grateful to you, Dame Janet. What I am doing is going through the amendments that have been selected by the Chair and dealing with each one in turn. I should like to come back to the press release which was produced by the German embassy on 13 April 1992.

Mr. Wells: Can my hon. Friend tell us which of the items he is dealing with at present, which he has already dealt with and which he will deal with next?

Mr. Cash: Fortunately, as they are all grouped together, that decision has been taken by the Chair. I do not have to answer that question because they are all interwoven as part of the debate. I am delighted to assure my hon. Friend that I have no intention of attempting to separate them. I should have been delighted if each had been taken separately because there is more than enough meat in the words "economic and monetary union" to enable us to have a full debate on that alone.

Mr. Bill Walker: Given the way in which the amendments are grouped, does my hon. Friend agree that it is important that all the arguments on them are deployed? This is no ordinary legislation—if we get it wrong, we cannot put it right next year—it is a constitutional change and we must therefore ensure that it is debated properly and thoroughly.

Mr. Cash: I endorse my hon. Friend's remarks. I am surprised that some of my hon. Friends are not prepared to allow an opportunity——

Mrs. Currie: Let other people have an opportunity.

The Second Deputy Chairman: Order. There are many sedentary interruptions—some from the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie). This is not satisfactory. As long as the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) has the Floor, he is entitled to be heard.

Mr. Cash: I am most grateful, Dame Janet.

A speech by Mr. Martin Bangemann, the Vice-President of the European Commission and a former German Cabinet Minister, was mentioned earlier. As it directly bears on the question of European union, it is worth reminding the House that he said:

"The inadequacies of European decision-making cannot be remedied by returning power to member states. The notion of subsidiarity presupposes the idea of a federal European state."

That mirrors what Mr. Delors and everyone in Europe has said because their perception——

Mr. Devlin: On a point of order, Dame Janet. I hesitate to draw your attention to this matter, but I have listened to this speech for more than one hour and have heard the same section of Herr Martin Bangemann's speech referred to twice before. As you ruled that it was not in order to indulge in repetition, does that qualify as the requisite repetition?

The Second Deputy Chairman: The expression is "tedious repetition" and that must be the view of the Chair and not of hon. Members.

9 pm

Mr. Cash: As often appears to be the case, my hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) is wrong. I merely mentioned Martin Bangemann before, whereas just now I quoted what he said. It is important that we make it clear that those people in Europe believe that they are creating a federal super-state. That is in direct contradiction to what the Prime Minister has been telling us we want for this country.

The press release from the German embassy on 13 April says:

"There are no differences of conviction between Chancellor Helmut Kohl and the Prime Minister."

The second paragraph of the press release congratulates the Prime Minister on his election victory and says:

"This is a deserved accolade for you and a great encouragement for those of us who hold the same convictions."

The press release is saying that the German Chancellor believes that the Prime Minister holds the same convictions as he does. Obviously, it is worrying to some of us if they share the same convictions on Maastricht, as Chancellor Kohl states that the treaty

"is a new and decisive stage in the process of European union, leading to a united states of Europe within a few years".

That is directly contrary to what we heard at the Conservative party conference, and to the pamphlet "Britain in Europe", which unequivocally states that we are not on the slippery slope to federalism——

Mr. Milligan *rose*——

Mr. Cash: I am delighted to give way to my hon. Friend, since he had the benefit of a trouncing in the debate the other day.

Mr. Milligan: My hon. Friend says that the Prime Minister and Chancellor Kohl appear to agree, which seems to be the case. My hon. Friend has not noted that it is Chancellor Kohl who appears to have changed his mind, and who is now a supporter of subsidiarity and made a strong speech on the need for national identity. Will my hon. Friend welcome that conversion?

Mr. Cash: No, I do not believe that subsidiarity is worth the paper that it is written on. It is the biggest con trick of all time. It demonstrates the centralising features of the Community. If something is subsidiary, it automatically assumes that something else is superior. The central bank is superior. It is a granary of power, which will exercise undemocratic control over the people of Europe. When that system collapses, there will be real trouble.

Mr. Devlin: On a point of order, Dame Janet. My hon. Friend has mentioned that argument about the central bank once before. He has just mentioned the discrepancy between the Prime Minister's speech at the Conservative party conference and the booklet for the second time. I have no doubt that that is very tedious; what we are trying to establish is whether it is also repetition.

The Second Deputy Chairman: Order. I must be allowed to be the judge of that. As long as the hon. Member for Stafford is constantly interrupted, it may make it easier for repetitions to slip in.

Mr. Cash: Again, I am most grateful, Dame Janet.

The pamphlet purports to deal with a range of issues concerned with the European Community and the Maastricht treaty, so it is not surprising that I might wish to dip into it from time to time, because it contains so many inaccuracies and so much disinformation and so many half-baked statements. As it has been distributed to the people of this country as some sort of alternative White Paper, it is very important to point those out.

It is all very well for us to think that there can be a bit of banter in this Chamber, but some hon. Members, including those who have made deliberate interventions, are overlooking the fact that their constituents are affected by what is contained in the treaty. Many of their constituents might not be too happy if they knew what their views on the subject were. I intend, without tedious repetition, to set the truth of what is in the treaty before the British public. That is worth doing, because the Government will not publish a White Paper.

I refer to the next comment, rather than the previous one, of Martin Bangemann. On 3 November 1992, the Prime Minister said that Mr. Bangemann was wrong. The report in *The Times* says:

"The Commission had already made absolutely clear that these were personal remarks and did not reflect the views of the Commission. Nor, can I assure you, are they my views, the views of this Government or any mainstream Government in Europe."

Judging from some of the speeches that I have heard in the past year, certainly since the Maastricht treaty was signed, there is a strong sign that the leaders of the other Member States—Mitterrand, Kohl, Lubbers, and so on—have a federal agenda on their minds; that is what they want. It would not surprise me to learn that Martin Bangemann made the statements, because they are merely a reflection of the attitude of other leaders in Europe.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Eastleigh (Mr. Milligan) said, the establishment of the social cohesion fund is terrible. The bottom line is that the treaty called for

a new cohesion fund for the poorest members of the European Community—Greece, Portugal, Ireland and Spain.

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): Is not the cohesion fund the essence of a communist ideal of taking from the people to redistribute to the people? Is not that socialism, tooth and claw? Should not the Conservative party be opposed to it?

Mr. Cash: Bearing in mind the colour of the dress of my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman), I am not surprised that the reference to the setting up of the social cohesion fund as a communist plot immediately sprang to her mind. The worst aspect of any policy is to engage in breaking promises which may not be fulfilled. It is clear that the other leaders of the member states are seeking to transfer resources on that socialist engineering principle, which will not work.

We must try, somehow or other, to give genuine help through fair trade with the other member states. The problem is that not all the member states will subscribe to the cohesion fund. We have heard that the Delors 2 plan has been jettisoned, in part because there is no money to pay for the cohesion fund. The structural funds—the regional funds—which I have not dealt with at all, have been cut back. A range of other matters have been presented to us as part of the package, but they simply will not work.

Mr. Livingstone: Does the hon. Member not agree that, far from being a communist plot—because that might change the opinions of some of my hon. Friends—it is a great redistribution treaty? When we are talking about 2 per cent., or perhaps 3 per cent. at the most, of the European total GDP being under control, that does not provide those powers. We oppose the setting up of the social cohesion fund, largely because it will have no capacity to cope with or pay for the restitution of damage that centralisation of the economy will cause.

Mr. Cash: It is intraordinary how much I agree with the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone). I never thought for a minute that that would be possible. There have been moments when I had the highest regard for many of the arguments of the hon. Member for Chesterfield, (Mr. Benn) about British democracy, but I never thought that I would agree with the hon. Member for Brent, East on economic matters.

It will not work. That is one good reason for not allowing it to happen, but it is being thrust on us. We have an opportunity in Committee to expose the inadequacies of the arguments and to be able to say that we are—we hope—rational people who will listen to the arguments and attempt to form a measured judgment.

I would not want to espouse Tory party policies if I did not think that they would work effectively. I have an instance in mind. I was delighted that the exchange rate mechanism collapsed—some of us said that we thought that it would not work. As I said to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister during my speech in the recess, the measure was contained in our manifesto. It was not the Euro-realists—I am not sure about the phrase "Euro-sceptics" and prefer to use the phrase "Euro-realists"—who destroyed it. We said that we did not think that the exchange rate mechanism would work; we thought that it would collapse, and it did. We did not tear up our manifesto to get out of the ERM, we were driven out of it because the system was inadequate, insufficient, fatally flawed——

Mrs. Gorman: It was unsustainable.

Mr. Cash: As my hon. Friend says, it was unsustainable. We must be entirely realistic about what the treaty contains. As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said, we must go through it clause by clause, line by line. It was also suggested that the Bill would have a bruising passage, and that may be the case. It will certainly have a thorough passage through the House.

Sir Teddy Taylor: I agree with almost all that my hon. Friend has said, but is there not a danger of being too pessimistic about the cohesion fund? Does my hon. Friend not accept that the scope for spending anything on the cohesion fund has been greatly reduced by the fact that the cost-cutting reforms of the common agricultural policy —a triumph for the Government and the EC—have resulted in an increase in the estimated expenditure from £26,000 million to £31,000 million, so there should not really be anything left for the cohesion fund?

Mr. Cash: I find that an encouraging intervention, but I always feel that whenever I see that my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) is about to rise. I see that my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay wishes to say something.

Mrs. Gorman: Is it not a tenet of communism that it takes from people according to their means and gives to people according to their needs? Is not that, in essence, what the cohesion fund is about? Is it not also true that, while our net contribution to the European Community is now £50 million every week, with the cohesion fund—I do not know how the Government believe that they can take that from the same pot of money, although they have said that it will not cost more money—by 1994, our membership of the organisation will cost us the equivalent of £200 million every week. Is it not true that we could build roads, hospitals, schools, homes for the homeless and many other things in this country if we kept the money in our pockets where it belongs?

Mr. Cash *rose*——

The Second Deputy Chairman: Order. Before the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) continues, he should appreciate that many of the issues that he is raising come under a separate and later group of amendments. I hope that he will address himself to the amendments that form the first group.

Mr. Cash: I certainly shall, Dame Janet.

The citizenship of the union arises under article B, which clearly states:

"The Union shall set itself the following objectives . . . to strengthen the protection of the rights and interests of the nationals of its Member States through the introduction of a citizenship of the Union".

Some of the statements that I have heard in support of that have been disingenuous and less than candid. Unfortunately, what is not made clear is the fact that the union provides not only for rights to be given to its participants, but for the duties imposed thereby.

My right hon. Friend the Minister of State may or may not recall that I raised the issue whh him in a written question to which I received one of the most extraordinary

[Mr. Cash]

answers that I have ever received during my time in the House. He said—I paraphrase—that such duties as were referred to would be those that emerged as the European Community evolved. His reply was something along those lines and I am sure that he will correct me if I am wrong.

That is the sort of theme that was being pursued and there is very good reason for being vague in matters of this kind. I think that the Minister is very wise to be vague, because this is blank cheque territory.

What is the most important function, or certainly one of the prime functions, of a legal entity of the kind that this European union is to be? It is the call to arms. That is the direction in which this is going: to a common defence policy. What is the first requirement, the first duty to be imposed on citizens? It is that they may be conscripted. Labour Members may care to reflect on that, because a Franco-German army has been created and I believe that the Secretary of State for Defence was not even invited to some of the meetings because they were held in secret. They were obviously up to something or other and they did not seem to want to have him there. Be that as it may, one of the first duties of a citizen is the call to arms and I think that people ought to be reflecting hard on what that might involve.

9.15 pm

There is the further question of voting in elections. We have been told that the wording of the arrangements for voting for these new citizens will be confined to local and regional elections but that is not what it says. It says "municipal".

In English, according to "The Concise Oxford Dictionary" the word "municipal" would mean to do with a borough—perhaps a rotten borough or whatever—but the practicality of it is that it is to do with local government.

However, in the precedents of the Court of Justice there is a very important Italian case from a few years ago. Surprise, surprise—the word "municipal" as already interpreted by the court means "national". Translate that in the citizenship provisions. Translate municipal to national, in line with the precedents of the Court of Justice, and we have a big question mark. I hope that the Attorney-General or someone will come and explain these complicated legal things that I do not understand.

I should like to know whether the word "municipal", meaning national in that context, would refer to what a Liberal right hon. Member did when he went to Rome to stand for election there. We might find other nationals coming over for a test case. Then it will go to the Court of Justice. We will sign the treaty and suddenly they will say, "You thought you knew what you were signing, but, as is so commonly the case with this treaty, you thought it meant so and so, but actually, bad luck, it means something else." The Court of Justice could easily substitute "national" for "municipal" and we could find ourselves in difficulty. I should like to know why that matter was not raised when the treaty was being negotiated. That Italian case is quite a well-known one.

As I see the Minister of State thumbing through some biographies down there, perhaps he would be good enough to tell me whether he will answer the question, which I might put to him rhetorically, as to whether municipal means national as expressed by the Court of Justice?

Mrs. Gorman: Does my hon. Friend think it possible that, as a result of this legislation, we might end up with Sophia Loren opposing Shirley Porter for Westminster city council or if Mr. Delors fails to make it for the presidency of France, that he might stand for Durham or even that La Ciciollina might stand in Northampton for a seat on the council there?

Mr. Cash: All these things are marvellous and extraordinary in themselves. I have not the faintest idea which way they will go, but it conjures up some pretty amazing thoughts. Some of the people my hon. Friend refers to are the stars of some time ago, but we may find that other people who have been taking an active part in politics, but are also star quality of a younger generation, might come forward as well.

Important questions lie at the heart of the citizenship issue because we are being told that what is being done will not affect our rights as British citizens. It is said that this is an add-on, a little extra, when in reality it is fundamental and goes back to the whole question of the union. The union is a legal framework, and whether it comes within the Court of Justice or is a legal international obligation, what is proposed will be binding on us. It should be struck out of the treaty because it goes to the heart of the way in which we run our democracy and the rights which we are used to exercising.

Sir Teddy Taylor: Will my hon. Friend remind the House that European citizenship is not static and that under article 8E there must be a three-year review to extend the duties of European citizens, in addition to which new powers and rights can be introduced? The idea that, by some means, voting in municipal elections represents citizenship is a load of rubbish. Instead, every three years there will be a review to increase the duties. We shall be well on the way to a single European state, even though the vast majority of hon. Members do not want to face up to that, do not want to read about it and do not want to hear the arguments on the subject.

Mr. Cash: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his intervention.

Article B provides:

"The Union shall set itself"

the objective

"to develop close co-operation on justice and home affairs".

While we are told that that is a separate pillar, those provisions will be binding on us. We are bound to compare what was said on immigration at the Conservative party conference with the substantive provisions in the treaty.

It is not even as simple as that. If the unanimity rule is dispensed with and a joint action plan for immigration is brought in, we shall face the prospect of another enabling provision designed to allow the Court of Justice to have jurisdiction over immigration policy. That issue has not been explained to people, and considering what is going on elsewhere——

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): Including the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Bill.

Mr. Cash: The hon. Gentleman is right to refer to that measure. Many of those who are responsible for putting the treaty together do not realise that people can read and do not necessarily believe what they are told. Indeed, the more incredibility that arises as the process goes forward, the more questions people want to be answered.

The British population is becoming increasingly concerned at the vast discrepancy between what they were led to believe and what is going on. As the currency of language is becoming more familiar to people, they are discovering that they do not like much of what they hear. That will cause greater difficulty for the advocates of the measure as time passes, for as the monetary system implodes, so the other provisions relating to justice and home affairs become clearer.

There are no doubt some admirable objectives, for example, in seeking to prevent drug abuse and the transfer of drugs across borders and so on, but is it necessary to have a Euro-poll? Where will the centre of power of that poll be, who will run it, what powers will they have and what effect will that have on the rights and duties of British citizens? Little information has been given on all those matters.

Mr. Allen *rose*——

Mr. Spearing *rose*——

The Second Deputy Chairman: Order. Could the hon. Gentleman make quite clear to whom he is giving way?

Mr. Cash: To the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen), the captain of our cricket team.

Mr. Allen: I presume that the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) will be aware that yesterday the ad hoc group of Immigration Ministers met in London, came to numerous conclusions and made numerous resolutions in respect of asylum and safe third countries, none of which has been or will be reported to the House. Will he make a brief comment on that in his remarks?

Mr. Cash: It is all quite disgraceful. It is not the slightest bit surprising, however, because many of these meetings take place in secret, as the Council of Ministers does. This is half the trouble: the European union will not be a new wonderland of democracy, anything but. It is my belief that the European Parliament cannot fill that void. If Westminster and other Parliaments are emasculated by the provisions of this treaty, we will have a democratic void and the power of government will grow greater.

In the July edition of a journal published by the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, the official think tank of the Christian Democrat Party, Chancellor Kohl's party, there was a very interesting statement—that since the Danish referendum something very strange had been going on in Europe; voters were beginning to protest. It went on to say that this would make governing even more difficult than it had been in the past. This is the kind of language coming out of the Christian Democrat party. This is what was said by the editor of the official think tank journal.

Our Conservative MEPs—and this relates directly to the questions on the European Parliament contained in article D—have joined up with the European People's party, an exclusively federal organisation. That causes great concern among certain Conservative Members, but obviously not to the Minister of State, who is looking, in his usual way, totally bewildered by what he is hearing.

Sir Russell Johnston: Since it is such a federal party, which is obviously something that the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) finds quite odious, why have all the Conservative Members of the European Parliament joined it?

Mr. Cash: The short answer is that they have federal inclinations of which the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber would be more than proud. They want a federal system, and that is why many of them——

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): They do not.

Mr. Cash: Very well. I am more than happy to qualify that by saying that many of them do. I apologise to my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) because I happen to know that her husband, who is an MEP, does not.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): I am grateful to my hon. Friend and next-door neighbour the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash), but he is traducing many fine Members of the European Parliament, including his own Member and leader of the Conservative group, Sir Christopher Prout.

Mr. Cash: I said "they", but I was referring to a number of them. There are some who do, although I am more than happy to accept that there are others who do not. Unfortunately, irrespective of what they think privately, they have joined up with the European People's party, the constitution of which is exclusively federal. It is very difficult, on the one hand, to say that one does not believe in it, and, on the other, to subscribe to a constitution which is as federal as that of the EPP.

Mr. Cormack: Is my hon. Friend querying Conservative party policy?

Mr. Cash: My hon. Friend, from a sedentary position, says that I seem to have doubts about aspects of Conservative party policy on this matter. I can say with absolute clarity that I do not believe in the exchange rate mechanism, although that was described as the centrepiece of our counter-inflationary policy and therefore the central plank of our economic strategy. I did not tear it up, but it was torn up, and it was the central plank of our economic strategy.

The Second Deputy Chairman: It does not seem to be the centrepiece of this group of amendments.

9.30 pm

Mr. Cash: I would not for one minute, Dame Janet, wish to cross swords with you on any matter, and certainly not on that. Economic and monetary union and a single currency are included in these proposals but I have already dealt with them, so I would not want to go into that again.

Mr. Marlow: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way. He is very tolerant and I know that he wants to conclude his remarks very shortly. He will make up his own mind on that, so perhaps I should say that I am sorry to intervene on my hon. Friend's introduction.

My hon. Friend sits with me on the European Select Committee. As regards title I, we have had before us recently a large number of documents arising out of the Maastricht treaty. The treaty has not yet been ratified. Perhaps it is not title I, but some other part of the treaty that entitles European institutions to put documents before the House based on the Maastricht treaty when the treaty has not yet been ratified.

Mr. Cash: As ever, the ingenuity and perception of my hon. Friend are quite magnificent. He has made his point. I have not the faintest idea how it can be done, but I

[Mr. Cash]

certainly share his deep reservations, worries and doubts about it. The plain fact is that on most of the matters which arise on this treaty we are being taken for a very substantial ride.

There is another provision in article B on which I have not yet touched, and that is the subject of subsidiarity. Subsidiarity is described here as one of the main objectives of the union. It clearly states that the objectives of the union are to be achieved as laid down

"in the Treaty and in accordance with the conditions and the timetable set out therein"—

some very important matters relating to the conditions and timetable for economic and monetary union arise on that—

"while respecting the principle of subsidiarity as defined in Article 3b of the Treaty establishing the European Community."

We all know that Lord Mackenzie-Stuart described subsidiarity as gobbledegook. There are serried ranks of European lawyers who take exactly the same view and are totally opposed to it. They include some of our most distinguished practitioners at the European bar. They know that subsidiarity is a con trick, and they say so repeatedly.

I see that you have now returned to the Chair, Mr. Morris, and I shall seek to keep within the bounds of order in line with the strong rulings that you have given on these matters. I am very gradually and carefully working my way through the provisions.

I shall leave it to others to elaborate on subsidiarity because I find that it is a theological concept of such complexity and confusion that it is much better left for the early part of a day—perhaps that will be tomorrow.

Mr. Knapman: My hon. Friend is moving on so fast that I am having a job keeping up with him. I wonder whether it is possible to believe in both market forces and a fixed exchange rate?

Mr. Cash: My hon. Friend asks whether it is possible to equate market forces and a fixed exchange rate. The answer is emphatically no, for this very good reason: what these proposals are attempting to do is to pay lip service to free trading arrangements. That is what the treaty of Rome, the original basis of the European Economic Community, was all about, and I thoroughly endorse and agree with it.

But then, because of this extraordinary desire to impose systems within it and then to redistribute in this social engineering way that we are expected to agree to under the transfer of resources, they want to have fixed exchange rates, not only to get a greater degree of control over the currencies but also to create one country. At the moment the Berlaymont seems to be closed, but anyone who managed to get in before that happened will have noticed the placards on the way in which say "Europe my country". No attempt is made to disguise that.

I have enormous respect for the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber and his colleagues, who passionately believe in the virtues of a federal system and European union. They believe that it will enhance democracy, but those who hold the contrary view are equally entitled to develop their arguments. I am worried, however, about compromises being reached on issues that are not capable of being compromised—democracy, voting and citizen' rights in the United Kingdom in the United Kingdom and whether Parliament will be able effectively to conduct its affairs. The budgetary arrangements proposed in the treaty will be imposed on our central bank—the Bank of England—and thereby on Parliament. We shall not then be able to hold the Chancellor accountable for the Budget.

There are other measures that I have not mentioned, such as multisurveillance budgets, which sound like something from outer space—which is where the treaty should be sent.

Mr. Winnick: The hon. Gentleman referred to the possibility—to many of us it is more than a possibility—of going down the federal road. Should not we congratulate the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath), the Father of the House, on being so frank when he was challenged——

Mr. Spearing: By me.

Mr. Winnick: By my hon. Friend on one occasion—about his belief that Europe should follow the example of the United States? He justified that by saying that the states of America have some autonomy. If the Government were as frank as the right hon. Gentleman, we would know where we stood. Does the hon. Gentleman agree, therefore, that when emphasis is on an ever closer union, as proposed under article A, whatever interpretation——

The Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. I have noted that interventions have been very long today. They should be short and succinct.

Mr. Cash *rose*——

The Chairman: Order. I have been listening all evening to the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash), who has now covered all the articles and is beginning to be repetitious. The Committee is willing to listen to specific and new points, but he has dealt with the values of this Parliament at some length and is beginning to go down that route again. I hope that he will move on to new subjects. He has spoken—I have kept a careful check—to every article so far.

Mr. Cash: I am most grateful. I shall do all that I can to ensure that I do not transgress your rulings, Mr. Morris. I agree that sometimes it is better to stick to six-ball rather than eight-ball overs.

Article C says:

"The Union shall in particular"—

this is very important and it ties in with another article that I have not dealt with—

"ensure the consistency of its external activities as a whole in the context of its external relations, security, economic and development policies."

The paragraph goes on to say:

"The Council and the Commission shall be responsible for ensuring such consistency. They shall ensure the implementation of these policies, each in accordance with its respective powers."

Mr. Marlow: My hon. Friend was saying that, if the Chancellor were to announce his Budget at some future date, people would find it difficult to understand. But if, in three years' time, the Chancellor says, "I'm awfully sorry, but we must close 50 schools and 30 hospitals," the reason that he can give is perfectly straightforward: to promote economic and social progress that is balanced and

sustainable. We would have to spend more money for Greek and Portuguese hospitals and schools. It is clearly written in the treaty, so people will know why the Chancellor is doing that in three years' time.

Mr. Cash: One problem is that people will not easily forgive us if they discover that what they thought we had signed turns out to be something else. When they complain, it will be too late.

That is why, Mr. Morris, I am going gradually, but none the less carefully, through the provisions. In no sense do I want my speech to be regarded as a filibuster. I am dealing specifically with the provisions as and when they arise, and I am more than happy to justify every word that I have said.

Sir Teddy Taylor: Although I appreciate the fact that my hon. Friend is trying to hurry because of pressures from you, Mr. Morris and elsewhere, does he agree that it would be wrong to complete that part of his argument without telling all hon. Members present who may not have read the treaty that, if a future Chancellor of the Exchequer does not do what the central French institutions tell him, he and the British people can be fined in the same way as a rate-capped council?

Mr. Cash: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making that observation. I do not need to repeat it, because it is now on the record. I hope that people outside will take note of that because I have discovered that people are discovering many things about the treaty and, as we go deeper into it, they will learn even more.

I return to article C about the consistency of external activities. We well remember what happened in the GATT round recently when France dug itself into a position which, even now, may induce a trade war. It is precisely because of the European Commission's role in that matter that those difficulties arose. It is not just bilateral trade. The provision says:

"The Council and the Commission shall be responsible for ensuring such consistency."

The hon. Member for Leicester, South said earlier that I was claiming that the Commission would have more powers under the treaty than I could justify. This is yet another example, and there are many others. It is not simply an airy-fairy canter through "Alice in Wonderland" territory; it is about how the United Kingdom will be governed in future.

When we see that our business men, companies, partnerships and good, honest, decent hard-working people could find that they are afflicted with a massive trade war because of one country's intransigence and the fact that the European Commission is operating——

Mr. Cormack: As the country in question can be so intransigent and independent, does that not blow a hole in my hon. Friend's argument?

Mr. Cash: It certainly does not, because my argument is that, within a European Community that works effectively, people operate on the basis of mutual obligations. It is precisely because some countries are not interested in doing that that we are faced with the difficulty. It is a form of nationalism, not national interests, which is the subtle distinction that needs to be made.

We have had a similar problem with Honeywell Bull, Renault, Rhone Poulenc and Usinor. There is a stack of examples—the creation of mega-Euro-champions. That is the kind of thing that causes difficulties. It is the job of the European Commission to sort out such things and, in relation to the external activities, it is found wanting. That is why we should not be making these massive transfers of power to it in relation to economic and development policies.

9.45 pm

The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry was present a few moments ago and I should like to address some remarks to him. In the proposed energy policy under the treaty, there are already signs of greater control by the so-called union over our energy affairs. The pit closure programme and the disposition of the balance between nuclear, gas and coal power is a matter that we went into recently. The Vice-President of the European Commission, that tremendous advocate of free trade, Sir Leon Brittan, approved a DM3·3 billion deal between the heavily subsidised German coal producers and the German power operators.

That gives a tremendous advantage to German energy users at our expense. RWE, which I understand is the biggest energy concern in Germany, intends—and I have every reason to believe that it will be successful—to sell steam coal to our power generators when we are closing our pits. That is an incredible state of affairs. All that arises out of the movement towards a common energy policy.

I asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when I met him why we did not sort out the European Coal and Steel Community regulations as a precondition to all this, because it is upon that basis that the German coal producers are so heavily subsidised. There are omissions from the arrangements every bit as much as there are matters which should have been sorted out as the negotiations went ahead.

Mr. Winnick: Again, I draw the hon. Gentleman's attention to a point that I have made and on which he is dwelling. As a result of the treaty, by the beginning of the next century we shall be left with a British Parliament with little more power than a state senate within the United States. That may satisfy some, such as the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath), but I imagine that it does not satisfy the majority of hon. Members, and certainly not the British people.

Mr. Cash: I am sure that that is a sound point. The hon. Gentleman compared Britain and America. The harmonisation of our VAT arrangements has put us in a more disadvantageous position vis-a-vis the European Community, even before we enter into this union, than individual states in respect of the federal arrangements for sales tax in the United States. We are worse off even before we go into the union.

Mr. Barnes: Has not the hon. Gentleman persistently confused the development towards federalism with the development towards a unitary state, sometimes using the word "or" to put the two together? Some of us favour the establishment of federalism in Europe, a united states of Europe, but we are against developing a unitary state. We do not believe that we can get to federalism by going through a unitary state. That is the big mistake that the Liberal Democrats seem to be making.

Mr. Cash: I have enormous sympathy with the hon. Gentleman's point, but there is no such thing as a simple,

[Mr. Cash]

overarching definition of federalism. I have read articles describing the treaty sometimes in relation to a unitary state, sometimes with a federal connotation. There is a tendency to intermingle the two. I am inclined to agree with the hon. Gentleman that the treaty has more of a unitary character than the commonly regarded federal system.

There is no way of precisely defining federalism. We must avoid becoming involved so much in semantics—which is why all the nonsense about taking the word "federal" out of the treaty does not amount to a row of beans. The issues are the distribution of functions, the extent of the centralising process, and where the power will lie. Those are the questions on which we should concentrate, and I intend to do so tonight.

I mentioned economic and development in respect of article C, but I have not yet referred to external relations and security. Common foreign and security policy raises big questions. Those are prerogative powers and, as with title I, it is not intended that they will be included in the Bill.

The extent and range of the powers that will be conferred on the Community are infinitely greater than people have been led to believe. Under a joint action plan or European guidelines, a completely different kind of foreign policy would be run in this country. No longer would we be able unilaterally to enter into the kind of bilateral arrangments that took us into the Gulf war.

Mrs. Currie: That is nonsense.

Mr. Cash: My hon. Friend says that I am speaking nonsense, and I shall be more than delighted to give way to her.

Mrs. Currie: I had my supper and returned to the Committee, and found that my hon. Friend was still talking. Britain did not enter into a bilateral arrangment in the Gulf war but served as part of the United Nations force of 30 countries. Nothing in the Bill will stop us doing the same in future.

Mr. Cash: I emphatically take issue with my hon. Friend, because the treaty clearly states that where a joint action plan has been created——

Mrs. Currie: That is not the same thing.

Mr. Cash: Yes, it is. I said that, in the context of a joint action plan or in relation to European guidelines, there would be substantial changes in the way that we carry out our foreign and security policy. I quote from article J.1(4) of the treaty:

"The Member States shall support the Union's external and security policy actively and unreservedly in a spirit of loyalty and mutual solidarity. They shall refrain from any action which is contrary to the interests of the Union"—

and we are debating the union under title I—

"or likely to impair its effectiveness as a cohesive force in international relations. The Council shall ensure that these principles are complied with."

Article J.1(1) states:

"The Union and its Member States shall define and implement a common foreign and security policy"——

The Chairman: Order. I can read as well as the hon. Gentleman, as I am sure other right hon. and hon. Members can. I remind the hon. Gentleman that the Committee is debating not article J but amendment No. 93 and those associated with it. I shall be grateful if the hon. Gentleman will not be tempted down other routes.

Mr. Cash: I agree with you absolutely, Mr. Morris, but I was dealing with foreign and security policy, and in the light of my hon. Friend's intervention, I thought that it would be helpful to explain why I thought that she was wrong. However, of course I accept your ruling.

Article D says:

"The European Council"—

that is not the same as the Council of Ministers—

"shall provide the Union with the necessary impetus for its development and shall define the general political guidelines thereof."

That represents a curious but none the less dangerous movement towards greater union. When the European Council prescribes the union's general political guidelines that will have a significant adverse impact on the manner in which we in this country, through our elected representatives, decide the basis on which we want to run our affairs.

There is no definition of those general political guidelines. That should give considerable cause for concern. We often find that the treaty does not provide proper definitions of the expressions within it, and if we do not have those we shall get into deeper and deeper trouble. The expression "general political guidelines" is so vague as to mean almost anything to anybody, yet it is included in the treaty as a legal obligation to be exercised by the European Council.

No one has a clear idea what the functions of the European Council will be. It appears that, although it is effectively without a democratic base, that body will make decisions at summits, pronouncing on the political affairs of all member states. Apparently it will not be accountable within the new legal framework or specifically accountable to the House. To whom will it be accountable? Nobody knows. It is not set out anywhere how its functions will be implemented.

As I read through the treaty I find ever more grounds for disturbance and concern, as I imagine that we are about to transfer such powers to a treaty arrangement which has never been explained to the British people.

The last article that I shall discuss is article F. Interestingly, the Leader of the Opposition tabled an amendment to that article that was identical to the one that I had tabled.

Sir Teddy Taylor: Before my hon. Friend leaves article D, will he explain that the European Council, with all those wonderful new powers, will have a legal obligation to report to the European Parliament but not to national Parliaments?

Mr. Cash: As ever, my hon. Friend has made a most valuable intervention. The European Council will report only to the European Parliament. That is where the con trick occurs. In all the verbiage and garbage generated to try to justify the treaty we are told that the European Parliament will be given greater powers, yet all that the European Parliament will get here is a report after each of the council's meetings, and a yearly written report on the progress achieved by the union.

I do not believe that there is any good reason for giving the European Parliament enhanced powers. I believe that we should retain our powers as a sovereign independent state within Europe. But when I was working on the

Conservative manifesto committee, I was offered a suggestion that would have included the words "sovereign independent state" in the manifesto. Unfortunately, much to my concern, those words disappeared during the proceedings. That demonstrates the basis on which the treaty has been negotiated.

If the words "sovereign independent state" were taken out of the Conservative manifesto working party paper at about that same time that the Government were beginning to negotiate the treaty, one can begin to understand that the European union they had in mind was not a European union of independent sovereign states.

I see that my right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker) is here. He has repeatedly made profoundly useful contributions to the question of independent sovereign states within Europe. We are determined to maintain our position in Parliament and not to allow the treaty to overtake the ancient traditions of this House. I was about to turn to article F3, which I raised on a point of order before we started these proceedings. That——

It being Ten o'clock THE CHAIRMAN *left the Chair to report Progress and ask leave to sit again.*

Committee report Progress; to sit again tomorrow.

ESTIMATES

Motion made, and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 131 (Liaison Committee),

That this House agrees with the Report [26th November] of the Liaison Committee.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

Question agreed to.

North Sea Haddock Quota

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

10.1 pm

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): I rise on the Adjournment. For a few seconds, I thought that those in the fishing industry watching and listening to this debate would be impressed by the amount of interest shown in the future of the haddock fishery. I am sorry that so many hon. Members are now leaving.

I hope that the Minister has been informed that my hon. Friend the Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) wishes to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, at the end of my contribution. That is wholly appropriate, because the issues that will be raised affect the whole fishing industry round the coast of Scotland and elsewhere.

This debate takes place on a motion for the Adjournment. It reflects great shame on the Government that, at the end of a vital Fisheries Council last week, no statement was made to the House on the progress or lack of progress of that Council. There was no opportunity in Government time to debate properly the future of this vital industry. There might then have been more time and opportunity for hon. Members to make their particular contributions. I hope that the Minister will first address the question of when fishing will be accorded its proper priority in terms of the proceedings of the House to allow a variety of hon. Members representing fishing communities to put forward their views.

I hope that the Minister is under no illusions about the consequences of last Monday's abject failure. There was total failure to gain any extension or borrowing forward of the haddock quota. The consequences will be severe. If the Minister had told the House that he had tried his best, but had failed to achieve any progress in Europe, he would have been subject to a variety of criticisms, but at least he would have had an argument and a leg to start on.

What is intolerable is that the Minister and the Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food did not even attempt to argue for the borrowing forward of the haddock quota. The fishing communities of Scotland regard that failure absolutely and utterly inexplicable.

There are three consequences. As a direct result of the Minister's failure, the industry will move from its current position of total scarcity to one of glut on 1 January, when the haddock quota will zoom up by 120 per cent. on current levels. The industry will move from famine to almost uncontrollable feast. Many industry observers do not believe that the processing sector can cope with 130,000 tonnes of haddock annually. The result of that huge increase in the haddock quota will be glut, depressed prices, and the industry's problems will immediately change as it oscillates from famine to feast.

In Committee only last week, hon. Members debated the principle of the "Hogmanay haddock". The fish are not to be caught in December, when there is a ready market and keen prices. Exactly the same fish will be available to be caught next month, when there will be a glut and depressed prices. The Minister's failure has subjected the industry to that nonsense. The Minister should reflect on the direct result of his failure—the bleak Christmas that many thousands of people in fishing communities will face as catchers and processors lay up boats and lay off workers.

[Mr. Alex Salmond]

One of the remarks in Standing Committee a couple of weeks ago which caused most offence was that of the Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. He said that there was no real need for concern because

"the processing industry in Scotland . . . has not shut up shop."—[*Official Report, European Standing Committee A*, 18 November 1992; c. 14.]

It is extraordinary that a Fisheries Minister can be so oblivious to the problems of the fishing industry as to make such a casual remark.

At the major demonstration in Aberdeen a week past Friday, that remark was noted by fishing communities. Processors who are trying their best in very difficult conditions not to lay off workers as Christmas approaches found it offensive that the Fisheries Ministers could not even recognise the extent of the problems faced by the processing sector because of the dearth of fresh fish.

Hon. Members from fishing communities will have been advising constituents at their weekend surgeries on the problems faced by the catching sector, such as obtaining unemployment benefit, which is an extreme problem for many constituents. I should like the Minister at least to tell us that he appreciates the severity of the problems affecting thousands of families in fishing communities.

There is another consequence which, for many people looking at the long-term future of the industry, is the most severe of all. As a direct consequence of the Minister's failure not to get borrowing forward of the haddock quota at the Fisheries Council, thousands of tonnes of good-quality fish are currently being discarded dead into the North sea.

Mr. Andrew Welsh (Angus, East): Does my hon. Friend agree that fishing is a sustainable, renewable industry, which is badly mismanaged by the British Government, and that the fishing industry in Arbroath and throughout Scotland has every reason to feel betrayed by a Government whose policy failures will devastate families and fishing communities throughout Scotland?

Mr. Salmond: My hon. Friend's remarks are well noted. They were universally shared at the fishing rally in Aberdeen a week past Friday. Many people see as the most criminal aspect of the current fisheries mismanagement the fact that good-quality fish could be discarded dead for no useful purpose into the North sea.

I now refer to why Fisheries Ministers felt unable to take any action. My hon. Friend the Member for Moray and I met the Scottish Fisheries Minister on 21 October, when we first raised the necessity of looking for the advance on next year's quota. He wrote to us last month. He said that it would be "imprudent", in the absence of scientific advice, to borrow forward a quota which was not known. Most of us would say that that is a substantial argument, but, even before the Minister's letter reached me, the quota for next year became known, and of course it is a 120 per cent. increase on this year's quota. So the argument that the Minister presented at that stage was false.

We were told in Standing Committee that the Government could not argue for this, because it would be difficult in terms of the European negotiations. That struck me as a surprising argument, since haddock is almost completely a United Kingdom fish and, for that matter, dominatingly a Scottish fish. No one else in the European Community has a strong vested interest in the haddock quota or in stopping borrowing forward.

No doubt the Minister will say, "What about the Norwegians?" They have a huge interest in the haddock quota in the North sea, but the simple solution was to borrow forward on the west coast quota, which is 100 per cent. a United Kingdom quota and 90 per cent. a Scottish quota. In the coming year, an increase of 50 per cent. for that quota is forecast. The few thousand tonnes of haddock involved could have been borrowed forward on the west coast quota to address the current crisis in the fishing industry in Scotland, with no complications for the Norwegian negotiations.

The Minister may tell us that there is no precedent for borrowing forward within the Community. That is not so. It is only some five years since the Community rolled forward the entire fishing year, because Fisheries Ministers were not satisfied at the end of the year that we were progressing sensibly. The fishing year became 14 to 15 months. In addition, the Minister is currently negotiating a change in the common fisheries policy, or perhaps a completely new policy which proposes a multi-annual quota, so no damaging precedent would have been set if they had borrowed forward on the haddock quota.

Can the Scottish Minister tell us whether the real reason for his inability even to table the proposal last week was not given in Standing Committee by the Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, when he said:

"The industry is fairly divided about whether it is desirable to do that."—[*Official Report, European Standing Committee*, 18 November 1992; c. 14.]

The Scottish industry is not divided. Every section of the industry, every producer organisation, every representative organisation, and every representative voice in the processing industry had asked for the same proposal. If the industry was said to be "divided", it can only be a hint that advice was coming from elsewhere against the proposal. The Minister must be honest and tell us whether he was vetoed from putting forward the proposal by objections from elsewhere furth of Scotland.

It has been suggested by reputable voices in the fishing community that there has been a miscalculation of this year's quota which would explain the extraordinary oscillation of the haddock quota. I have tabled questions, but I hope that the Minister will address that point tonight.

Finally, I hope that the Scottish Office Minister understands that the Scottish industry is on the march, as was shown in Aberdeen a week past Friday. The Scottish industry will be on the march again a week come this Friday, at a major demonstration at the European summit in Edinburgh. The Minister should not underestimate the anger felt across the fishing communities. I hope that we will get satisfactory explanations tonight. I have never seen a more convincing argument for Scotland needing independence in Europe than the abject failure to represent our fishermen in the European Community last week.

10.13 pm

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray) *rose*—

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Do I understand that the hon. Lady has informed the Minister?

Mrs. Ewing: To my knowledge, the Minister's office was informed of my request to participate in the debate, with the agreement of my hon. Friend the Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond).

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is the Minister happy for the hon. Lady to participate in the debate?

The Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Sir Hector Monro): Yes, indeed.

Mrs. Ewing: I shall be brief, because the reply from the Minister will be very important to us. In congratulating my hon. Friend on securing the debate, may I say that he and my hon. Friend the Member for Angus, East (Mr. Welsh) recognise that an Adjournment debate is no substitute for a debate in Government time.

Since the House resumed its official capacity in mid-October, we have mentioned the need for a debate on the fishing industry in Scotland at every business question time, but those requests have not been granted. They have been pushed aside, and the fishing industry and fishing communities feel offended by that attitude. From the Government's approach, one would think that the industry was not important, but it is vital to Scotland's national economy and to our local communities the length and breadth of the Scottish coastline.

A week past Friday in Aberdeen, our fishing communities showed dignity and decency as they walked in unity, whether they came from the catching or processing sides of the industry and whether they were directly or indirectly involved. They walked throught the streets of Aberdeen and asked that their voices be heard.

Given that there will be another demonstration in Edinburgh on 11 December, will the Minister at the very least ensure that the Conservative party is represented on the platform and that it makes its views heard in front of the people of Scotland and of those fishing communities? If the Government continue to treat our people with such contempt, they most certainly do not deserve any respect. Will the Minister or his Back-Bench colleagues—I notice that at least one has had the decency to turn up for this debate—at least show their faces on that occasion?

10.16 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Sir Hector Monro): I am pleased to be able to reply to the debate obtained by the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond). Although I realise from his speech that he finds it difficult, he must accept that I take this matter as seriously as he, his colleagues from the Scottish National party and my colleagues do.

Fishing is of prime importance to Scotland. I shall explain why what happened this year has been extremely unfortunate. I know that the hon. Gentleman finds it difficult, but it is important to accept that North sea haddock has been in a distressed state for several years, yet fishing pressure has remained high.

Spawning was good in 1991; hence the great increased prospects for 1993. There will be an enhanced total allowable catch because of good spawning during the past two years, and not because the scientists got it wrong. That does not mean that we can immediately return to over-fishing. If we do, we shall return to the cycle of recent years, when there has been an extreme shortage of fish. We cannot allow unlimited fishing at present.

Let us get the facts right. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will listen. As he knows, in 1992, the total allowable catch of haddock was 60,000 tonnes, and we had to negotiate—with extreme difficulty—with Norway for our 42,640 tonnes quota, which was up 15 per cent. on 1991. He should bear in mind that no one else in the Community has more than 2,000 tonnes, so the haddock quota is significantly a United Kingdom tonnage.

As the hon. Gentleman and the hon. Lady know, we fished out that quota by November. Indeed, in some cases it was fished out by October. There were no cuts in the quota—it was fished out earlier than expected purely because fishing pressure was so high and fishing was so expert. Management of the quota is the industry's responsibility. Much of the haddock caught was small and difficult to market and, unfortunately, that helped to reduce prices in mid-summer.

I agree that the non-sector also fished out its quota, but it has to keep roughly in step with the producer organisations, if the quotas are to be fished out equally. The closure in October was not premature. By that time, we were up to 92 or 93 per cent. of the quota. Subsequently, after the fisheries had been closed, we were up to 98·4 per cent. In the Scottish Fisheries Organisation, landings were still coming in six weeks after the closure.

The scientific information from our Advisory Committee on Fisheries Management is that the quota will be much higher in 1993. That is good news, and we should welcome it. The total allowable catch is likely to be about 133,000 tonnes. Once again, we will need to go into detailed negotiations with Norway. I expect that we will receive between 70,000 and 80,000 tonnes of North sea haddock, which is almost double what we have this year.

Mr. Salmond *rose*——

Sir Hector Monro: There is a constraint on time, so I must press on.

The quota for cod will be much the same next year, and the quota for whiting will be down slightly. Fishermen will be encouraged to know that they can begin fishing in four weeks time with a substantially increased quota.

The west coast fisheries will have an increased quota for haddock, although not so much as in the North sea, and a small increase in the quotas for cod and whiting. Broadly speaking, the prospects for next year look much better.

It is unreasonable for the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan to allege that I did not take action. I want to make that matter absolutely clear. As someone who has been preaching about Scotland in Europe for a long time, the hon. Gentleman should begin to understand how Europe works—he has no idea whatever. He thinks that he can drift to Brussels or Luxembourg, wave his arms and all the other countries will fall at his feet and accept exactly what he asks.

Mr. Salmond *rose*——

Sir Hector Monro: No, the hon. Gentleman can wait until I have made further progress.

In early October, my officials foresaw the problem, and immediately commenced discussions with officials and the Council in Brussels and Luxembourg. When I raised the matter at the Council on 19 October, it was clear that no one would grant us an advance of quota, especially in the light of the reputation that we had earned during the year for the production of black fish. Nevertheless, although

[Sir Hector Monro]

the council said no in October, our officials kept up the pressure and did everything possible to obtain an advance of quota, but it simply was not possible. We tried swaps and all means to obtain quota for our Scottish fishermen.

One day, the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan will get to Europe in some capacity. However, he will not get very far if he does not understand how the Council of Ministers works and how the Council of Europe works generally.

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): I hesitate to intervene in matters of a Caledonian nature. I do not know much about haddock, cod or whatever.

Mr. Salmond: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In an Adjournment debate, is it normal for a Minister to give way to another hon. Member when he has already refused to give way to the hon. Member whose had the Adjournment debate?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): It is for the Minister to decide to whom to give way.

Mr. Porter: Is the Minister satisfied, not so much with the arrangements that have been made in the European Community, as with the policing of them?

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That is a complete abuse of an Adjournment debate by a Scottish Member.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is not a matter for the Chair.

Mr. Porter: I am part of the United Kingdom Parliament. I am merely asking whether the Minister is satisfied with the policing arrangements for the quantity of fish which is taken by countries other than the United Kingdom.

Sir Hector Monro: I am certainly not satisfied. I want other countries to meet our standards in terms of policing the quota system and the days-at-sea system.

I made it quite clear to the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan that we had made every conceivable effort. He must bear in mind the fact that, even if there had been a chink of light, it would have meant returning to Norway to discuss the matter with the Norwegians. Whatever precedent the hon. Gentleman likes to trot out, it would not have taken us forward.

The hon. Gentleman has said some irresponsible things to the press.

Mr. Salmond: Will the Minister give way?

Sir Hector Monro: No, I shall not give way, as I am trying to finish my speech in four minutes.

Mr. Salmond: The Minister gave way to his hon. Friend the Member for Wirral, South (Mr. Porter).

Sir Hector Monro: That was, perhaps, a mistake.

The hon. Member for Banff and Buchan has made some irresponsible statements. The rules were absolutely clear. It is much more important to ensure that we obtain better results in 1993 than we did this year. That is what we intend to do.

In *Scottish Fishing Weekly*, the hon. Gentleman said that it was criminal for the Government to refuse to borrow the quota. It was absolutely impossible to do so, and he must accept that.

Mr. Salmond *indicated dissent.*

Sir Hector Monro: He is shaking his head as if he were able to control the Council of Ministers in Europe. That shows how out of touch he is with the practicality in Europe.

The hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) spoke in the same way when she said that the matter was equivalent to the highland clearances, which is a gross exaggeration of the present position. Nobody has tried harder than my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and I. My hon. Friend knows as well as I that we have done our level best to obtain the best possible arrangments for our fishermen in Europe next year.

Mr. Salmond: Will the Minister give way?

Sir Hector Monro: If the hon. Gentleman will let me finish what I am saying, I shall then give way. He must accept that we made positive gains at the last Council—we obtained gains from the multi-annual guidance programme, which was reduced to 20 per cent., 15 per cent. and zero. That was a substantial improvement on the reduction in fishing that there might have been over the next four years.

We have retained the Shetland box, the Hague preference, the six and 12-mile limits. The stability issue is important relative to the quota split. We have also obtained segmentation of demersal, pelagic, and nephrops fishing. We have introduced decommissioning. Nobody was shouting louder about decommissioning than the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan 12 months ago—now we have obtained it. It is most important that the hon. Gentleman realises the positive input that we have made to help fishermen in the United Kingdom and Scotland in recent weeks.

Mr. Salmond: I have listened to the Minister's excuses, but we have had no answer to the basic question: why was the request not tabled at the Fisheries Council? When the Minister of State, Minstry of Agriculture, said on Wednesday before the Fisheries Council that the industry was divided on the issue, what exactly did he mean? Was that the real reason why the Minister did not come forward and represent Scottish fishermen as he should have done in the European Community?

Sir Hector Monro: One day—or perhaps never—the hon. Gentleman will learn a little about diplomacy in international negotiations. He must accept that some things are written down, some things are achievable and some things are not. It was absolutely impossible to obtain an advance on quota for next year. If we had obtained an advance quota, next August or September we might well have been in the same position as we are now.

The capabilities of the Scottish fishing fleet in capacity are enormous. There is no difficulty at all in catching thousands of tonnes of quota, as we have seen this year, when the fishermen put their minds to it. So I hope the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends will realise that we did have a debate in which he and his hon. Friends had free range of subjects on fishing. That was in Standing

Committee a fortnight ago. They made a very valuable contribution which was helpful when we went to Brussels to discuss the MAGP.

In the debate around the end of the year on the important Fisheries Council to take place later this month, we shall be coming to the announcement about the exact quotas for fishing.

Mrs. Ewing: What about the tie-up position?

Sir H. Monro: The rumours one hears about eight or ten-day tie-ups are but rumours. The hon. Lady knows what I think about them, from the debate we had two years ago. I hope very much that we are not in that position, particularly bearing in mind the very strict restrictions that we have in this country, and which we will be in a position to enforce later on if the Bill now before another place becomes law. There is a great deal ahead in terms of restrictions.

The hon. Lady must understand that, if we were not tough on fishing quotas, we would have very few fish to catch, and the fishing industry would be in decline. We are determined as a Government to see the fishing industry prosper. We shall be in that position next year and will see the fishing industry prosper, because quotas will be substantially more than they were this year. I believe that this is the right way to assist the fishing fleet. That is of the greatest importance to this Government, whatever the hon. Gentleman says about our efforts over recent months.

Lastly, I reiterate that it was simply impossible to obtain an advance quota. If it had been, we would have achieved it.

Mr. Dalyell: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Can you clarify the rules on interruptions during Adjournment debates? I was certainly under the impression that no-one could interrupt a debate without the permission of the hon. Member——

The motion having been made after Ten o'clock and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at twenty-nine minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 2 December 1992

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Selective Assistance (London)

1. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what regional selective assistance has been given in the past 12 months in *(a)* west London and *(b)* Greater London, and in respect of how many intended new jobs; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister for Industry (Mr. Tim Sainsbury): The locations identified are not at present designated as assisted areas and, therefore, projects in those areas do not qualify for regional selective assistance. The assisted area map is being reviewed.

Mr. Greenway: Does my right hon. Friend accept that we in Ealing respect his effort for jobs in the east London corridor, but ask him to remember west London? Is he aware that 10 years ago all the Hoover jobs were sucked out of Ealing and went to Scotland and Wales and that it has taken us 10 years to get jobs back on that site, which we did last week with the opening of a Tesco store? Will he try in any way that he can to give proper help to west London, and especially to Ealing where we can do with it?

Mr. Sainsbury: I am happy to assure my hon. Friend that I am looking carefully at the submissions from his London borough of Ealing and other west London boroughs. Those submissions will be carefully considered and the requests from west London will certainly not be overlooked.

Mr. Soley: Is the Minister aware that London has never before needed the special pleading that it now needs as a result of the Government's economic policies? Will he bear in mind the Engineering Employers Federation view about London, which I fully share, that the lack of an industrial base is at the root not only of Britain's economic problems but of those of west London and London in general? Until the Government take engineering and manufacturing seriously and put real money into them, as other countries do, we shall continue to have a weak pound and a weak economy.

Mr. Sainsbury: I hope that the hon. Gentleman is aware of the performance by British manufacturing industry and the extent to which it has improved not only its productivity but its output and, in particular, its exports over the past decade. He will be aware that manufacturing employment is important in London, but that it forms a lower proportion of total employment than in most other areas. We shall certainly take account of unemployment in London and all other relevant facts when reviewing the matter.

Leicester

2. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will provide extra assistance for Leicester's traditional industries.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Technology (Mr. Edward Leigh): The DTI already has in place a number of schemes that are helping traditional industries and other companies in Leicester and elsewhere.

Mr. Janner: Is the Minister aware that those schemes are totally inadequate and that while in previous recessions Leicester's traditional industries—knitwear, footwear, hosiery and textiles—survived well, they now face catastrophe and high unemployment, and businesses are closing by the day? What practical measures, if any, do the Government propose to help pull those industries and those who work in them out of this misery?

Mr. Leigh: Leicester's economy has successfully diversified over the years and its unemployment rate is below the national and the regional average. The hon. and learned Gentleman did not mention in his usual litany of lament about Leicester that textile exports by one of Leicester's traditional industries jumped by 8 per cent. in the first half of this year to a value of £1·4 billion. He did not mention the measures in the autumn statement. We now have one of the lowest rates of inflation in the EC and the lowest rate of corporation tax. Those are the sort of measures that will promote business in Leicester, rather than the measures promoted by his party to allow secondary action and a minimum wage. I challenge the hon. and learned Gentleman to name one business man who is currently asking for a minimum wage.

Mr. Jim Marshall: May I ask the Minister to allow his blood pressure to come down a little? Does he accept that one of the reasons for the textile industry being able to export in the manner in which he has outlined is that it has been assisted by the multi-fibre arrangement? There is some concern in the local textile industry about the phasing-out of that agreement as part of the new GATT arrangements. Could he tell the House and the industry whether that phasing out period started at the beginning of the present GATT negotiations or whether it will commence when the new agreement as a whole is signed?

Mr. Leigh: The hon. Gentleman can be assured that my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade will ensure that there are adequate safeguards for the textile industry in the period until the GATT review is agreed. Over the years, the textile industry has successfully restructured and that is how we have ensured its record level of exports in the first half of 1992.

Pit Closures

3. **Mr. John Evans:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to meet the chairman of British Coal to discuss the review of the 10 collieries threatened with closure.

The Minister for Energy (Mr. Tim Eggar): My right hon. Friend and I have meetings with the chairman of British Coal, as necessary, to discuss a range of coal industry matters.

Mr. Evans: Before the President of the Board of Trade next meets the chairman, will he publish the Boyd report and then demand of the chairman why he included among the 10 pits for closure five collieries, including Parkside in my constituency, which that report identified as profitable pits with a viable future in Britain's deep-mine industry? Will he also use the meeting to condemn the chairman of British Coal for his niggardly and Scrooge-like attitude in stopping the attendance payments to the miners at the 10 collieries?

Mr. Eggar: As I am sure that the hon. Gentleman knows, as part of the review that is being carried out, Boyd has been engaged to give a full review of each of the collieries, both the 19 and the 21, and, as has already been made clear, that will be published as part of the review.

Mrs. Peacock: Is my hon. Friend aware that some of the 10 collieries have specialised markets for their coal—I think that it is called niche marketing in anybody else's industry—and that there is great interest from the private sector in purchasing some of the mines? Is he also aware that British Coal is refusing to give any information about the collieries and is therefore making it difficult for people to put in bids?

Mr. Eggar: I am very much aware of a point made by my hon. Friend, which has been made by a number of hon. Members on both sides of the House. This is a matter for British Coal, but it would not be appropriate for British Coal to be considering the sale or the licensing of pits in advance of either the statutory consultation period or the end of the review. Once that consultation period and the review have been completed, then, in the light of the review and the interest in the private sector, British Coal will have to consider how to respond. I dare say that, as a result of the review, the Government will make clear their position.

Mr. Tipping: When the Minister meets the chairman of British Coal to talk about the 10 pits, will he remind him of the commitment given in the House that the review will be open and honest? Given that commitment, why will not the Minister instruct British Coal to share with the work force the financial statements—the F23s—for those pits? If the work force are to be able to put up a case for keeping those pits open, they need the figures. If the Minister is open and honest, he should give them.

Mr. Eggar: As the hon. Gentleman knows, the matters to which he refers are the subject of a judicial review, so I must be careful about what I say. However, both my right hon. Friend and I have stressed that there must be full and proper consultation. It is our understanding that that is exactly what British Coal has pledged to do.

Mr. Cash: When can I have a reply to the letter that I delivered to the President of the Board of Trade on the day of the pit closure debate, in which I asked a number of questions that, as yet, remain unanswered? Will my hon. Friend let me know whether any Minister has signed a public interest immunity certificate to prevent the disclosure of information that is relevant not only to that matter but to both the Select Committee review and the Government's review?

Will my hon. Friend make certain that the response that I had from the Secretary of State for Wales in an intervention during that debate, that British Coal must prove its case, will be carried out to the letter, and that those completely failed consultation procedures will be sorted out so that we know that the people who work in those pits are being properly looked after?

Mr. Eggar: A reply to my hon. Friend's letter is on its way. *[Laughter].* I may tell him and other hon. Friends that it may literally be in the post. A number of the issues that my hon. Friend raised, particularly with regard to Trentham, will be covered in the statutory consultation that is under way between British Coal and the unions. As to public interest immunity certificates, there has been a considerable degree of misreporting by the press in respect of the current judicial hearing, and I assure my hon. Friend that no such certificate has been signed by Ministers.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: Does the Minister accept that many of the pits threatened with closure have substantial reserves? Does he agree that the cost of mothballing the pits would be between £3 million and £6 million a year, whereas the cost of reopening them would be about £400 million? Will the Minister ensure that an independent review of reserves will be undertaken and published before any pit is closed—and that if British Coal is not prepared to operate those pits, they should be offered to others who may be able to do so?

Mr. Eggar: I note the hon. Gentleman's remarks about mothballing, but the figures may be rather lower and rather higher, depending on the particular pit. Mothballing will be considered in the review, and I presume that the Select Committee on Trade and Industry also will examine that aspect.

Mr. Moss: Given that the electricity inter connector with France, through which we import huge amounts of subsidised French nuclear electricity, displaces the equivalent production of coal from the 10 pits in question, does my hon. Friend agree that it would be highly popular in coalfield communities and the country as a whole if that contract were renegotiated?

Mr. Eggar: That undertaking, which was entered into by the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), has potential consequences for the amount of coal burn in this country and is bound to be considered as part of the review. I dare say that it will also be taken into account by the Trade and Industry Select Committee.

Mr. O'Neill: Does the Minister appreciate that there is widespread cynicism about the manner in which the 10 collieries appeared on the list? We know that negotiations about which collieries were to be included went on until 10 o'clock in the evening, or certainly until 4 o'clock in the afternoon—*[Laughter.]* I am sorry, Madam Speaker—I was thinking of another debate. Obviously the price was not high enough for a number of hon. Members who took part in the coal debate, as it was in the other debate. Seventy per cent. of Grimethorpe colliery's output does not go to the electricity industry, and that is true of 90 per cent. of Houghton Main's output. Betws produces anthracite and has no need to take account of the electricity generating industry. At least three of the 10 mines are completely independent of the electricity supply industry, so there is no reason why they should be

considered in any way uneconomic. They should immediately be reconsidered for inclusion among the 20 pits that are considered possible contenders for a long life in the coal industry.

Mr. Eggar: I do not know the source of the hon. Gentleman's information, but given the accuracy with which he put it across at the Dispatch Box, I am sure that it is inaccurate. The hon. Gentleman is right to say that Betws is an anthracite mine, and he will have noted the exchange between the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) and myself during the debate on pit closures. As to the two other mines, the hon. Gentleman may be correct in claiming that some of their output potentially goes to domestic and industrial markets rather than to generators, but a significant amount goes into the generating market. None the less, I can categorically tell the hon. Gentleman that when the statutory consultation period ends—I am sure that he accepts that it would not be right for British Coal actively to consider the sale of either the 10 or 21 pits in advance of the consultation period for the 10 or the review of the 21 mines—British Coal will remain responsible for licensing coal mines and must consider applications from responsible organisations seeking licences. That must of course be subject to the current statutory limitations. It is a complicated subject, but I note the hon. Gentleman's remarks.

Mr. Cormack: Does my hon. Friend realise that the answer that he has just given and that the answer that he gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Moss) begs a central question: will those 10 pits be in a state to be taken over? We do not want to leave it until too late. Will he please assure the House that if at the end of the review the 10 pits are still up for closure, there will be an opportunity for them to be taken over in a working condition by private owners?

Mr. Eggar: I have heard what my hon. Friend said. British Coal has given a quite categorical assurance that the decision as to reopening will not in any way be influenced by any deterioration that may or may not have happened during the closure period.

Mr. John Evans: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Due to the highly unsatisfactory nature of the Minister's reply, it is my intention to seek to raise the matter on the Adjournment of the House at the earliest possible opportunity.

Export Credit

4. **Mr. Raynsford:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade on what terms export credit guarantees are offered to British industry in respect of major south American countries.

Mr. Leigh: Short-term credit insurance is available from the private sector. ECGD medium-term cover, on credit terms of two years or more is available for British exports to Chile, Colombia, Venezuela and Uruguay. At present, medium-term cover is not generally available for other south American countries, but the position on individual markets is kept under regular review.

Mr. Raynsford: Does the Minister accept that the absence of export credit guarantee support in respect of Brazil and Argentina has severely prejudiced the prospects of a world-beating firm that is based in my constituency —STC—which has sought to win an international submarine telecommunications contract in those countries? Will he review urgently the nature of the export credit guarantee scheme to ensure that British firms are no longer left at a disadvantage as against their overseas competitors, whose Governments give them far more effective support than ours do?

Mr. Leigh: The hon. Gentleman was kind enough to write to my right hon. Friend about the issue on 26 November. We replied to him yesterday. I hope that by now he has received the letter. I think that I see the hon. Gentleman nodding. What I said in that reply was that of course we keep all these matters under review. The hon. Gentleman will be aware that I have already intervened on behalf of STC and that I wrote to the procurement group of companies to see whether any help could be given to the company, for which it was grateful. To put the matter into context, £800 million of Brazilian debt and £150 million of Argentinian debt has been rescheduled. There has to be a real possibility of the debt being repaid. It does not help UK Ltd. if exports are not paid for. To ignore economic reality would, to quote the hon. Gentleman's article on the anaesthetised, torpid Labour party, be to sleepwalk into oblivion. We are not prepared to do that.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: May I draw to my hon. Friend's attention the fact that we are losing many opportunities in the major countries of Latin America, due to the lack of capacity and flexibility of the Exports Credits Guarantee Department? I draw his attention also to the major city of Sao Paulo in Brazil which has always used the River Tietê to get rid of its sewage, with very smelly consequences. It is looking to Britain, to the example of what we have done to the River Thames, as a means of improving the position. That gives great opportunities to British water companies and to British technology. May I ask my hon. Friend to ensure that Britain is at the forefront of this activity in Brazil?

Mr. Leigh: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. The whole House recognises his expertise in south American affairs. The Minister for Energy, who is sitting on my left, met the governor of Sao Paulo last week. The competitive nature of ECGD generally has been improved by the additional £700 million of cover that has been obtained by the sterling efforts of my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade. Of course we shall keep these matters under review, but my hon. Friend will be aware of the difficult economic situation in Brazil.

Mr. Bell: The Minister has not yet answered the question put to him by my hon. Friend the Member for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford). He talked about competition from our European competitors—our European counterparts. Is it not a fact that their interest rates are lower than ours and that their time scales are longer than ours? As we now have the presidency of the European Community, can the Minister tell the House what initiatives have been taken within that presidency to bring those rates and time scales into harmony, in the interests of British industry?

Mr. Leigh: The Government continue to press ahead with initiatives in the EC and OECD to ensure that other agencies charge premiums that more closely reflect the

risk. In recent months, a number of agencies in Japan, France, the Netherlands and Belgium have announced increases in rates or have advised that they plan to do so.

Mr. Anthony Coombs: I recognise the generally excellent performance in the recession of British exporters to south America and elsewhere, but will my hon. Friend bear in mind the representations made by the CBI in "Making it in Britain" and by the Engineering Employers Federation in "Industrial Strategy"? Both ask for a more level playing field for export credit guarantees compared with their European competitors.

Mr. Leigh: I take my hon. Friend's point, but repeat my point: my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade and my hon. Friend the Minister for Trade are committed to promoting British exports. In the spring, they secured the major achievement of cutting premium rates in more than 50 markets, since when we have obtained another £700 million of cover. They constantly strain every nerve to promote British exporters and exports. I am sure that my hon. Friend will accept that in these difficult markets there must be some realistic chance of the product and export being paid for; otherwise the taxpayer will lose out considerably. There is about £4 billion worth of debt outstanding on ECGD.

Export Credits Guarantee Department (Civil Servants)

5. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proposals he has to secure the future and effective deployment of civil servants in the Export Credits Guarantee Department who were not affected by the sale of the insurance section to NCM.

The Minister for Trade (Mr. Richard Needham): I have endorsed the recommendations of the ECGD management board that there should be no major change to the distribution of functions between London and Cardiff for at least three years.

Mr. Michael: Will the Minister acknowledge that moving jobs from Cardiff to London—now or in three years' time—would be against the Government's policy of dispersing civil service jobs from London [illegible]he regions, Wales and Scotland? Will he confirm, first, that the 200 jobs in Cardiff are safe and, secondly, that they will remain in Cardiff in the long term?

Mr. Needham: When NCM took over the short-term credit arrangements of ECGD, everybody who wanted to move to NCM was given the opportunity of doing so. These 200 jobs are for staff who decided that they would not go to NCM. They were aware that there was bound to be a reduction in the number of jobs because some of their work was being taken over by NCM. The functions have been reviewed by ECGD. There will be a further small reduction, but the jobs will be there for three years, after which we shall reconsider.

Magnox Power Stations

6. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on his Department's policy in respect of the potential for extension of the life of the seven Magnox stations.

Mr. Eggar: It is for the operators of Magnox stations to assess the practicality of life extensions, taking fully into account the safety requirements of the nuclear installations inspectorate. The review announced by my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade on 21 October will consider the implications of the statutory obligation on electricity suppliers to purchase non-fossil power, including that from nuclear sources.

Mr. Hughes: Is the Minister of State aware that Nuclear Electric's latest annual report shows that almost two thirds of the subsidy to the nuclear industry goes to prop up the operations of the Magnox stations, which were described by the President of the Board of Trade in an answer in October as being "old and unsafe", and of advanced gas-cooled reactors? How can the Government justify spending £783 million a year of taxpayers' money to bail out and keep going an old and unsafe nuclear industry, when perfectly up-to-date and safe coal mines are paying the price and being carved out of the electricity supply market?

Mr. Eggar: The h[illegible]. Gentleman is referring in particular to the Magnox stations, the future of which will be covered by the review.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: When considering energy policy overall, will my hon. Friend not allow the very unfortunate events at Chernobyl, which not surprisingly raised considerable anxiety in the minds of the public, to colour our energy policy, and recall that nuclear power is the most enviromentally friendly power source?

Mr. Eggar: I have taken a careful note of what my hon. Friend said. Such issues will be covered by the review.

Mr. Beggs: Is the Minister aware that the high cost of electricity now poses a threat to the future viability of large energy users? How does he propose to help to reduce the high cost of electricity to large-user industries, whether future electricity is generated using Magnox or other means?

Mr. Eggar: I am aware that that is a matter for considerable concern to large users, both in the Province and in the rest of the United Kingdom. It is one of the issues that will be covered by the review, and we had received evidence, especially from Northern Ireland interests, by the deadline that expired yesterday.

Mr. Mans: Will the Minister confirm that the cheapest electricity on the grid comes from nuclear power stations, and that by keeping them going longer we can spread the decommissioning costs over a longer period? Will my hon. Friend also confirm that the safety standards in nuclear stations are higher than those in coal-fired power stations, and that their accident record is better than that of coal-fired stations?

Mr. Eggar: I hear what my hon. Friend says. Of course, safety standards are covered by the nuclear installations inspectorate. With regard to the statistics on the costs, it is true that Magnox stations have low current operating costs per kilowatt hour, but they have high front-end capital costs and high back-end decommissioning costs.

Mr. Miller: Is the Minister aware that trade unions representing workers in the nuclear industry have given their commitment in writing to support the future of the coal mining industry in this country, and that they and their coal mining colleagues want a strategic energy review to be published? Members of the House, too, want such a

review to be published and want there to be a stated strategy, in the interests of supply from all sources throughout the energy industry.

Mr. Eggar: I am aware of the concern expressed not only by the hon. Gentleman's constituents but by other constituents, especially those in the north-west, who are affected, especially with regard to their employment prospects, by the future of the nuclear industry——

Mr. Miller: And by coal.

Mr. Eggar: And, of course, by coal. That is exactly why the review that my right hon. Friend is currently conducting will cover all those issues.

Mr. Batiste: If the seven Magnox stations were closed, and the Government maintained their commitment to controlling atmospheric pollution, would not there be a threat to several coal-fired power stations and the pits that they support?

Mr. Eggar: Undoubtedly one of the many issues that we shall have to consider in the review is the interaction between methods of electricity generation and the environmental obligations into which we have entered. I believe that my hon. Friend is saying that if we had less nuclear-generated electricity, and therefore more coal-generated electricity, there would be an impact on emission levels.

Iraq

7. **Mr. Heppell:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many trade missions to Iraq have been authorised by his Department involving Nottinghamshire chamber of commerce in each year since 1984.

The President of the Board of Trade and Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. Michael Heseltine): There were two in 1984, one in 1985, two in 1986, one in 1988, one in 1989, and two in 1990.

Mr. Heppell: Is the President of the Board of Trade aware that one of the authorised participants in the mission in 1989 was Sheffield Forgemasters, which was clearly against the 1988 guidelines, the 1985 guidelines and any other guidelines that the President may feel are in fashion at the moment? If there was no ministerial approval, will the right hon. Gentleman take action against senior DTI officials for breaching the Government guidelines, or will he turn a blind eye, as he and three other Ministers did in the past, to innocent business men who were set up, fitted up, in British courts?

Mr. Heseltine: I do not see the gain involved for the hon. Gentleman in peddling a totally dishonest interpretation of what happened, presumably in an attempt to get some cheap publicity in his constituency.

The issues that the hon. Gentleman raised will be fully examined by Lord Justice Scott, and I look forward to the report.

Mining Equipment Firms

8. **Mr. Bennett:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what Government assistance is currently given to United Kingdom firms that produce mining equipment.

12. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the future prospects for the British mining engineering industry.

Mr. Eggar: The size of the domestic market for the mining equipment industry is largely determined by British Coal. Prospects in export markets are reflected in the 38 per cent. rise in exports last year.

The industry is eligible for a wide range of Government assistance for exports, research and development, and new investment.

Mr. Bennett: Does the Minister agree that the mining manufacturing industry in this country has an extremely good record in terms of exports? Perhaps he could tell the House how much foreign exchange they earn. If firms such as Oldham Batteries in my constituency lose the market for their mining lamps and helmets, they will find it increasingly difficult to compete on the world stage without that home market, because they will not have the money to invest in keeping themselves at the forefront of technology. Does the Minister realise that when the Government destroy British coal mines, they also destroy an important part of our manufacturing base?

Mr. Eggar: I can confirm that the mining equipment industry has a good record. In 1991, it ran a positive trade surplus of some £46 million. It has been active in export markets.

When I was in China recently, I took the opportunity to promote British mining equipment there. There is no doubt that British mining companies have a good reputation. I am currently working with the Export Credits Guarantee Department to see whether we can support a major export drive in China with formal bank lines of credit to support its initiatives.

Mr. Hinchliffe: Is the Minister aware that since 1984 some 2,000-plus manufacturing jobs have been lost in my constituency alone? Many of those jobs were related to the export trade, and were directly earning for Britain. Does the Minister realise that when the Government destroy British pits, they also destroy the vital shop window that mining engineering companies need to display their products for the export market? What assessment have the Government made of the impact of the 13 October announcement on coal, especially as it relates to the export trade and mining engineering?

Mr. Eggar: I have had meetings with individual mining equipment companies. I had arranged another meeting with MECO a week ahead. Unfortunately, the Chairman of the Select Committee on Employment has asked me to attend that Committee, but we will be rearranging the MECO meeting. I am aware of the problem. I recognise that there is a role for the Government to play in assisting.

Mr. Luff: Will my hon. Friend confirm that representations from mining equipment manufacturers, such as MECO in my constituency of Worcester and in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Clifton-Brown), will be taken fully into account during the review of the coal mining industry? Will he further confirm that one of the major fears of mining equipment manufacturers is that the significant subsidies enjoyed by German coal producers

enable German mining manufacturers to develop a home market, which enables them to enhance their penetration of export markets?

Mr. Eggar: My hon. Friend the Member for Worcester (Mr. Luff) kindly sent MECO's evidence to the review. That evidence will be considered as part of the review. I have met the managing director of MECO on at least two occasions. Indeed, he accompanied me on a visit to the United States to see his and Gullick's equipment in operation in United States mines.

Mr. Robin Cook: I have visited three of the coalfields that are at risk. The more I visit pits that have spent millions of pounds in orders to the British mining engineering industry and, as a result, can cut coal at a profit and at a competitive price, the more I marvel at the decision to close them.

What would the Minister say to the men at Markham, who, as a result of that equipment and their efforts, have doubled productivity in eight years? Why should that dramatic success be met by closure? Will the Minister invite his right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade to go with him down some of the pits? Will they see for themselves the orders that the pits provide to British industry? Will the Minister then answer the question for the men whose jobs are at risk?

Mr. Eggar: I imagine that the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) was referring to Markham Main. Of course, Markham Main is one of the pits that are covered by the statutory consultation period. The consultation will be genuine.

The Markham pit will be covered by the review. The hon. Gentleman will be aware that part of the review is a study by Boyds, which will be published. That study will make an independent assessment of the viability of the Markham pit.

Steel Production

9. **Mr. Stevenson:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the prospects for steel production in 1992 and in 1993; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: United Kingdom steel production totalled 11 million tonnes in the first nine months of 1992, equivalent to 14·7 million tonnes in a full year. The industry expects United Kingdom steel production in 1993 to be at the same level as it was in 1992.

Mr. Stevenson: Is the Minister aware that his response will be seen as another example of the Government's attitude towards industry, which reeks of complacency? In the light of the recent statement by the chairman of British Steel that up to 50,000 additional jobs could be lost as a result of this Government-inspired recession and of the dumping of cheap steel imports, especially from eastern Europe, into the European market, will the Minister in his capacity as President of the European Council initiate an immediate inquiry into the dumping of cheap steel imported into the European market? In view of the similarities, will he do the same for cheap, dumped coal imports?

Mr. Sainsbury: I am a little puzzled about how giving the facts about production this year and the forecast production for next year could be complacent. We are well aware of the concerns about dumping. We also fully support the Commission's investigation into illegal state aids. We are working urgently with our European Community partners to explore what regime might be appropriate for the imports of steel from central European countries into the whole European Community from 1 Janaury next year.

Mr. Knapman: Will my right hon. Friend bear it in mind that nationalised, subsidised Italian steel firms have gained the orders for the supply of steel to all the works in the second Severn crossing, in addition to embroiling British Steel, which stands on its own two feet, in a trade war with America? Will my right hon. Friend please intervene, if not before tea, at least before dinner?

Mr. Sainsbury: I am well aware of the concerns of the industry about the contract to which my hon. Friend refers. My hon. Friend the Minister for Roads and Traffic has already written to the British Constructional Steelwork Association on that. My officials yesterday met the director of the association and explained the Government's present action to address those issues.

Mr. Barry Jones: May I remind the right hon. Gentleman of the £50 million losses announced by British Steel, of its 20 per cent. cut, of the loss of 500 jobs at Shotton steel works and of the closure of Brymbo steel works with the loss of 1,100 jobs? What precisely will the Minister do to prevent the dumping of east European steel in Britain and in western Europe? May I remind the Minister of the vital part steel plays in Wales? We have given our blood. We cannot lose any more jobs. We look to the Minister and to the Government to help our steel industry.

Mr. Sainsbury: I hope that hon. Members of all parties are aware of the achievements of the industry and of the dramatic improvements in efficiency which have made it, by all accounts, one of the world's most efficient steel industries. It would be nice to hear Opposition Members pay tribute to the achievement of the industry in increasing its exports again this year and for the first time achieving an export of more than 50 per cent. of its production.

Mr. Oppenheim: Will my right hon. Friend gently remind Opposition Members that when they were running British Steel with their hands-on industrial strategy, British Steel was the world's largest loss maker and our balance in steel products was £1 billion a year in the red? Now, our balance of trade in steel products is £1 billion a year in surplus and British Steel is the most productive and efficient steel producer in western Europe.

Mr. Sainsbury: My hon. Friend has made his point effectively. I can add that in 1979, it took more than 13 man hours to produce a tonne of liquid steel. That is now being achieved by British Steel in fewer than five man hours.

Mr. Hardy: Will the Minister look without delay into the trading position of the engineering steels industry, a large part of which is in my constituency, not least to ensure that we maintain our export record, especially in North America? Urgent consideration needs to be given to the matter.

Mr. Sainsbury: I share the hon. Gentleman's disappointment about the action taken on steel imports by the American authorities. Countervailing duties have been imposed, but, as the hon. Gentleman will be aware, the duties on British steel are somewhat less than those on most of the competitors.

I would say to the hon. Member that, as a highly efficient private sector company, British Steel expects to take its own commercial decisions, and the last thing it wants is to have the Government telling it how to run its business.

Manufacturing

10. **Mr. Mudie:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to meet representatives of the Confederation of British Industry to discuss future prospects for the manufacturing sector; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heseltine: Ministers and officials from my Department are in frequent contact with the Confederation of British Industry on a range of issues. I addressed the CBI national conference on 10 November.

Mr. Mudie: Given that in the 1980s, 1,752,000 jobs were lost in the manufacturing sector and in the 1990s, 668,000 jobs have already disappeared in manufacturing, will the President confirm that he is aware of the CBI projection, backed up by other sources, that those job losses will continue at least until 1994? Will he agree that unless those losses are stopped and reversed, there will be no possibility of a sustained economic recovery?

Mr. Heseltine: I agree that the CBI welcomed the Government's autumn statement, which was made with just the same intentions in mind that the hon. Member has referred to. The CBI welcomed the fact that we got rid of the car tax; that we increased capital allowances and reduced interest rates to the lowest level for 15 years, saving something like £10 billion a year from the costs of industry; that we preserved the capital programmes; and that we increased Export Credits Guarantee Department cover by £700 million. Those actions were a very considerable, determined step by the Government to help the policies the CBI wanted.

Mrs. Chaplin: Does my right hon. Friend share my irritation at the constant denigration of manufacturing industry in this country by Labour Members who ignore the fact that £90 billion of exports from manufacturing industry will go out this year? Will he agree with me that the lower pound means not only that the industry can increase exports, but that it can recapture home markets?

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend puts the case extremely well. The fact is that there is now considerable opportunity in export markets for British manufactures. Exports already are at an all-time high and they are set to increase further as a result of the opportunity. I also agree with my hon. Friend that Labour Members seek every opportunity to run down success, not only in manufacturing industry but anywhere they can find it.

Mr. Orme: Will the Secretary of State have a look at the Engineering Employers Federation's devastating critique of the Government's policy and the failure of the Government to provide for manufacturing industry? Has he discussed it with the federation? Has he discussed it with the CBI? Does he not think that it is about time he did?

Mr. Heseltine: I spent some time last night reading the Engineering Employers Federation publication and I was delighted to see upon how many of their suggestions the Government have already acted.

Mr. Riddick: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the chattering classes, both in the media and the universities and sometimes on the Opposition Benches, talk about the importance of manufacturing industry, but one thing, for sure, that they do not want is for their children to go to work in manufacturing industry? Indeed it is fair to point out that very few Opposition Members have ever worked in manufacturing industry themselves, as I did.

Can my right hon. Friend tell me what steps the Government have taken to bring home to schoolchildren and students the importance of working in manufacturing and the fact that a good career can be had in manufacturing industry?

Mr. Heseltine: I agree with my hon. Friend, and the Government have taken significant measures during the 1980s to draw together manufacturing industry and the educational establishments in order to create just the improved atmosphere which he suggests.

Mr. Robin Cook: Does the President recall telling the "Today" programme in October that he was putting in place the basis of a strategy for industry? While he was reading the Engineering Employers Federation document, did he notice that the federation produced its strategy in six weeks? As it is now seven weeks since the broadcast, eight months since he took the job and nearly 14 years since the Government took office, just when will the right hon. Gentleman produce a strategy for industry?

Mr. Heseltine: The very successful conclusion of the EEF publication is that we have done so many of the things that it wanted us to do. We have done them because we had considered, perhaps even before the federation began to draft its report, the needs of manufacturing industry. I was delighted to see the warm reception that the autumn statement received from the CBI.

Assisted Areas

11. **Mr. Willetts:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will now announce the conclusions of his review of the assisted areas map.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Government's intention is to announce the results of the review of assisted areas as early as possible next year, taking account of the outcome of the coal review and after the necessary clearance of the European Commission.

Mr. Willetts: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for that reply. Will he confirm that the shrinkage of the defence industry is a factor which will be taken into account in his review? In that context, may I draw his attention to the compelling case for assisted area status put forward by Havant and Portsmouth councils?

Mr. Sainsbury: I am happy to assure my hon. Friend that any closures or job losses resulting from "Options for Change" will be fully taken into account, together with all

other relevant factors, in the review. I am also happy to assure my hon. Friend that the particular presentation to which he referred will be very carefully considered.

Mr. Barron: In the letter that the Minister sent to the Chief Secretary to the Treasury dated 1 September, he said that the mining communities would be seriously hit by the closure programme and he suggested, as he has just suggested, that assisted area status may help. Looking at those areas now, before the closures, does not the Minister believe that there are good economic grounds for them to have assisted area status now and not to have to wait until more coal mines are closed?

Mr. Sainsbury: We are looking at all areas and we are taking into account the current unemployment situation and any known changes, including the coal review to which I have referred, which might affect that situation. We want to arrive at a balanced map that properly reflects the priorities across the whole country. I do not think that it would be very sensible in that context to try to anticipate the outcome of the review in respect of any single area.

Mr. Hawkins: Does my right hon. Friend agree that while it would clearly not be wise, as he has just said, to anticipate the findings and the announcement of the redrawn map, one of the great strengths of assisted area status has been that areas that have benefited from it in the past have improved on almost all the criteria applied to the previous map? Will he note that areas such as mine in Blackpool have particularly welcomed the very careful analysis by Baroness Denton, my right hon. Friend's ministerial colleague in another place, of all submissions made by those areas?

Mr. Sainsbury: I am happy to assure my hon. Friend that the submissions received from his area and all others are being carefully considered by my officials. That is why we want to ensure that they are all taken into account so that we arrive at a fair new map that is right for the whole country and not just a review that takes account of one particular area.

Mr. Fatchett: Is not it significant that the first demand for assisted area status should come from an hon. Gentleman who represents a southern constituency? Is not that an indication of how the Government, having ripped out the heart of manufacturing industry in the west midlands and the north of England in their first recession, have now done exactly the same to once-prosperous London and the south-east of England? Will the Minister give a guarantee that if he is to create new assisted areas in the once-prosperous parts of the United Kingdom, he will not do that at the expense of the north of England, the west midlands, Scotland and Wales, because those areas still need regional assistance?

Mr. Sainsbury: I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman is joining the usual catalogue of criticism of British industry that we hear from the Opposition Benches. I am also sorry that he feels that some parts of the country should be prejudiced in favour of other parts. The objective of the review is to determine which areas fall within the approximately one third that most justify the additional assistance that is available in an assisted area. If that reveals areas in the south, which may have suffered from changes in employment as a result of the defence review and "Options for Change", it is surprising that the hon. Gentleman should believe that those issues should not be taken into account and that they should be prejudiced at the expense of some others.

US Tariff Act

14. **Mr. Faber:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has made to the United States Government concerning section 337 of the US Tariff Act.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs (Mr. Neil Hamilton): Strong representations against this discriminatory legislation have been made to the United States Government on a number of occasions by the British Government and by the European Commission.

Mr. Faber: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his reply and for the news that the European Commission is also now involved. He will be aware of the company in my constituency, Bath Scientific Limited, of Melksham, which has traded successfully in the United States for the past six years and which now finds itself unexpectedly subject to extremely expensive litigation, because of this legislation, brought against it by a competitor. Will my hon. Friend continue to press the American Government on this issue and do what he can for my constituents?

Mr. Hamilton: My hon. Friend the Member for Westbury (Mr. Faber) has made strenuous representations on behalf of Bath Scientific, based at Melksham in his constituency. I can confirm that the British Government will continue to make the strongest representations to the United States Government to ensure that section 337 of the US Tariff Act is repealed. The United States Government have said that they will act as soon as the Uruguay round is completed. That is yet another reason for ensuring that the current GATT negotiations are completed successfully and as quickly as possible.

Mr. Rooney: Does the Minister accept that the United States, while in one arena preaching free trade, is in many ways the most protectionist economy in the world? Will he particularly note the 36 per cent. tariff on British textile goods that still destroys jobs in this country and take that into account when we reach the last stages of the Uruguay round?

Mr. Hamilton: It is a bit rich of Opposition Members, who are great supporters of import controls and protectionism, to attempt to castigate the United States for its protectionist policy. The hon. Member knows that our Government, of all Governments in the European Community, have been the strongest supporter of GATT, and we will make every possible opportunity available to advocate the cause of British industry and free trade.

Mr. Butcher: Does my hon. Friend recall that something like half of the total foreign earnings of the top 20 British manufacturers come from the North American market? At a time when some elements in Europe are becoming protectionist or anti-American, would it not be wise to consider new initiatives building on our right hon. Friend's undoubted success in GATT to reduce tariffs between the North American free trade area and the European Community, which would have immense benefit

for the economies of the eastern seaboard of North America and a certain large island off the western coast of Europe?

Mr. Hamilton: Important as we know the European Community to be, my hon. Friend is right to remind us of the importance of our trade across the Atlantic. I can assure my hon. Friend that, under my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade, we have not lost sight of this important element in Britain's foreign earnings.

Technology Transfer

15. **Mr. Connarty:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what investment programmes are planned to assist the development of new products arising from technology transfer programmes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Leigh: The Department has a number of technology transfer and investment programmes directed at encouraging industry to address the development of new products.

To date there are no plans for further investment programmes.

Mr. Connarty: That is a very disappointing reply. Is the Minister aware that much of the breakthrough in fibre optics technology was developed in the research laboratories of the United Kingdom? Does he share my concern and that of the Scottish business community that 50 per cent. of those awarded doctorates in fibre optronics in Scottish universities are working in the research laboratory of one United States telecommunications manufacturer? Will he give us an assurance, or any indication, that he has any programme at all to ensure that he will do better in the development of future industries for this country than he is doing at the moment in defence of our traditional industries?

Mr. Leigh: Contrary to what the hon. Gentleman has implied, the United Kingdom spends about £3 billion a year on civil R and D, which is quite as much per head as Japan. My own Department's programme amounts to about £100 million a year which is split between technology transfer—*[Interruption.]* It is no good the hon. Gentleman pointing his finger at me; he may learn something if he listens. One third goes on technology programmes, one third on pre-competitive research and one third on collaboration programmes. We have a programme which is effective and well targeted, but I am sure that, if the hon. Gentleman does not agree, the paltry two Labour Members who stood just now to announce that they had worked in manufacturing industry—unlike the rest of them—would accept that the best form of R and D is that funded and financed by industry itself.

Exports

16. **Mrs. Angela Knight:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to increase support for British exporters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: Our plans for export promotion were set out in my export promotion strategy speech to the Institute of Export on Wednesday 25 November.

Mrs. Knight: I thank my hon. Friend for his reply. Does he agree that some of our European partners have not reduced their aid and subsidies to industry to the same extent as the United Kingdom, despite agreeing to do so? Will my hon. Friend continue to do all that he can to ensure that there is a truly level playing field so that excellent and competitive British companies are not disadvantaged in their trade in Europe?

Mr. Needham: Of course. The fact that we have reduced the value of the pound by 12 per cent., the fact that we are working toward a successful GATT round, and the fact that we are now working with industry in a partnership at local level, national level and overseas level mean that we now have in place just as good an export strategy as any other nation in Europe. It is high time that the Opposition read it.

Public Expenditure (Scotland)

3.30 pm

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Ian Lang): With permission, Madam Speaker, I wish to make a statement about public expenditure in Scotland.

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced the Government's expenditure plans in his autumn statement on 12 November. On the same day, I announced my decisions for aggregate external finance for local authorities. I am publishing today details of the council tax transitional relief scheme which will accompany the introduction of the council tax in Scotland next year. As a result of settling the final details of that scheme, I have been able to increase the level of aggregate external finance available for distribution to local authorities from 3·2 per cent., as previously announced, to 3·5 per cent. I am also able to announce how I propose to allocate the remainder of the resources available for my programmes in Scotland. As usual, a table summarising my decisions will appear in *Hansard*. Full details will be included in my departmental report, which will be published in February.

My right hon. Friend made it clear that the Cabinet had set a remit for the public spending round which would keep public expenditure under firm control. The resulting overall settlement has, as a consequence, been a tight one. Nevertheless, the net public expenditure resources available to me for allocation in 1993-94 amount to no less than £13·45 billion. That is around £1 billion higher than last year's settlement and the largest ever annual spending total available to my departments, not just in cash but in real terms.

Our commitment to continue to fund growth in the health service in real terms, year by year, is an important one. But this year, with a tight public expenditure settlement, that is a demanding target. However, I am glad to say that, despite the tight limits on total resources and the priority given to economic recovery, I have once again been able this year to make substantial provision for the national health service and to plan for real growth in its funding. In 1993-94 the health programme will amount to more than £3·75 billion of net expenditure, an increase of £151 million over plans for the current year, and a real terms increase of 1·4 per cent. At that level, expenditure on the NHS in Scotland will be 47 per cent. higher in real terms than in 1979-80. That amounts to an all-time record of £744 per head in Scotland.

In deciding the disposition of the reminder of my resources among my various responsibilities, my first priority this year has been to invest in Scotland's economic recovery and longer-term growth. The House is already aware of the additional £340 million economic package for Scotland announced as part of my right hon. Friend's autumn statement. The promotion of economic recovery is also at the heart of the expenditure plans that I am announcing today.

Provision of national roads over the next three years will enable the programme of investment which we published last year to proceed as planned. More than £233 million will be invested in 1993-94, a 2 per cent. increase in real terms over plans for the present year. In addition, there will be new opportunities for the private sector to invest in Scotland's transport infrastructure. Resources available for local authority roads and other transport programmes, including forecast receipts from the European regional development fund, are expected to increase in real terms to £206 million.

The private sector-led local enterprise companies have a central role to play in promoting enterprise development, training and environmental recovery throughout Scotland. The LECs are actively encouraged to seek private investment and their strength is not accordingly to be measured solely by the level of their public funding. This year there has been understandable speculation that, to help fund other programmes, Scottish Enterprise's budget would have to be cut—a cut of 10 per cent. has been quoted in the press. It is true that the training budget, which represents Scotland's share of the funding for programmes in Great Britain, has fallen. It is none the less right in the present economic circumstances that the Government should back the LECs' development efforts with substantial resources. I am happy therefore to announce that the budget for the enterprise and environment functions of the Scottish Enterprise network will increase by £27 million in 1993-94 compared with plans for the present year. This is an increase of almost 11 per cent. in real terms.

In addition, the LECs are attracting an increasing share of the available grants from the European regional development fund which are additional to the expenditure allocations announced today. As a result the total cash resources available to the Scottish Enterprise network are expected to exceed the £455 million planned for the present year. Provision for Highlands and Islands Enterprise will be maintained at £78 million and is expected to rise to over £80 million once forecast ERDF receipts are taken into account.

In seeking to ensure that, within a tight overall settlement, the resources at my disposal should, so far as possible, be directed towards stimulating economic recovery, I have ensured that, across my programmes as a whole, my plans provide for gross capital expenditure totalling over £2·5 billion next year and an aggregate of £7·8 billion over the survey period. Together with European regional development fund grants, this enables a higher level of activity to be undertaken in real terms for 1993-94 than previously planned.

Spending on agriculture and fisheries is vital to the rural economy. Provision will increase in 1993-94 by some £141 million. That is 43 per cent. growth in real terms compared with plans for the present year. These increases reflect the outcome of agreement earlier this year on reform of the common agricultural policy, which switched the emphasis from commodity price support to direct payments to farmers.

Investment in education is the key to longer-term economic strength. The budget of the Scottish Office Education Department will be increased by 80 per cent. to nearly £1·2 billion next year, reflecting not just growth, but also my new responsibilities for the older Scottish universities and my new direct funding responsibilities for further education colleges in Scotland.

Adjusted for these transfers, provision for education will rise by 5 per cent. in real terms next year with further real terms growth thereafter. Scottish participation in higher and further education will be maintained at record levels following the substantial increases of recent years.

I am also able to invest substantially in a better environment. Expenditure on environmental programmes will amount to £485 million. Provision for the water and

sewerage programme over the survey period amounts to some £728 million. This represents a doubling in the programe over five years. Local authorities will be able to add to these resources grants obtained from the European regional development fund.

In housing, local authority expenditure on private sector improvement grants will increase by 1·5 per cent. in real terms while expenditure on council housing can be maintained at the level of expenditure per house provided for in this year's provisional allocations. The resources available to Scottish Homes represent an increase of £31 million in its investment resources compared with this year's plans—a real terms increase of almost 7 per cent.

The plans which I have announced today provide for the highest ever level of funding for Scottish Office programmes. They permit continuing real improvements in the provision of public services. They provide a framework for jobs and economic growth. I commend them to the House.

Following is the table:

£ million

	1992-93 estimated outturn		*1992-93 planned provision*		*1993-94 planned provision*		*1994-95 planned provision*		*1995-96 planned provision*	
	gross	*net*	*gross*	*net*	*gross*	*net*	*gross*	*net*	*gross*	*net*
Central Government's own expenditure (including public corporations other than nationalised industries) and local authority capital expenditure										
Agriculture, fisheries and food	337	331	304	300	444	441	490	480	530	520
Industry, energy, trade and employment	626	544	617	535	615	530	630	580	650	600
Roads and transport	431	431	418	418	406	406	420	420	440	440
Housing	1,031	668	1,040	665	1,020	664	1,050	700	1,060	710
Other environmental services	488	387	477	376	485	361	490	360	500	370
Law, order and protective services	432	406	429	403	470	448	480	460	500	480
Education	636	636	628	628	1,167	1,167	1,220	1,220	1,270	1,270
Arts and libraries	49	49	47	47	54	54	60	60	60	60
Health	3,761	3,643	3,725	3,615	3,888	3,766	4,060	3,940	4,200	4,070
Social work services	62	62	62	62	63	63	70	70	70	70
Other public services	222	180	222	180	222	185	240	190	240	190
Total Central Government and local authority capital	8,073	7,337	7,968	7,229	8,834	8,085	9,200	8,470	9,500	8,760
Grants from the European regional development fund	—	0	—	0	—	120	—	120	—	120
Central Government support to local authorities' current expenditure	—	5,203	—	5,198	—	5,207	—	5,420	—	5,590
Nationalised industries financing limits	—	32	—	32	—	35	—	−20	—	−20
Total expenditure within the Secretary of State's responsibility	—	12,571	—	12,458	—	13,446	—	13,990	—	14,450
Forestry Commission	—	99	—	99	—	94	—	100	—	100
TOTAL	—	12,670	—	12,558	—	13,540	—	14,080	—	14,550

Notes

1. 1992-93 and 1993-94 rounded to nearest £1 million. 1994-95 and 1995-96 rounded to nearest £10 million.
2. Figures may not add due to rounding.
3. Central Government support to local authorities comprises revenue support grant, grants to local authorities for specific purposes, and income from non domestic rates.
4. Provision for industry, energy trade and employment includes that for tourism.
5. Provision for agriculture includes £96 million (1993-94), £102 million (1994-95) and £148 million (1995-96) included in the MAFF/IBEA programmes in the autumn statement but which forms part of agricultural spending in Scotland.
6. Comparisons between 1992-93 and 1993-94 are affected by transfers to Education from DFE and grants to local authorities and to grants to local authorities from DSS in respect of higher and further education and care in the community.
7. For 1992-93 expenditure financed by grants from the European regional development fund was included in the relevant programme total.

Mr. Henry McLeish (Fife, Central): Is the Secretary of State aware that, four days after his second anniversary in the post, when facing the longest recession since the 1930s, with business and consumer confidence at rock bottom, this statement does not begin to deal with the real issues facing Scotland? It will do nothing to allay fears about unemployment, to help boost the economy, or to improve the quality of public services.

The casual listener today might have been forgiven for thinking that Christmas had come early. When we consider the sleight of hand, manipulation of the figures and the inclusion of enormous transfers from other Departments, a very different picture will be revealed, which will put a different complexion on what has been announced. Any statement on expenditure must be assessed against the fragile condition of the Scottish economy.

[Mr. Henry McLeish]

The Secretary of State claims that there has been a real terms increase of 4 per cent. The Treasury says that, if one excludes transfers, there has been only a 1 per cent. increase in real terms. Will the Secretary of State clear up that confusion and confirm that he set out to use a different set of figures in his press release on 12 November, which was not a presentation shared by the Treasury?

The Secretary of State has virtually said that money is flowing from the Scottish Office into every nook and cranny of Scottish life. In that case, why is there a cut of 5 per cent. in real terms for industry, a cut of 8 per cent. for roads and transport, a cut of 3 per cent. in housing, and a cut of 9 per cent. in other environmental services? The right hon. Gentleman can tell us when he responds why his figures simply do not add up. The tables are more accurate than the Secretary of State's rhetoric.

Secondly, the Secretary of State talked about a £340 million recovery package. Will he confirm that next year all that we will get is £23 million of housing investment by Scottish Homes, and that that is the extent of his £340 million recovery package? If that is so, it does not begin to address the key issues which Labour Members appreciate but which are constantly ignored by the Secretary of State and his complacent friends in the Scottish Office.

Thirdly, will the Secretary of State tell the House why he has surrendered on the Barnett formula? For 13 years we have been led to believe that that is quite important and that it had an impact on the quality of public services and the volume of expenditure. Now the Secretary of State would like us to believe that the Barnett formula did not mean a great deal. He should come clean and tell us what it means in terms of future funding and expenditure.

The real tragedy of the statement, stripped of its hype and hypocrisy, is that it will do nothing for jobs, nothing for unemployment and nothing to tackle homelessness and the rising crime rate throughout Scotland.

When unemployment has risen in the past two years by 23 per cent. to nearly a quarter of a million, why has no emergency employment programme been announced in the statement? Have the Government given up on the unemployed? Are they not concerned about the one in four young Scots between the ages of 16 and 24 who are out of work? Is the Secretary of State not concerned about the one in 10 of our working population who are also out of work? By their actions today, the Government have shown that they have no interest in the unemployed.

The chief executive of Scottish Enterprise is alarmed about what might happen to his budget, but today we have been treated to the simplistic notion that the Secretary of State is increasing the budget. Would the Secretary of State like to come clean and tell us about the training elements of Scottish Enterprise, which he conveniently forgot to mention in his statement and his presentation to the House?

Training is a crucial item of the budget and the statement. One quarter of training places have been lost in the past two years. Nearly 9,000 young Scots are without a youth training guarantee. Surely the Secretary of State should come clean on the extent of the cut because it is vital for young people and adults and for Scotland's economic recovery.

Will the Secretary of State also consider that, in Scotland, 12 people are chasing every vacancy? Bankruptcies have increased by 280 per cent. in the past two years. Faced with all that, why is the industry budget being cut by 5 per cent?

We have had no better definition of insanity in public policy than this afternoon's statement. Problems are mounting by the day and the budget for investment is declining by the day. It simply makes no sense, and the Secretary of State should comment on that.

The Opposition are not convinced that Scottish Enterprise has a healthy future in the hands of the Conservative party. Budget cuts are being imposed, morale is at rock bottom, and we now see the appointment of another representative of that cosy clique of Conservative cronies, Mr. McKay, the chairman of Scottish Enterprise. When will that placement approach to politics in Scotland stop? We need people who will tackle the Scottish Enterprise budget problems properly and who do not have such close affinities with the Conservative party.

Another issue that did not surface in the statement was crime. Why has the crime rate increased from 900,000 in the past two years to more than a million, yet the statement specified no figure to show why——

Madam Speaker: Order. As crime was not specifically mentioned in the statement, I remind the hon. Gentleman that the procedure restricts him to questioning the statement.

Mr. McLeish: The law and order issue is contained in the table that accompanies the statement, so it is germane to the Scottish Office's current expenditure, Madam Speaker.

When a crime is being committed every 30 seconds in Scotland, we should have a response about what the Government intend to do about the rising crime wave. Have they simply given up once again on crime, which stalks our streets and houses in Scotland?

The final point that was not dealt with in the statement was that of homelessness, which is now at record levels with 39,500 households having registered with local authorities as homeless. Why is there no vigorous improvement in investment in house builds? It cannot be right that nearly 100,000 Scots, according to the Government's latest figures for the past year, are now without a home. Why, therefore, has 3 per cent. been cut from the housing budget in today's statement?

Local government expenditure is also crucial because, once again, tucked away in the tables accompanying the statement is a 3 per cent. cut in the cash going to local authorities. Will not that mean that the 1·5 per cent. pay issue will simply disappear and that we shall have a pay freeze? Will it not mean the underfunding of care in the community, and council tax being set at artificially high levels because of the meanness of Government funding? Is it not a potentially lethal cocktail to suggest that vicious capping of local authorities will accompany inadequate funding to ensure that council tax levels remain reasonable at the expense of services and jobs?

The statement is not worthy of the problems in Scotland. The Secretary of State well knows that, when the transfers from other Departments to the Scottish Office are excluded and when we consider the increasing need in housing, crime and the economy, the statement will receive

no support from the Opposition. I urge him, even at this stage, to reconsider the unemployed and to give them a priority which, until now, they simply have not had.

Mr. Lang: I know that figures are not the strong point of the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish), but he should take a closer look at the figures before making such comments.

I am glad that the Opposition have accepted my proposal that the Scottish Grand Committee should meet to discuss the statement, because it covers many important issues that deserve debate. I assure the hon. Gentleman that my announcement, with all the real terms increases that I have listed, will lead to improved public services. There is no question of sleight of hand. For that, we look to the hon. Gentleman who, less than a month ago, suggested that the Government's spending on Scottish Enterprise was set to fall from £373 million to £340 million next year. The resources at Scottish Enterprise's disposal next year will be £455 million, which is rather different.

The hon. Gentleman suggested that capital allocations to local authorities would fall from £826 million to £810 million. The figure is likely to be nearer £900 million, so the hon. Gentleman has a bit of homework to do. He also questioned the unadjusted real terms increase—in other words, whether allowance was being made for the transfer of programmes to Scottish Office responsibility. Unadjusted, the programme expenditure increase is 5 per cent. in real terms, plan on plan. However, after taking out provision for higher education and care in the community, the increase is not the 1 per cent. that the hon. Gentleman suggests; it is a 2·7 per cent. plan-on-plan increase.

The hon. Gentleman spoke about Scottish Enterprise and about a cosy clique of cronies. Perhaps he was thinking of Monklands. He mentioned morale in Scottish Enterprise. He should speak to it following my announcement because it has had its enterprise and environment functions budget increased by £27 million, a rise of 11 per cent. in real terms. That returns Scottish Enterprise's total spend, after the reduction in the training budget to which I referred, to broadly the same level as for the current year. That is very different from the hon. Gentleman's figures.

The hon. Gentleman asked about roads and transport and suggested that there were cuts. The roads and transport programme will increase by 5 per cent. in cash terms and by 2 per cent. in real terms. The hon. Gentleman failed to take account of the European regional development fund share which will be allocated to those programmes in the year ahead.

The hon. Gentleman asked about the change in the Barnett formula. The updating of that formula took account of the population changes since it was introduced arising from the 1991 survey, thus bringing it back to the same broad level intended by the then Chief Secretary, Mr. Barnett. The impact on this year's total programme is about £12 million, which is less than one tenth of 1 per cent. of the total. Anyone who contrasts that with the £340 million package that I was able to secure outwith the block will begin to realise that I have secured about 10 times as much by that means.

The hon. Gentleman derided the £340 million package as though it had only one small component involving the Scottish Homes budget, but it comprises £70 million of resources in the current year for schools, hospitals, roads and a range of other areas which we have now spelt out and published. It also includes the writing off of debt inherited from Scottish Homes' predecessors, and that will release about £70 million over the next three years. It also included the reduction of £68 million this year, carrying forward to future years, in Scottish business rates.

That is the emergency employment plan for which the hon. Gentleman called, and that and the more than £2·5 billion of capital spend will help to generate jobs and stimulate the economy.

The hon. Gentleman spoke about the law and order budget. We have not given up the fight against crime. That is why we are increasing the law and order budget by 11·6 per cent.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the substitute striker for the Opposition Front-Bench team, the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish), was offside for most of the game? He failed to understand or realise that in order to score goals he must make statements that will stick. Has the hon. Gentleman failed to notice how, since 1979, the Conservative Government have increased spending on the health service over and above the rate of inflation by 47 per cent.? Has he failed to notice that we are now spending much more on the environment, which has been targeted in the way that people want? Has he not noticed that the shift in emphasis on the way that Scottish Homes is to be financed will make a substantial contribution, especially in rural areas, to funding?

All that is against the background of a world recession. My right hon. Friend is to be congratulated, not condemned.

Mr. Lang: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. He is quite right to point to the increase in expenditure on the health service in Scotland of 47 per cent. in real terms since 1979-80. That is dramatic evidence of our long-term commitment to improving the delivery of public services. My hon. Friend might also have said that expenditure on health in Scotland is 24 per cent. higher per head than in England. My hon. Friend is also right to draw attention to the environment budget. He may like to know that the budget for Scottish Natural Heritage is being increased to £36 million, a 5 per cent. real terms increase over the current year. The Scottish Homes budget is also being increased. My hon. Friend will also be pleased to know that there is provision in these figures for expenditure of £4 million on raspberries over the next three years.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): Can the Secretary of State confirm that there is no increase whatever in the Scottish Enterprise budget for this year? What guarantees can he give that the increase announced for the environment and enterprise will not have to be siphoned off to allow the training guarantees to be met? Will he confirm that there is no increase in the budget for Highlands and Islands Enterprise? How can he justify that given the loss of jobs at Ardersier, Nigg and Dounreay?

The Minister implied that there would be a make up from the European regional development fund. Have those figures ever before been included in the statement, or is it just that he needs to put them in to give a gloss to the statement? Is he aware that the loss of the Barnett formula will continue year after year and the one-off that he managed to secure this year as part of an overall United Kingdom package will not make up for that?

Mr. Lang: I am happy to reassure the hon. Gentleman. The Scottish Enterprise budget has been increased on enterprise and environment functions by 11 per cent. in real terms, which makes up for the reduction in the Scottish Enterprise share of the Great Britain training budget. As to the budget of Highlands and Islands Enterprise, that will be over £80 million next year, higher than it is this year, and it may be as high as £83 million or £84 million, depending upon how much ERDF resources it receives.

The hon. Gentleman said that ERDF resources had not been included in the past. On the contrary, they have always been included. This year, we have responded to Commissioner Millan's request that they should be seen transparently and separately. Therefore, they are published separately in the tables. That is why they are shown in that way.

Mr. Phil Gallie (Ayr): I share with my right hon. Friend the despair that he must feel at times at the Opposition's constant gloom during statements. Once again, he has confounded—[HON. MEMBERS: "Question."]—he has confounded all of their expectations by increasing—[HON. MEMBERS: "Question."]

Madam Speaker: Order. Hon. Members are asking that questions be asked. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will ask a direct question, and I also hope that hon. Members in all parts of the House will be ready with their questions, not comments. I call Mr. Gallie to ask a question.

Mr. Gallie: Is my right hon. Friend aware that there is great joy in Scotland at the continued drive towards the uniform business rate and the good use to which the £340 million mentioned in the Chancellor's statement is to be put? Will he join me in reminding Opposition Members that it was a Conservative Government who introduced the idea of the enterprise trusts in Scotland? Does he agree that there is a continuing commitment from him and his fellow Cabinet Ministers towards enterprise trusts?

Mr. Lang: I am happy to assure my hon. Friend of our continuing support for the good work done by enterprise trusts, working well with local enterprise companies. I am also grateful for his welcome for the business rates reduction of £68 million that I was able to announce for next year. That will bring to £348 million the resources put into bringing down business rates from the high levels set mainly by Labour-controlled local authorities to levels comparable to those in the rest of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Jimmy Wray (Glasgow, Provan): The figures used by the Secretary of State are misleading. If he were to tell the House the truth, he would have to calculate the figures going back to the level of 1978-79 prices. The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities states quite clearly——

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman heard me say a moment ago that I am not open to debate and comments. I am interested only in direct questions.

Mr. Wray: Is it not the case that, since 1978-79, there has been a cut in revenue support grant of £47 million, totalling over the years £600 million, with a total cost cumulatively, accordingly to the gross domestic product deflator, of £1·8 billion overall?

Mr. Lang: Next year, the support that I shall give to local authorities through the aggregate external finance will be £5·2 billion. That is a higher figure than ever before. It represents an increase of 3·5 per cent. over the current year.

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson (Aberdeen, South): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his statement. I assure him that, unlike Labour Members who came here ready to carp and criticise before they had even heard what he had to say, the people of Aberdeen will not be so dogmatic or blinkered, and will welcome the statement. Will he confirm, preferably in words of one syllable, that the statement sets out the largest amount of public spending ever announced in the House by any Scottish Secretary of State, not just in real terms or cash terms but in any terms?

Mr. Lang: I am happy to assure my hon. Friend that this is a record statement in every way. Coming as he does from Aberdeen, which has two universities, my hon. Friend will be pleased to hear that we have increased education provision by 5 per cent. in real terms, and our assumption for higher education numbers will increase from 100,000 this year to 107,000 next year.

Dr. Jeremy Bray (Motherwell, South): What consideration has the Secretary of State given to training programme cuts and their effects on Lanarkshire in particular? During the coming financial year, the training support for Lanarkshire steel workers received from European Community funds will expire. Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the contribution to overheads will therefore bear heavily on the training provided for young people and for workers who have lost their jobs, who have never had the benefit of European Community funds?

Mr. Lang: I certainly recognise Lanarkshire's problems, which is why we have given special attention and resources to its interests, and why Scottish Enterprise and the Lanarkshire development agency have been specially funded. It is also why we have devoted resources to training in that area. We shall be able to continue to do so as a result of the increased funding that I have been able to generate for Scottish Enterprise, to top up the training budget that it receives as a result of the Great Britain training negotiations.

Dr. Bray: How much?

Madam Speaker: Mr. Kynoch.

Mr. George Kynoch (Kincardine and Deeside): There are many things in my right hon. Friend's statement——

Dr. Bray *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order.

Dr. Bray: I believe that the Secretary of State's last words were lost.

Madam Speaker: Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman will repeat them for the sake of the *Official Report*.

Mr. Lang: As an afterthought, to answer the hon. Gentleman's sedentary question, I said that the apportionment for local enterprise companies will be decided later.

Mr. Kynoch: There are many things in my right hon. Friend's statement to welcome, despite the comments of

Labour Members, who clearly wrote their speeches before they heard it. There are real increases across the board, although the Opposition and the media predicted cuts. I particularly draw attention to the £31 million extra for Scottish Homes, which is a 7 per cent. real increase. Will my right hon. Friend ensure that an adequate proportion of that money will be devoted to rural, developing areas of population, such as my own constituency of Kincardine and Deeside?

Mr. Lang: I am glad to assure my hon. Friend that Scottish Homes pays great attention to the housing needs of rural areas, and I feel sure that its resources will be directed at that, as at its other priorities. Scottish Homes will also devote some £7 million of its budget to the interests of care in the community—another subject to which I know my hon. Friend pays much attention.

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): At a time when 100,000 Scots are homeless, how can the Government justify their persistent refusal to give local authorities the resources to build sufficient houses and at the same time propose to spend up to £60 million of taxpayers' money on Windsor castle? Does the Secretary of State agree with me that it would be absolutely unjustifiable for the Government to cut legal aid to those on low incomes when the Chancellor of the Exchequer—who lives in a rent-free house and has a salary of more than £63,000 a year—is receiving legal aid from the taxpayer?

Mr. Lang: As to housing, my hon. Friend the Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Kynoch) mentioned the 7 per cent. real increase for the budget of Scottish Homes. In addition, we announced £20 million as part of the package for 1992-93, from which £7·5 million will go to housing. Housing resources are, therefore, being effectively focused. Far from cutting the legal aid budget, we anticipate a 40 per cent. rise over the period of the survey.

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): Will my right hon. Friend ensure that ordinary Scottish people will benefit from the increased public expenditure in Scotland? In the Monklands district council area, much of the additional money seems to be going into the pockets of councillors and their families. Is my right hon. Friend aware that Monklands district council has approved legal fees to be paid——

Madam Speaker: Order. I am perfectly willing to hear a question on the statement from the hon. Gentleman, but only on that subject.

Mr. Shaw: I apologise, Madam Speaker, but I do not think that I was straying from the statement because—if I may finish the point—the decision was taken to spend money that my right hon. Friend has just announced is supposed to go to the Scottish people on legal fees to support a private action by Monklands district councillors. That would be an abuse of the money that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State——

Madam Speaker: Order. I call the Secretary of State.

Mr. Lang: I am sure that the appropriate authorities will be able to investigate any misappropriation or wrongful use of resources by local authorities. However, I am pleased that local authority funding is increasing in the way that it is and that, for example, the local authority capital spend on school buildings is going up from £74 million to £82 million.

Mr. William McKelvey (Kilmarnock and Loudoun): Several schools in Kilmarnock are crumbling because money is needed to repair them. How much of this money does the Secretary of State think will be directed towards that source? In general, how does he think that the life of the people in Kilmarnock will be improved by his announcement?

Mr. Lang: The allocation between authorities will be made in due course and the hon. Gentleman's anxieties will be set at rest. As to the improvement in the life of the people of Kilmarnock, I am sure that they will be pleased to hear that the advance works on the A77 should be able to start in 1993-94.

Mr. Brian Donohoe (Cunninghame, South): Can the Secretary of State be more specific about the training budget? He referred to statements in the Scottish press about a 10 per cent. reduction, but, when asked, he avoided answering our question regarding the training budget for 1992-93.

Mr. Lang: The allocation of resources is a matter for Scottish Enterprise and the local enterprise companies. They can decide whether to reallocate resources or to apply operating surpluses to training, in addition to the existing budget. The youth training guarantee will be met. By levering in more private sector training resources—which is already happening, according to the survey carried out recently by the Confederation of British Industry—I would expect the funds committed to training in Scotland to continue to rise.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): Has the Secretary of State really considered the problems of housing in Scotland? Has he considered how many local authority houses will be modernised and brought up to standard and how many new-build houses will be available as a result of this statement? What is the basis for university funding? Is it based on the Scottish population, or on the number of students that Scottish universities put through in a year?

Mr. Lang: The funding for university students is based on the number of students already in higher education and those anticipated to be in higher education. That number is anticipated to rise from about 100,000 this year to about 107,000 next year. I cannot give the hon. Gentleman the specific housing figures that he requests, but the housing programme's gross capital expenditure will rise by £25 million more than was forecast.

Mr. Peter Atkinson (Hexham): May I just—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Hon. Members: The hon. Gentleman was not here for the statement.

Madam Speaker: Order. I have seen the hon. Gentleman rising to his feet for some time.

Mr. Atkinson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Do I understand that the hon. Gentleman was in the Chamber for the statement?

Mr. Atkinson: Yes, Madam Speaker, I was.

I congratulate my right hon. Friend on another bright spot in the statement—the settlement amounting to £440 million for Scotland's farmers, which is 44 per cent. up on the previous settlement. That will be warmly welcomed by Scottish farmers. May I use this opportunity to draw attention to the bargains that can be obtained in my constituency's livestock marts, just across the border, and hope that Scottish farmers will make full use of them?

Mr. Lang: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend for the close interest that he takes in Scottish matters as a result of his membership of the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs. He will be glad to know that funding for the suckler cow premium is expected to rise from £26 million to £37 million in Scotland.

Mr. Michael J. Martin (Glasgow, Springburn): The Secretary of State will know that many visitors to Glasgow are impressed by the rehabilitation of the older tenements as a result of the sandblasting and re-roofing that was done with Government and local authority grants. Can he tell me whether the statement means that more money will be available for that type of work? Many young couples and elderly people in the older tenements suffer from rain penetration and dampness in those tenements. They want to remain in them, but they will need assistance if they are to remain in those parts of Glasgow where they have lived for many years.

Mr. Lang: Expenditure on private sector improvement grants will rise by 1·5 per cent. in real terms over 1992-93 plans. Provision for housing expenditure assumes that £63 million will be spent on special needs.

Mr. Andrew Welsh (Angus, East): If training represents hope for the present and growth for the future, why are not the Government, who are giving £1·75 billion in a straight subsidy to London Transport, adequately funding training in Scotland? Does the Secretary of State understand that this package is woefully inadequate, given the reality of unemployment and the infrastructure needs of Scotland? It will neither get Scots off the dole queues nor build up the nation's infrastructure. The right hon. Gentleman has simply let Scotland down once again.

Mr. Lang: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman should reflect on the fact that our expenditure on training is two and a half times as high in real terms as that of the previous Labour Government, whom his party supported in office. Perhaps he will also reflect on the fact that a comparison of the programmes covered by the Scottish Office block with those in England shows that expenditure in Scotland is 30 per cent. higher per head.

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): Last year, the Secretary of State announced an increase in the specific grants to local authorities for police to £243 million, which allowed for an additional 200 police and civilian staff. What is the increase this year, and how many additional police and civilian staff will it allow for in the face of the crime wave that is sweeping the country—which seems to have escaped his notice?

Mr. Lang: We have increased law and order provision by 11·6 per cent., which will provide for police, prisons, legal aid and other aspects. The details of the specific grants have yet to be decided, but I reassure the hon. Gentleman that we have approved an increase in police manpower in the current year and that we shall not give up on crime.

Mr. Norman Hogg (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth): As the Secretary of State has collective responsibility for economic policy with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, will he say how he will tackle the horrendous problems of unemployment in Scotland, particularly among young people in the new towns? What changes does today's statement make to the funding of the five Scottish new towns, with particular reference to inward investment and the mechanisms that the Government use for that purpose?

Mr. Lang: The resources for Locate in Scotland, which encourages inward investment and is run jointly by the Scottish Office Industry Department and Scottish Enterprise, will be decided by Scottish Enterprise from the extra resources—up by £27 million, a real increase of 11 per cent.—that we have given for its enterprise and environment budgets. The hon. Gentleman will be pleased to know that we have budgeted for a real terms increase of 10 per cent. in expenditure on the infrastructure of new towns.

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): Does the Secretary of State believe that the money that he intends to spend on housing will do anything to help to solve the problems of employment in the construction industry or of dampness in housing throughout Scotland and of homelessness? If he does, will he ensure that a fair proportion of the money goes to Glasgow district council so that it can improve housing in south-west Castlemilk and lift the threat of demolition from tenants in the Hangingshaw area of my constituency?

Mr. Lang: Yes, I believe that, and I shall bear in mind the hon. Gentleman's representations.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): When funds are apportioned to the local enterprise companies, will the Secretary of State ensure that sufficient funds are given to Renfrewshire Enterprise so that its officials can deal with the massive problems generated by continuing high unemployment in Inverclyde, particularly in Greenock and Port Glasgow? Many of those unemployed people are highly skilled adults and youngsters; they have been denied employment. They deserve a better chance in life from a so-called United Kingdom Government.

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman will know of the attention that we have given his constituency and its problems, not least in establishing an enterprise zone in the area. The budget of the local enterprise company is a matter for Scottish Enterprise, and I am sure that it will note his representations.

Mr. Ian Davidson (Glasgow, Govan): What hope is there in the Secretary of State's announcement for the people in my constituency who are experiencing difficulties? Can the right hon. Gentleman tell me what hope was offered in his statement to young people without work, to people in damp, badly repaired houses, and especially to the elderly, who live in constant fear of crime?

Does not he agree that his statement contained far too little to meet the real difficulties faced by people in my area?

Mr. Lang: The hope that those people can derive from my statement comes from the fact that we have made resources available for housing, for the Scottish Enterprise initiative, for education, health and roads, for the environment and for a whole range of other things. As a result of my statement, spending in Scotland will be about £1 billion higher in 1993 than it was in 1992.

Mr. Adam Ingram (East Kilbride): Will the Secretary of State tell the House what sum has been allocated for the new towns' transfer of housing stock, with reference to the capital consents that will have to be applied to the transfer to local authorities?

Mr. Lang: That matter has not yet been decided.

Mr. Thomas Graham (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): Not long ago the Secretary of State said at the Dispatch Box that we needed £5 billion to improve water and sewerage systems in Scotland. Yet today's announcement makes it look as though we shall continue to need £5 billion to fix the environment in our country. Why has the right hon. Gentleman not fought to ensure that the people of Scotland have proper water to drink which complies with EC standards? Why has he not introduced measures to improve our sewerage systems?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman cannot have listened to my statement. I said that we were finding £728 million for water and sewerage over the survey period, including an increase of £16 million for the year ahead compared with the current year.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): As the Secretary of State has announced some increase for Scottish Homes but the planned outturn for housing this year is 11 per cent. above the projected provision for next year, by how much is the right hon. Gentleman cutting local authority spending on housing?

Mr. Lang: As I said in my statement, local authority expenditure on housing is being maintained on a per house basis. The hon. Gentleman is wrong to compare outturn with plan. The proper comparison is plan with plan.

Mr. Eric Clarke (Midlothian): Does the Secretary of State realise that he is being accused of, and is guilty of, the sin of omission? He has omitted from the statement many things that we would have liked to hear, one of which was community care. How much money is being allocated to community care—or is it now called care in the community, or hidden within some other nondescript phrase?

Mr. Lang: It was announced some time ago that the care in the community budget will be £41 million, £5 million more than was being spent in Scotland by other departments, plus a top-up of £20 million from the Scottish Office block, making £61 million. In 1994-95 we are planning for £106 million, and in 1995-96 for £158 million.

Mr. Michael Connarty (Falkirk, East): Does the Secretary of State really believe that he will get away with the sleight of hand on the housing budget? We have the absurd situation of the Secretary of State giving money to local authorities theoretically to deal with homelessness, which means that between now and next March they will be scrabbling around for short-term solutions and buying short-term properties, while the statement announces a cut in real terms in the housing budget. Will the right hon. Gentleman admit to the people of Scotland that he has no long-term way of dealing with homelessness, because he will not give the local authorities the finance that they require to deal with homelessness by providing more homes?

Mr. Lang: I have already told the House that the homelessness budget was increased by £7·5 million within the current year, on top of existing resources. As I have also said, the Scottish Homes budget will increase by an extra £31 million next year, a 7 per cent. increase over and above the rise in the cost of living.

Mr. Malcolm Chisholm (Edinburgh, Leith): Given that the outturn figure for health expenditure this year is £3·64 billion and that the figure announced for next year is £3·75 billion, is it not true to say that the increase in cash terms is barely 3 per cent.? Surely the Secretary of State realises that that is an inadequate figure which does not even cover general inflation, and totally ignores the facts that medical inflation runs at 2 per cent. higher than general inflation, and that 1 per cent. extra is needed just to cover developments in medical technology and the needs of an increasing elderly population.

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman should have heard the figures that I gave earlier. We are increasing health expenditure, plan on plan on the direct comparison, by 1·4 per cent. We do not know what the final outturn will be in the current year, which we are only halfway through, but on present estimates there will still be an increase in real terms, over and above the rise in inflation, of 0·6 per cent.

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): May I impress on the Secretary of State the desperate need for continued investment in Lanarkshire, especially in the Motherwell district? Although I and others welcome the increase in capital allocations for 1991-92, does the Secretary of State recall that those allocations were made before the closure of Ravenscraig? Will he examine with sympathy the case that has been presented for the five-year development plan by Motherwell district council? In that context, can he make a statement about progress on the upgrading of the A8 to motorway status? He will recall that, for very good reasons, the upgrading was postponed earlier this year. He promised that he would make a statement before Christmas.

Mr. Lang: We hope that the A8 may feature in the roads programme. The hon. Gentleman will be pleased by the upgrading of the A74, which should be close to being two thirds completed by the end of the next financial year. That will be of major importance to not just Lanarkshire but the whole of Scotland.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Will the Secretary of State and his sycophantic acolytes come away from the Westminster world into the real world? If he does, he will see that the Ayr sewerage scheme is delayed because of his cuts, that the bypasses in my constituency are further delayed because of his cuts, and that Scottish Homes cannot put money into Dailly and Drongan because of his cuts. Does he realise that,

[Mr. George Foulkes]

unless he gives an assurance that all those projects will go ahead in the coming year, his pretence to act as Santa Claus will wear thin?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman could not have been listening to a word I said. Over the next three years we will spend £728 million on water and sewerage. If the hon. Gentleman had listened to all the other increases in real terms that I announced across the range of programmes, he would have recognised that the extra £1 billion expenditure in Scotland for 1993-94 offers a real opportunity for progress.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths (Edinburgh, South): Does the Secretary of State recognise the despair that the statement will cause in hospital wards throughout Scotland? In those wards nurses are so stretched that they are unable to take tea breaks, recovery is inadequate and patient health is at risk. Why will the Secretary of State not act on those matters?

Mr. Lang: The action that I will take is to say to the hon. Gentleman that this Government, with their 47 per cent. real-terms increase in health expenditure, have recruited hundreds more doctors and thousands more nurses than were employed by the Labour Government. The contrast between our achievements and the Labour Government's record of cutting nurses' wages and capital expenditure on the health service is dramatic.

Mr. Sam Galbraith (Strathkelvin and Bearsden): The Secretary of State said that £728 million will be available for sewerage over the next three years. How much of that money will be given to the Kelvin drainage scheme? Unless that scheme in my constituency is started immediately, we will not be able to fulfil the EC regulations.

Mr. Lang: I note the hon. Gentleman's representation. The matter will be borne in mind when it comes to apportioning resources.

Mr. Jimmy Hood (Clydesdale): Does the Secretary of State accept that not one penny extra in real terms will be spent on housing, employment and health care? Unemployment will still increase in Clydesdale; the homeless will receive a poorer service from local agencies; and hospital lists will continue to grow. Is that not the effect of the statement? Frankly, it is a disgrace.

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman is wrong on all three fronts. The budget for the enterprise and environment functions of Scottish Enterprise will increase by 11 per cent. in real terms; the budget for Scottish Homes will increase by 7 per cent. in real terms; and the overall health budget of £3·75 billion will increase by 1·4 per cent. in real terms.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): In the context of the budget for roads and transport, when will the Secretary of State be able to advise regional authorities of their allocation? That is especially important to those of us in the north-east and in the highlands of Scotland where communications are vital, especially against the background of the single market. Will there, for example, be additional funding to ensure the Fochabers bypass on the A96? Will the west highland railway line continue? Will the Secretary of State go out fighting to ensure that Objective 1 is secured for the highlands and islands as that would have major implications for the infrastructure?

Mr. Lang: I am glad to be able to assure the hon. Lady that we are proud of our record of increasing trunk roads expenditure by 75 per cent. over the past five years, which is a 35 per cent. real terms increase. I hope that the A96 will be able to feature in our substantial roads programme over the next few years. I am glad to be able to assure the hon. Lady that the ferry schemes for the highlands and islands should be able to be maintained at the planned level of expenditure.

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South) *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. I did not see the hon. Gentleman in the Chamber during the statement. Do I understand that he was in the Chamber?

Mr. Porter: I was, Madam Speaker. I do not think that you were looking. I was here throughout the statement.

Madam Speaker: I accept what the hon. Gentleman says as he is an honourable gentleman.

Mr. Porter: I am very much obliged to you, Madam Speaker. I came here under the naive impression that I was a Member of the United Kingdom Parliament——

Madam Speaker: Order. All hon. Members have a right to ask questions. I insist that, before they do so, they should have been in the Chamber and have had the courtesy to hear the statement. That applies in all cases.

Mr. Porter: I would not disagree with that statement, as you know, Madam Speaker.

Does the Secretary of State agree that, whatever he offers by way of public expenditure in Scotland, it is never enough and will never be enough for the Opposition? Does he also agree that the north-west of England deserves something similar? The north-west has twice the population of Scotland—and, on the evidence available, twice the intelligence.

Mr. Lang: I suspect that my hon. Friend is right in pointing out that, whatever we announced, it would not be enough for Opposition Members. This is a substantial increase in resources. We have directed it towards programmes that will bring maximum benefit to Scotland's economic prosperity.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): In all the agonies with the Public Expenditure Survey Committee round and the tight financial position that he faces, has it ever occurred to the Secretary of State that he could make a considerable saving? What is to be the cost of all the proposed local government reform? Would not it be better to say to Eastwood district council, which is the tail that is wagging this dog, "Forget it."? The rest of us cannot face the added financial burden and all the problems that my hon. Friends have described of yet another change in local government reform. It is all about the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart). He should be told that he is wrong.

Mr. Lang: Far from adding to the cost of local government, the evidence suggests that the reform of local government to a single-tier structure will generate substantial savings which could be as high as £200 million a year. However, I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will

be pleased to know that we have managed to increase the arts budget next year, in spite of the costs that we bear in various areas, which will enable the new museum of Scotland to go ahead. We have also been able to authorise the extension to the herbarium and library at the Royal Botanic gardens.

Mr. McLeish: The discussion has been interesting and has shown a number of things. Will the Secretary of State now concede that there will be massive cuts in the training budget of Scottish Enterprise? Will he acknowledge that his statement means cuts in the road programme, cuts in industry, cuts in housing and cuts in other environmental services? Will he accept that, despite his trying to create today an illusion of progress, he has failed? Will he now accept that there is a real programme of work to be addressed which simply is not included in the statement?

Mr. Lang: I said that figures were not the hon. Member's strong point. They are palpably his weak point. The roads programme, far from being cut, has been increased by 2 per cent. in real terms. The industry budget is broadly where it was with the enterprise and environment components increased by 11 per cent. in real terms. The Scottish Homes budget is being increased by 7 per cent. in real terms. On the question of other environmental services, he might like to know that Scottish Natural Heritage and Historic Scotland budgets are both being increased by 5 per cent. in real terms.

This is a programme which is carefully targeted to generate the maximum advantage and improvement of public services in Scotland and the delivery of economic growth and the creation of new jobs in Scotland. I am confident that it will deliver its objectives.

Cammell Laird

4.31 pm

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

the proposed closure of Cammell Laird.

It is specific because only hours ago men and women who work there were told that their ranks would be attacked by wave upon wave of unemployment until July next year when the yard will close.

It is urgent because Cammell Laird is the foothold to the future, not just for my constituents in Birkenhead, not just for those who live in Merseyside, but in the north-west region generally. Without that centre of skill that foothold to the future will be denied to us.

It is important to remind the House that already in my constituency and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Wallasey (Ms. Eagle) some areas already have an unemployment rate of 40 per cent. If this proposed closure goes through those rates will be compounded and it is an important matter because Cammell Laird is to British industry what a barium meal is to X-ray. It can highlight those aspects of national life which are life-threatening.

Today we are not only fighting for our jobs, but we fight to prevent another hammer blow against British industry. I seek the Adjournment of the House so that I and the friends of Cammell Laird in the House may begin the debate today and make a plea that the assets of this shipyard, which were bought from us taxpayers for a single pound, be returned and, secondly, that some of the very substantial profits that Vickers Shipbuilding and Engineering Ltd has made in the past five years should be given as an endowment fund for a new company at Lairds.

We want in that debate to set out how we wish to attract the entrepreneurial skills so that there is a future rather than an end for Cammell Laird. We should like the opportunity in that debate to invite the Government to say how they would support us in that endeavour.

I do not need to remind you, Madam Speaker, representing the constituency that you do, what it is like for workers to be part of an industry and a firm that is dying around them. Today Cammell Laird has been told that it should quietly die in July. We have no intention of accepting that option. We seek your leave to move the Adjournment so that we can debate what that future will be. We believe it is right that that debate should take place and our plan for action given.

Madam Speaker: I have listened most carefully to what the hon. Member said and of course I have to give my decision without stating any reasons. I am afraid that I do not think that the matter he has raised is appropriate for discussion under Standing Order 20 and I cannot therefore submit his application to the House.

Points of Order

4.34 pm

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson (Aberdeen, South): On a point of order, Madam Speaker, as a new and inexperienced Member I seek your guidance and a ruling. Is it not a contempt of this House for the leader of one of Scotland's principal parties, the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond), to absent himself from one of Scotland's biggest statements of the year—the Secretary of State's annual expenditure statement?

Madam Speaker: Frankly, I did not hear what the hon. Gentleman said. *[Interruption.]* Order. I think he was being facetious and wasting the time of the House.

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): On a point of order, Madam Speaker, while I appreciate the decision you have just given to my hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) in respect of Cammell Laird, would it be possible to use your good offices to ask the President of the Board of Trade, who once posed as a friend of Merseyside, to come to the House at 7 o'clock this evening to make a statement and answer questions which are vital for our constituents on Merseyside and elsewhere?

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman knows full well that the Speaker has no authority to request or influence in requesting a Minister to come to the Dispatch Box. The situation is the other way round: a Minister informs the Speaker when a statement is to be made.

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I risk mildly irritating you for a second time today. Further to the Standing Order No. 20 application made by my hon. Friend—and I use that term advisedly—the Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) in relation to Cammell Laird, I accept your decision and I realise that you do not have to give a reason for that decision. However, might I ask as strongly as I can that, perhaps when you are taking a cup of tea, you might reconsider that decision in the light of the plea made eloquently, sensibly and with plenty of evidence by my hon. Friend?

Madam Speaker: I tell the hon. Gentleman and the House that I am not easily irritated. If I have a chance to have a cup of tea today, I will, as ever, take the Standing Order No. 20 application very seriously. I realise the seriousness of the situation.

Mr. Bryan Davies (Oldham, Central and Royton): Madam Speaker, my point of order is genuine and helpful to the Chair. You will recall the somewhat protracted exchanges that took place last week in respect of the proper use of Government and private money in the Chancellor's case to evict his tenant. Those protracted exchanges would have been brought to a much speedier conclusion which would have been helpful to our business if it had become clear early on that the Comptroller and Auditor General intended to examine the matter.

Has a Minister indicated to you that the Comptroller and Auditor General will also consider the use of important Government buildings for private purposes? In that regard, I refer to the use this morning of No. 11 Downing street for fund raising activities for the Conservative party. Once again, that seemed to cross the line between public and private use. I have no doubt that exchanges on the matter in the House would be curtailed if we could be assured that the Comptroller and Auditor General will look into that matter to ensure that public moneys have been properly expended.

Madam Speaker: The use of official Government accommodation is a matter for hon. Members, who should pursue the matter with Ministers. It does not raise points of order for the Chair.

Ms. Angela Eagle (Wallasey): Further to the application under Standing Order No. 20 by my hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field), while I appreciate and respect your decision, Madam Speaker, would it be in order for me to ask you to look favourably on an application for an Adjournment debate on that extremely important issue given that the Speaker can choose one subject for an Adjournment debate a week?

Madam Speaker: I do not want to put myself in the position of encouraging hon. Members to make such applications to me across the Floor of the House because, if I did, I would have a rash of them. The hon. Lady had better leave it with me.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): I am not sure, Madam Speaker, whether my point of order is genuine. No doubt you will put me right if it is not. I am a positive European which is why I have problems with the Maastricht treaty. Imagine my excitement when I discovered that there was a parliamentary group known as the positive Europeans. Knowing your interest in parliamentary groups, Madam Speaker, I went to the Library to find out about it. I was very excited because I was told that there were 75 members. When I went to the Library, I discovered that there were only five officers and one member. I am deeply concerned about that. Is it right and proper that people should say that there is a parliamentary group with 75 members when there are only five officers and the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett)? Is there something that you can do to clarify the matter because it seems that the House is being misled?

Mr. Ray Whitney (Wycombe) *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Is it further to that point of order?

Mr. Whitney: Yes, Madam Speaker. I am sorry that my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) is deficient in knowledge, but I will certainly ensure that a copy of the list of 79 members of the Positive European group is placed in the Library. It was already available to the Press Association. I am sorry that my hon. Friend and his collegues are so ill-informed on that matter.

Madam Speaker: That is the most helpful point of order that I have had for some time.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(3) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

FIREARMS (NORTHERN IRELAND)

That the draft Firearms (Northern Ireland) Order 1981 (Amendment) Regulations 1992 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Boswell.]*

Question agreed to.

Commercial Debt Settlement

4.39 pm

Mr. Michael Bates (Langbaurgh): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to provide that commercial debts shall carry interest after a specified period; to require publication in annual reports of details relating to the settlement of debts; and for connected purposes.

I am grateful for the opportunity to seek leave to bring before the House statutory measures to protect small businesses from the late payment of bills. In presenting the Bill I would like the House to be aware of the key facts that have convinced me of the need for legislation of this nature.

It is estimated that small businesses, that is, those employing fewer than 20 people, which constitute some 97 per cent. of all businesses, are presently owed some £145 billion in unpaid bills. On average, it takes 81 days from the date of invoice for the average business debt in the United Kingdom to be settled. Since we are in the middle of considering matters European, I should point out that only we and Ireland do not have legislation to protect small businesses from the late payment of bills. The United Kingdom's record of an average 51-day settlement following the normal 30-day payment period compares with 28 days in France and 18 days in Germany, Norway and Sweden. This places British business at a clear disadvantage to their main international competitors. According to a CBI/Cork Gully report in January 1991, nearly one in five small firms were on the verge of going out of business because of late payment of debts.

In a recent debate on the Adjournment of the House, I addressed the problem of banks failing to pass on interest rate reductions to their small business customers. I acknowledge, however, that business overdrafts are only a symptom. The Bill that I seek leave to present to the House today tries to address the cause which, more often than not, is the late payment of accounts for goods and services. The Midland bank conducted a survey of its small business accounts and found that, on average, businesses were owed three times as much by their customers as they themselves owed to the bank.

The House will be aware that I am not the first to attempt to present a solution to this growing problem. My hon. Friends the Members for Newark (Mr. Alexander), for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates) and for Croydon, South (Mr. Ottaway) have all brought these important issues before the House, and I am sufficient of a realist to acknowledge that I may not be the last. As far back as 1978 the Law Commission identified the problem. In 1982 my noble Friend Lord Stanley of Alderley moved an amendment to the Administration of Justice Act 1977, designed to ensure that the Law Commissioners' proposals of 1978 were fully implemented.

It is also true that these proposals have always been opposed by the CBI. I do not begrudge this because the CBI feels that it is protecting its interests—the interests of large and medium-sized businesses. I would, however, put it to the CBI that its true best interests lie in having a thriving small business sector which will compete for custom on the grounds of quality and service rather than on the ability to keep their heads above water the longest.

Many people have made suggestions which fall short of what I propose this afternoon. For example, why not allow VAT on purchases to be claimed when businesses have settled the accounts or invoices in question? This suggestion contains a lot of common sense. However, with a VAT threshold of £35,000 it would not help the many small businesses which are not registered for VAT.

Some suggest voluntary codes of practice, and I acknowledge the role of documents such as the Government's leaflet "Prompt Payment Please" and the CBI's "Prompt Payers —A Code of Practice". From the fact that in 1986 privately owned business was owed £57 billion whereas in 1990 the figure had risen to £145 billion, an increase in real terms of almost 100 per cent., it is clear that this is not working. According to a survey by Dun and Bradstreet, only 5 per cent. of businesses are aware of these codes of practice.

Some say that it is up to the business itself to negotiate terms and conditions and to take businesses to court for late payment, but when a small business is desperate for work, as most are, and is offered settlement terms of 90 days only, what chance has it of levering a 30-day settlement period? It would only result in the contract going elsewhere. Moreover, what chance would the same small business stand of gaining repeat orders if it took the company to court? What chance has a small business man of taking on a multinational with its legions of commercial lawyers? None. That is why this Bill is so desperately needed by small businesses.

My Bill has four main provisions. It would establish a 30-day settlement period for contractual debts which would bring us into line with our main international competitors and ensure fair competition among suppliers on the basis of quality, service and price alone.

It would provide the right for statutory interest to be levied from the expiry of the 30-day settlement period. This would remove the financial incentive which currently exists for businesses to delay payment of bills.

It would establish a statutory rate of interest to be levied in accordance with judgment rates as laid down and amended from time to time by the Lord Chancellor. This would be fair, because the interest received on late settlement would be equivalent to that which would have been received had the matter been taken before the courts, and yet it would seek to avoid time-consuming and expensive litigation.

It would seek, through an amendment to the Companies Act 1989, to require all public limited companies to publish their settlement periods of accounts and invoices in their annual reports. This would open up the issue of prompt settlement to the scrutiny of shareholders and the public, and it would enable appropriate comparisons to be drawn.

I am grateful for the opportunity to present this Bill to the House. I believe that it is widely supported, inside and outside the House, as it is vitally needed by the businesses that it seeks to serve and whose interests it seeks to protect. I commend it to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Michael Bates, Mr. John Watts, Mr. John Sykes, Mr. Michael Alison, Mrs. Elizabeth Peacock, Mr. Peter Butler, Mr. Jonathan Evans, Mr. Raymond Robertson, Mrs. Angela Knight, Mr. Richard Spring, Mr. David Faber and Mr. Gary Streeter.

Commercial Debt Settlement

Mr. Michael Bates accordingly presented a Bill to provide that commercial debts shall carry interest after a specified period; to require publication in annual reports of details relating to the settlement of debts; and for conected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 11 December and to be printed. [Bill. 93.]

Orders of the Day

European Communities (Amendment) Bill

Considered in Committee [Progress, 1 December].

[MR. MICHAEL MORRIS *IN THE CHAIR*]

4.48 pm

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. You have been exceptionally helpful in trying to enable us to conduct this debate in a reasonable and sensible fashion. Can you help in any way to overcome a problem which may become serious for all of us? As I understand it, you are quite circumscribed in the degree to which you can regulate the length of hon. Members' speeches. I understand that you can stop them for speaking away from the point—for example, talking about the north pole when they are supposed to be talking about Strasbourg. You can check hon. Members for being tedious and repetitious. However, for anybody who knows anything about the European Community, it is perfectly possible to speak about the European Community for days without being repetitious—absolutely for days without being repetitious. The only limitation is the state of the larynx and whether there is some water available.

On the actual management of the debate, I compliment you, Mr. Morris, on dividing it into subjects so that we can have a rational discussion, or a succession of rational debates. I am sure that the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) will not object if I relate that, as we came into the House by accident —pas hasard, if I may use that expression—together this morning, he remarked that, if one was called upon to speak about industrial, consumer, commercial, agricultural, and market issues, one could go on for a very long time and that, if one was not able to do that, one would be quite a duffer. We have a real problem. What do we do?

There are three ways of dealing with the problem. First, Mr. Morris, you could have a timetable motion. You might say that that has nothing directly to do with you and that it is a matter for the Government at some stage to decide—they may at some stage so decide, although we have a problem with majorities. There are Members of Parliament such as the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) who would consider such a motion out of order, that it would not be appropriate because we are dealing with a constitutional issue and would raise that matter with you. That is a problem.

The second way of dealing with the problem is for a closure motion to be moved by the Government or by hon. Members. There is talk that there might be a closure motion some time this evening—talk in the couloir. Let us suppose that the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) continues remorselessly, inluctably, unrepetitiously——

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): And boringly.

Sir Russell Johnston: "Boringly" is a word I did not use. Conservative Members might use it.

The proposal is brought to you, Mr. Morris, because you decide whether closures are appropriate. That would be very difficult for you, because only four hon. Members would have spoken, and no Labour Back-Bench Member would have spoken. That would be exceedingly difficult for you, despite the length of time for which the hon. Member for Stafford had spoken unrepetitiously, as I have said. That is a difficult matter.

Thirdly, you could have a time limitation by agreement, Mr. Morris. That is done, as we all know, by the 10-minute limit on speeches, but it has not, as far as I know, ever been used in Committee. It might even be precluded in Committee; I do not know about that. It might be considered for a Committee; I do not know about that. For example, hon. Members say, "Yesterday, I spoke, according to the record"——

The Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. The hon. Gentleman brings 28 years' experience to the House. Hon. Members, not least those who have had fewer than 10 years in the House, will have listened to the hon. Gentleman. He is right to say that tedious repetition is out of order, as indeed is irrelevance. Water is not supplied to keep hon. Members going, and I am afraid that there is no 10-minute limit.

However, we are making progress. Almost every hon. Member who has tabled an amendment in the first group has spoken. The hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) has covered all his matters. I imagine that he will just about be winding up and that we can make progress and look forward to contributions from Back-Bench Members.

Sir Russell Johnston: Further to that point of order, Mr. Morris. I have raised, as far as I can remember, only three points of order in all my time in the House of Commons. *[Interruption.]* It is all very well hon. Members saying, "Hopefully." It is perfectly proper for you to hope that the hon. Member for Stafford will resume his seat in a short time. Unfortunately, it is true that, whatever his unique qualities, the hon. Gentleman is not the only hon. Member with loquacity, and others could imitate his capacity for speaking for two hours.

Therefore, will you speak to the Procedure Committee to see whether there is any way in which one could deal with that? You can check hon. Members for repetition. There is a stage at which one could speak at length without repetition, but one would be going beyond a cogent argument. Perhaps you might look into that.

Another point that you might consider, Mr. Morris, is whether you could talk to the parties or to the groups about a rational approach. Last night, I had a nightmare——

The Chairman: Order. I thought that, with the House rising at 10.30 pm, the hon. Gentleman would have had an early night. Sadly, there is no Procedure Committee at the moment, so I cannot report anything to it. The hon. Member for Stafford tabled no fewer than six amendments. He took rather longer than normal, but he has obviously now covered them. I travel in hope—one has to travel in hope in this job.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West) rose——

The Chairman: Is it a totally new point of order?

Mr. Budgen: It is a new point of order, Mr. Morris.

The Chairman: It had better be a new point of order.

Mr. Budgen: I wonder whether you could give the Government an early opportunity to make a statement on the decision of the Bundestag, which, if I may say so, is of great importance——

The Chairman: Order. The hon. Gentleman has been a Member of Parliament long enough to know that I have absolutely no power to encourage the Government to make a statement about anything. Twice yesterday the hon. Gentleman raised bogus points of order. This is now the third bogus one. I am here to serve the House, but I want genuine points of order.

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. It is my understanding, and perhaps it is yours also, that the treaty has to be ratified by all countries according to their constitutions. Does that mean according to the constitutions pertaining at the day that the agreement was reached, or does it take into account the various amendments and variations now affecting certain other constitutions, which are beginning to look suspiciously like opt-outs? I wonder——

The Chairman: Order. That has nothing to do with me.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. You are, of course, a servant of the House, as we all are, and not of the Government. I was a member of the Procedure Committee. Will you confirm that there is no question of a time limit being fixed by the Chair? Is it not usual, certainly in respect of controversial matters and not only in the House of Commons but in Committee—and nothing could possibly be more controversial than the Bill—that hon. Members debate and explore the Bill?

It is foolish and wrong to say that that is filibustering. No doubt you will confirm that the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) was never out of order yesterday. He was exploring the details in the amendments. He was explaining his objections and putting forward proposals. He was very much in line with the amendments.

Would it not be wrong if the feeling grew that, because the Government wish the Bill to progress as quickly as possible, hon. Members should be under any pressure whatsoever to say that we will not consider the detail of a Bill which we believe to be of the utmost constitutional significance?

The Chairman: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, but there are more than 650 Members of Parliament. I am not sure whether I could call every hon. Member on each amendment.

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. As it is freely admitted that the Government have presented to us a Bill on which we find difficulty in dealing with matters relative to the ratification of the treaty, surely, in your defence of every hon. Member as Chairman, you should permit hon. Members who are within order to speak, especially as the Government have tried to curtail the debate as best they can by the way in which they have drafted the Bill.

The Chairman: The hon. Gentleman will have to wait to see how we progress. For the moment, we will start again on amendment No. 93.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): On a point of order, Mr. Morris.

The Chairman: Is it a new point of order?

Mr. Marlow: It is a new point of order, Mr. Morris. I am grateful to you, as usual. You have just said that it would be impossible for every one of 650 Members to participate in every debate on every issue. That is obviously so. But you realise, Mr. Morris, as do other hon. Members, that this legislation may change fundamentally and put at risk the very powers of the House. Many hon. Members feel deeply about it.

Obviously not every hon. Member will want to speak on every issue or every amendment, but you will be aware of the depth of feeling among hon. Members. You will also be aware that there is no desperate, tearing hurry to get the Bill on the statute book. Not even the Government want it until May 1994.

The Chairman: I think that the hon. Gentleman made that speech yesterday. I agree that it is a different day, but perhaps in future the hon. Gentleman could make different speeches on different days.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): On a point of order, Mr. Morris.

The Chairman: Is it a new one?

Mr. Benn: It is about the way in which a referendum might get on to the agenda.

The Chairman: We had points of order about a referendum yesterday.

Mr. Benn: It is a serious point. I spent most of the night considering how this might be done. One way in which it could be done would be to have a preamble to the Bill, declaratory in character, which said that, in view of the importance of the Bill, everybody should have an opportunity to express an opinion.

There is no preamble to the Bill. Preambles are in order. The preamble which I have in mind would not affect the weight of the Bill but would simply declare that it was a matter on which the public would have a right to express an opinion. I wondered, Mr. Morris, whether you would be ready to consider amendments to the preamble so that the issue of public consent may somehow be introduced into our debates. That is the point that I wanted to make.

The Chairman: The right hon. Gentleman will understand that I cannot read his mind. I should be grateful if he would put the amendment in writing. If something is in writing, I can consider it.

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): On a point of order, Mr. Morris.

The Chairman: I hope it is a new one.

Mr. Taylor: It is, Mr. Morris. Clearly it would be impossible for you to read anyone's mind, including that of the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), on the point of a referendum. The decision must be for you when he presents the amendment in writing.

Would you note that there have been many rulings in the House that a referendum attached to a Bill such as this would not be part of the legislative proceedings, and, indeed, could cause constitutional problems? The purpose of the House is to go through a Bill such as this in

[Mr. Taylor]

Committee. That is why we are a parliamentary democracy. Many of us feel that a referendum is not appropriate in those circumstances.

The Chairman: The hon. Gentleman made that point yesterday. There is little point in hon. Members making the same points of order, day in, day out.

5 pm

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. You kindly said yesterday, on a very important point, that it would be possible at any time for the Government to move a money resolution. As this is relevant to possible amendments and would help the Committee, can you say whether that would be in the nature of an amendment, or can you tell us how a money resolution would be placed in the Bill?

The Chairman: It would be for the Government to decide the right way to do it. There are various methods which they could use. I suggest that the hon. Gentleman talks to the Minister if he wishes to progress that. It is not a matter for the Chair.

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. Can you give me guidance on whether there can be included in this section of the debate, since the Bundestag requires a two thirds majority——

The Chairman: Order. That is hypothetical. I have not called the hon. Lady yet. I call Mr. Cash on amendment No. 93, to which he has already spoken.

Clause 1

Treaty on European Union

Amendment proposed [1 December], No. 93, in page 1, line 9, after 'Titles', insert 'I'.—*[Sir Russell Johnston.]*

Question again proposed, That the amendment be made.

The Chairman: I remind the Committee that with this we are taking the following amendments: No. 108, in page 1, line 9, after 'Titles', insert

'I (except Article F on page 8 cm. 934)'.

No. 313, in page 1, line 9, after 'Titles', insert 'I (except Article E)'.

No. 344, in page 1, line 9, after 'Titles', insert 'I (except Article A)'.

No. 345, in page 1, line 9, after 'Titles', insert 'I (except Article B)'.

No. 346, in page 1, line 9, after 'Titles', insert 'I (except Article C)'.

No. 347, in page 1, line 9, after 'Titles', insert 'I (except Article D)'.

No. 348, in page 1, line 9, after 'Titles', insert 'I (except Article F)'.

Rev. Ian Paisley: On a further point of order, Mr. Morris. On the point made to you by the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) about a preamble, are you suggesting to the Committee that, although we are on clause 1, you could take a proposition for a preamble to the Bill?

The Chairman: I am not suggesting anything. When I have something in writing, I can have a look at it; until it is in writing, I cannot.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Last night, just before the Committee reported progress, I said that I was about to turn to article F3, which I had raised on a point of order earlier, but which I had not dealt with in my speech.

I am deeply concerned about the provisions of article F3, which incidentally are also covered by an amendment which has been tabled by the Leader of the Opposition. I think that due weight needs to be given to that.

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton) *rose*——

Mr. Cash: I will give way, because I am always willing to play some kind of game with the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Robertson: I assure the hon. Gentleman that I am not playing games, nor will I ask him a question which would prolong his speech. I simply repeat the point that I made yesterday. Amendment No. 108 in the names of my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the Opposition, other hon. Friends and myself is purely a probing amendment. At the appropriate time, we will seek the leave of the Committee to withdraw it. The hon. Gentleman should not read anything more into it than the fact that it is a probing amendment.

Mr. Cash: That is typical of the cowardly way in which the hon. Gentleman treats these matters. This is an important provision in title I. I will read it out:

"The Union shall provide itself with the means necessary"——

The Chairman: Order. The hon. Gentleman is getting into the well-known habit of reading from the Bill or a text. Hon. Members have read the treaty. All he needs to do is refer to the point and make his comment. He does not have to keep quoting from the treaty.

Mr. Cash: Indeed, Mr. Morris. As I have said, the union shall provide itself with the means necessary to carry out its objectives and to be able to carry out its policies. That is what article F3 says. If I happen to remember it, Mr. Morris, I hope that you will forgive me for repeating the point that I have already made.

When the article refers to "the means necessary", we are dealing with questions which go to the very heart of these matters. Will the money be made available to achieve the objectives of the treaty and carry out its policies? Will it require disciplinary action? For example, we know of a proposal that the European Court of Justice should be able to fine countries which do not comply with the requirements of parts of the treaty. Disciplinary action may not be just a question of a fine.

If the title includes such a vague provision, which is introduced under prerogative powers but is at the same time an international legal obligation, who is to say that it will not include in certain circumstances the use of force? What about the power to tax? In order to carry out a policy in line with an objective, and in order to be able to comply with that objective, money will be required. That raises another question which I raised earlier on a point of order, which is why and to what extent we are not being provided with a money resolution to cover these provisions. That is a very important point.

Furthermore, a booklet entitled "Europe after Maastricht" has been published by the Foreign and

Commonwealth Office as a memorandum to the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs. I have made allegations that we have not been given the whole picture when, in the absence of a White Paper, there are documents like the notorious pamphlet written in Europe, which gives only half the picture.

"Europe after Maastricht" is not merely a pamphlet but a memorandum to the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs which purports to describe Europe after Maastricht. What does it say? I shall not have to refer to the document, because I can remember that it states that article F provides for the implementation of the European convention on human rights and that European union shall subscribe to ensuring that national identities and democracies shall be sustained.

However, paragraph 10 of that important memorandum to the Foreign Affairs Select Committee does not mention the matter that I have just raised—the fact that the treaty says:

"The Union shall provide itself with the means necessary" to ensure its economic objectives and to carry out its policies.

Some people might say that that is misleading. Why should not the attention of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee be drawn to that important provision? The pamphlet is going to be published for the public—in the absence of any White Paper—so why are such things left out?

The same argument applies to the pamphlet "Britain in Europe", which contains no reference to article F3. I included it in one of my amendments for that reason.

Mr. Terry Dicks (Hayes and Harlington): My hon. Friend is talking about giving information to the public so as not to mislead them. Perhaps he should explain why he voted in favour of Europe in the six votes before the Maastricht vote. He was in favour of passing all those pieces of legislation—including the exchange rate mechanism. I have heard a story that he wants to become a Member of the European Parliament. Perhaps he can clarify that for public consumption, so that we understand the background to his arguments.

Mr. Cash: I have no problem about that—I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his helpful intervention. I voted for the Single European Act because I genuinely believe in the European Community and want it to work properly. People want to participate in the processes of the Community because they want that Act to work properly. That is why I made recommendations to the Chairman of the Select Committee on Trade and Industry last year, to help it to look into the single market.

The Chairman: Order. The hon. Gentleman is being tempted down a route that he should know better than to be tempted down. He should get back to the Bill.

Mr. Cash: I assume that that was a no ball. If I hit it for six, I can make sure that it is notched up on my score.

Mr. Ian Taylor: Does my hon. Friend appreciate that his view is far from unrepresentative of the people of Britain, who previously thought that all those Bills were a good idea and now realise that Maastricht will be the end of liberty and freedom? Does he appreciate that, instead of being attacked by hon. Members shouting from the Back Benches, he should say, "What I'm saying and doing is what the people of Britain are saying—that this treaty is bad for Britain," and that the people want the right to have a say.

Mr. Cash: In opinion poll after opinion poll, 68 per cent. of the British people have said just that.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

The Chairman: Order. No one has taken any vote anywhere yet on amendment No. 93. I ask the hon. Member for Stafford to make progress on his speech. He was making an important point about article F, and I think that the House wishes to hear it, rather than to hear him accepting diversions.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. I heard the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) talking about this, that and the other regarding the amendment. I was listening carefully. Then he was knocked off his subject by the hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks).

Are you saying, Mr. Morris, that, when hon. Members are challenged about whether they are pro-European or pro-Common Market, they are not allowed to answer, because that was what the hon. Gentleman was attempting to do? He gave an answer with which I do not agree, but he should be allowed to answer. If you want to stop the debate, stop him—but remember the people of Northampton.

The Chairman: Order. The people of Northampton remember me very well.

Mr. Skinner: They do not like Maastricht.

The Chairman: Order. I am enjoying it immensely.

I want to make it clear to the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) and all hon. and right hon. Members that the hon. Member for Stafford was straying beyond the intervention. Mr. Cash—back to amendment No. 93 please.

Mr. Cash: If I can deal with article F3——

Rev. Ian Paisley: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that no Member of the House has any right to impute motives to a Member of the European Parliament and say that, because he is an MEP, he cannot be against Maastricht? That is ridiculous.

Mr. Cash: I could not agree more. The issues we are dealing with in the treaty and in the Bill are essential to the future of this country. It is a slur to imply such things of MEPs and I regard it as disgraceful, but I shall get back to article F3 immediately, Mr. Morris.

5.15 pm

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, who has made a comprehensive and distinguished contribution to the debate so far. I hope that I may assist him in ending on a high note.

Has he noticed that the provision of necessary resources in article F makes no mention of money and taxation? Nor is there any provision in the remainder of the treaty for the amendment of the treaty. Does it occur to the hon. Gentleman that many of those resources and powers might well be obtained under article 236 of the treaty of Rome,

[Mr. Nigel Spearing]

and that those institutions might well expand their competence, powers and finances to fulfil the treaty of union—the two being close together?

I hope that the Minister who replies to this debate, after full consideration, will respond to my queries: first, on the amendment; secondly, on resources; thirdly, on relations with the treaty of Rome.

Mr. Cash: I am grateful for that intervention, which speaks for itself, and I agree with the basis upon which it was put.

Article F is an important provision in the treaty. I saw Chancellor Kohl on the television this morning, stipulating the basis on which the Bundestag is proceeding. It does not surprise me that he gave economic and political union as its vision for Europe. That is the basis for the provisions of article F3, which talks of the "means necessary" to achieve those objectives and to carry out those policies. Those policies are part of the union which is referred to in title I—economic and political union.

Furthermore, it does not surprise me to discover that the Bundestag has imposed another restriction on the powers of the German Government. It now insists on at least a two-thirds majority in both Houses of that Parliament to ensure that such provisions do not go through without its consent, and it will have a veto over a single currency. It is seeking to get that put back into the provisions—[HON. MEMBERS: "Illegally."] Yes, it is seeking to do so illegally. That raises essential questions on the money-raising powers of the union.

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): Does my hon. Friend agree that article F3 has the most dire political implications for this country? Is it not a paradox that the article is wholly inconsistent with the lack of a money resolution attached to the Bill? Does my hon. Friend agree that article F3 and the inclusion of a cohesion fund, which is all part of Maastricht, will have political, economic and financial consequences for every family in this country? Can he explain why there is no money resolution?

Mr. Cash: My hon. Friend is bang on the nail, as he always is, in both his public and his private life. No money resolution is attached to the provision because title I is dealt with under prerogative. Because it is not a part of the Bill, there will be no requirement for a money resolution.

Article F3 is representative of my main objections to the Bill, as it represents political and economic defeatism. It is a withdrawal of political responsibility and a denial of parliamentary accountability. For those reasons, I object to the treaty.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): The hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) has made a useful contribution to the debate. He has opened up the subject matter of the treaties in a way that was not done by Front Bench spokesmen. Whatever may be said about the length of speeches, I believe that the hon. Gentleman has helped significantly our understanding of the treaties.

This group of amendments, more than any other that has been selected, enables us to focus on the treaty's nature, character and purpose, which has eluded discussion. We are all capable of talking about the minutiae and major provisions of the treaty, but the totality of the treaty—what it is about and what sort of creature European union is—is at the heart of the debate. Ultimately, that will determine not only how hon. Members feel about and react to the treaty, but how our fellow countrymen outside the House will come to judge the treaty of Maastricht, this treaty of union.

Yesterday, several points were made about the Attorney-General's absence. I should like to reinforce those points because I believe that we are faced, almost immediately, with the character and legal personality of the union that is being created by the treaty. It is not simply a further amendment, although it may partially take that form, of treaties with which we have become familiar, such as the European Community and various amendment Acts to that; it is a new creature—a European union.

I submit that it is the aim of the new European union to become a new state embracing the 12 existing member states of the European Community. I also submit that I am not certain whether the treaty's existing provisions create such a state, but there should be no doubt about the purpose. That leads me to the paramount issue facing us all: whether we are content to see our future as a province of a united states of Europe or as an independent, democratic nation state.

Mr. Winnick: Are not my right hon. Friend's arguments strengthened by article F, which contains the nearest reference to member states' national identities? Article F1 says:

"The Union shall respect national identities of its Member States".

That is all that it says. There is no mention of respecting member states' national sovereignty or institutions. Surely that illustrates only too well what my right hon. Friend has said. The treaty takes the federal road, which will lead to one state whereby national Parliaments, including the House of Commons, will have little more power than county councils.

Mr. Shore: Furthermore, the phrasing of that paragraph—"the Union shall respect"—implies that that new entity, that superior body, will kindly respect nation states' national identities. That shows that a new creature of immense significance is facing our country.

Sir Trevor Skeet (Bedfordshire, North): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Shore: No. I would rather make some progress.

I do not intend to conduct a lecture on the treaties because that would carry my speech far beyond the compass which it is fair to inflict on the House after the admirable speech that we have already heard. I am conscious of the fact that I am only the second Back Bencher to be called and it is important that many more hon. Members are heard in this significant debate. The Committee must have an opportunity thoroughly to decide what kind of treaty we are dealing with and what its implications are.

It is extraordinary that so many hon. Members—I am thinking in particular of the interrogation of the hon. Member for Stafford yesterday—fail to recognise that the Bill's purpose is to set up a European union and create a quasi state in the reasonably near future. We should understand that the House of Commons and the British public generally are totally out of tune with the thinking and discussions taking place on that issue in Europe today. It is only here that the assertion that a new state is being

created is being made, where the character of that state is open to discussion, and people seek to challenge it. Everywhere else in Europe it is taken for granted that we are at least talking about a federal union.

Naturally, I understand why so many people are anxious not to accept that reality. Those include the people who are most enthusiastic about that purpose. The federalists long to conceal their commitment to federalism and the unitarists long to conceal their dedication to a European union. We therefore get the pretence at every stage of the European Community's development that nothing significant is happening and that those great issues are not involved.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones): I am sorry to interrupt the right hon. Gentleman but the "unitarists", as he calls them, throughout Europe have made it perfectly clear that they regard the Maastricht treaty as a significant setback for them. They have said so in public on numerous occasions.

Mr. Shore: That is frankly open to the greatest dispute. The Minister is not the only Member of this House who has had contacts with European leaders in the past two or three years, indeed in the past year. I shall give evidence of the difference of view in a few minutes.

Sir Jim Spicer (Dorset, West): Is it not fair to say that Chancellor Kohl has said that the treaty is an essential step towards a united states of Europe?

Mr. Shore: Yes. That was quoted only yesterday in the speech by the hon. Member for Stafford.

What has eluded so many people in the country and the House has been the sea change in the Community's attitude towards federalism in the past two or three years. Federalism was always in the original treaties but it was a recessive rather than a dominant element. The dominant element was the view put forward, above all, by General de Gaulle about a "Europe des patries". That was the dominant view, but there was a great change and we should recognise it. It was the abandonment, by the French in particular, of a belief in a Europe de patrie following the reunification of Germany.

5.30 pm

One of the consequences of bringing down the Berlin wall and uniting east and west Germany was the abandonment by the French of that belief. They decided that they had to enwrap and enclose a united Germany in the bonds and other restrictions that they hoped a European federal treaty would impose upon an otherwise too powerful Germany. That is the basis of the whole change and if we do not understand that we shall not understand what is really happening.

I shall illustrate the point. In December 1990 on the eve of the opening of the IGC on political union a joint letter and communique was issued by Mitterrand and Kohl. They said:

"We express the wish that the IGC . . . should establish the basis and structures of a strong and mutually supportive Political Union, which pursues firmly, and with the people in mind, the course that corresponds to its Federal Vocation."

The Commission opinion on political union which preceded that letter and communique by a couple of months refers without a blush to the course charted by the treaty of Rome leading eventually to a federal type organisation. Mr. Andreotti, at that time Prime Minister of Italy, addressed the European Parliament on 22 November 1990. Speaking about the single currency, he said:

"For the first time in the history of Europe we shall confer upon the Community one of the distinctive and essential competences on which national sovereignty is historically built."

That is fairly clear evidence of intent, but what about the European Parliament itself? A report of its Institutions Committee dated 21 May 1992 refers, continually of course, to the federal purpose and intent and describes how it sees the evolution to the next stage, perhaps the final stage. Dealing with the Council of Ministers, which after all is the one remaining instrument, as it were, of a non-federal character among the European institutions, the committee states:

"Its development into a second legislative chamber in the sense of a genuine chamber of states and alongside the European Parliament must be accelerated, with the Council of Ministers becoming a standing body of the union, its meetings on legislative matters—being held in public"—

I agree with that,

"and taking majority decisions with equal co-decision with the European Parliament, the qualified majority being redefined using new criteria . . ."

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): The right hon. Gentleman must remember as well as any hon. Member the immeasurable damage that was wrought in Europe by independent, competing foreign and defence and other policies. The whole of the past 50 years has been devoted to trying to find ways to achieve a different form of order in Europe that will avoid such damage. In view of his anxieties about the debate on the form of those structures, what are his alternative proposals for preventing Europe from again tearing itself to pieces?

Mr. Shore: Oh, really. The guarantee of peace in Europe and in the world over the past 40 years or more has been the existence of NATO of which we are a member. It would be absurd to pretend that our future security within a European union which excluded the United States and Canada would be better than it is now. Peace has been due to NATO's existence and the fact that there is no separate German high command. The hon. Gentleman should think about that. There is no possibility of France, Germany, Britain or Italy ever engaging in aggression against each other. I hope that answers the hon. Gentleman. I was not seeking to establish merits and demerits but to offer the Committee evidence of the nature and purpose of the current union treaty. The hon. Gentleman's intervention did not in any way disprove my contention.

Mr. Mike Gapes (Ilford, South): Does my right hon. Friend agree that his definition of federal is different from that of the Italians, Spaniards and Germans? Government in Germany is greatly decentralised and the system was introduced with the support of the British and other occupation forces and the British trade union movement. That system was designed to be internally decentralised. Does he also agree that many people in other European socialist parties fail to understand Britain's peculiar obsessions with some historical feelings and words? Almost every other socialist party in Europe is in favour of the Maastricht treaty.

Mr. Shore: It is extraordinary that other European socialist parties are in favour of the Maastricht treaty and that they have agreed to a document which, apart from

[Mr. Shore]

anything else, inflicts by treaty deflation upon the whole of western Europe and undermines the central purposes for which democratic socialist parties exist. *[Interruption.]* I shall not be diverted because I wish to cover the subject in an orderly way.

My last piece of evidence in support of what I said about the nature and character of the treaty is to remind the Committee that the first article in the treaty, right down to Maastricht itself, speaks about the federal destiny or goal of the treaty. The Prime Minister was desperately anxious to have those words removed and at the last minute he managed to persuade Europe by saying, "If I have to take that back to Britain I shall be in desperate difficulty, not only with my own side but with the British people and the British Parliament."

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): The objective of France, Germany, Spain and Italy and other European countries was to create a federal union. However, the Maastricht treaty that emerged after the negotiations is far from being a federal treaty. It faced in both directions, but our Prime Minister managed to negotiate a treaty that is a step away from the federal objective.

Mr. Shore: I do not think so, but I shall certainly deal with that matter later in my speech. The so-called pillars, which I prefer to call buttresses of the treaty, go a long way towards European union. I accept that they have not gone as far as to be totally incorporated within the machinery of the Rome treaty, but there should be no doubt about what our partners are up to or that resumed pressure will fall upon us.

It is not only the sources that I have mentioned that give credibility, I hope, to my claim about the purpose and nature of the treaty. The other leaders of European countries are admitted federalists: they do not argue about it. The Prime Minister of Holland, Mr. Lubbers, is being considered, quite naturally, as a successor to Mr. Delors in the European Commission because he is a proper person for the Commission to choose. He shares every bit of the federal purpose, he wants it and wills it. So does Felipe Gonzales, the Prime Minister of Spain. We know from my quote from Mr. Andreotti's speech that that is also the purpose of the Italians. Beyond that there is a fringe of what one might almost call client states of Brussels which receive large subsidies and hope for even larger ones and are anxious to make progress with European treaties. We are in a difficult and isolated position, backed only by those stalwart people, the Danes.

Sir Russell Johnston: The right hon. Gentleman will understand that I agree with what he is saying, but does it lead him to conclude that title I should be inserted in the Bill? That is what the amendment is about.

Mr. Shore: The danger of inserting it into the Bill in the proposed manner—I hope that ingenuity can find a different way to deal with the treaty—is to make it a Community treaty; in other words, to make those parts that are not Community treaties into Community treaties and therefore even more binding and having even greater impact on our powers. I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving us the opportunity, through the amendment, to discuss the purpose of the treaty. However, I shall not be supporting him in his efforts to incorporate it, for the reasons that I have given.

Mr. Marlow: Is not the beauty of including, through the amendment, title I in the Bill that there will be further debates on Report and that whereas it might be helpful to the Committee that title I was in the Bill and made things clearer, on Report we could pass amendments to take certain parts of title I out of the Bill? Therefore, we could select those parts of title I that the House then thought to be the most appropriate.

Mr. Shore: I know that the hon. Gentleman has a liking for danger, but it would be a hazardous procedure to put in something that is clearly unwelcome in the hope that we may be able to remove it at a later stage.

Against this background of trying to define what the treaty purpose is about, I move on to the provisions of title I.

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): I have been listening to the debate and I cannot see what difference the insertion of title I will make. I have heard the Minister talk for an hour and I have heard Members of the Opposition talking. Apart from the psychological factor involved in that it will make us feel more European, will the insertion of title I make any difference to anyone, in Britain or in Europe? I shoud love to know the answer.

Mr. Shore: It would have not only a psychological but a practical and legal effect if it were included as one of the Community treaties.

Sir Teddy Taylor: How?

Mr. Shore: It would then come within the normal procedures of the Rome treaty and be subject to the European Court, the Commission and so on even more strongly than would the treaty as it stands. For that reason, I am opposed to the amendment.

I have made the case to establish the nature of the treaty because I believe that the articles in title I, from A to F, clearly spell out the federal intent. There is not only what it says about the union. It goes on to say:

"This Treaty marks a new stage in the process of creating an ever closer union".

It is a "new stage", and not just another amendment to European Community Acts. That new stage is union.

The treaty then spells out the essence of the new stage. The first factor that it cites is economic and monetary union, and economic and monetary union, with a single federal bank and a single currency, is one of the most unifying of factors. According to Prime Minister Andreotti, previously that right has belonged only to a sovereign state, but now it characterises the new union.

Secondly, the treaty speaks of establishing a Europe without frontiers. Although frontiers can be a nuisance, I am fairly relaxed about them. To abolish them and to say that we are all part of the same zone in terms of the movement of people, goods and everything else is to abandon one of the essential purposes and powers of a separate state. We would pass that power over to a new state, which would define who and what has the right to come into our country. That carries me far beyond my interest in the proper movement of trade and goods and of people looking for jobs, finding them and taking them. Our rights are to be shared with over 300 million Europeans.

5.45 pm

Whether we like it or not, whether we have been consulted or not, whatever our views may be, we are now all to become citizens of the European union. Who has the right to claim citizens other than a state? What is the concept of citizenship? It would have been good to have had the Solicitor-General or another Law Officer here to answer some of those questions. Is not the very nature of the state the ability to create citizens or to have citizens? Citizens have not only rights but obligations and duties. Although this may appear to be a rather empty pillow case at the moment, before many Christmases are past, it will be stuffed with goodies by the European Commission and the Council of Ministers.

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): On the citizenship point, what is wrong with the notion that, for example, the French people who live in my constituency and pay taxes to the local authority should have the opportunity to vote in elections for that authority, or that I, who have a cottage in France and pay taxes to the commune, should be able to vote in the elections for it? What happened to the idea that there should be no taxation without representation?

Mr. Shore: I have not mentioned those matters, nor shall I. Citizenship will confer rights on other Community nationals. It is not that these are particularly important rights but that they are to be conferred not by the British Parliament but by the European union as an authority. We must remember that, in the first instance, it will be offering only what appear to be attractive features. We have not yet reached the business of duties and obligations, which will be far less attractive.

Mr. Richard Shepherd (Aldridge-Brownhills): On this point about citizenship, inasmuch as the right hon. Gentleman has identified a political state—the union—of which the United Kingdom is a subordinate constituent, does not that demonstrate that United Kingdom citizenship becomes subordinate in those areas where that union has competence and over which the European Court therefore has jurisdiction? Therefore, is it not a reflection in support of his argument that British citizenship is a lesser thing than European citizenship?

Mr. Shore: I am not certain of the answer. That is another reason why we should have a legal presence on the Treasury Bench. I shall want to explore that point. There is a danger that that is so. We have to acknowledge the basic point that only states bestow citizenship.

Article B says that an objective of the union shall be:

"To assert its identity on the international scene".

Again, that raises the question of whether it is a state, particularly as the assertion of identity will be through the implementation of a joint foreign policy, a joint security policy and, going a stage further, a joint defence policy. The characteristics of a state normally include control over external, foreign and, ultimately, defence policy.

Mr. Stephen Milligan (Eastleigh): The right hon. Gentleman makes the point that the assertion of identity is a property of a state. Only a moment ago he emphasised to one of my hon. Friends how successful NATO has been, and how the assertion of its identity has done so much to help us—but NATO is not a state.

Mr. Shore: The hon. Gentleman reveals a woeful ignorance of the NATO treaty. It makes vital commitments, but NATO itself has never passed a single law. It is also a treaty from which we can withdraw at any time—and from which France substantially withdrew many years ago when General de Gaulle kicked NATO out of Versailles.

Mr. Jim Marshall (Leicester, South): My right hon. Friend is right to say that the treaty forms a new entity and that its common provisions distribute powers between the centre and member states. Many of my right hon. Friend's points about economic and monetary union and the power that Brussels will have are also correct. However, perhaps he fails to understand that the Government need not bring before the House for approval the other aspect that he is now addressing, which is one of the separate pillars and will not form part of the ultimate Act.

The Government, acting through the intergovernmental conference, can continue to develop the entity or state without making any reference to Parliament or passing Acts of Parliament. In advancing his argument in terms of common defence, my right hon. Friend risks encouraging the Government to proceed even further down the intergovernmental conference road.

Mr. Shore: It might so encourage the Government, but if that danger exists we must confront it when dealing with the present prerogative powers. We must bring them more under the control of our own Parliament, not abandon them to European Community treaties.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Earlier, the right hon. Gentleman stressed the importance that he attaches, as do many right hon. and hon. Members, to the NATO alliance and to the contribution that it has long made to Europe's security. The treaties that established that alliance did not require any legislation before ratification by the United Kingdom. That expands on the point made by the hon. Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Marshall).

Mr. Shore: Although it might have been desirable to bring the NATO treaty before Parliament for ratification, it was no different from the 1,001 treaties that the United Kingdom signed over the years. The difference comes in the law-making and other major powers that the treaty will accord to the Community. That is an entirely different matter.

Mr. Garel-Jones: That is precisely my point. The Bill is before the House so that we may take on board those aspects of the Maastricht treaty that affect the United Kingdom's domestic legislation. Any action taken by agreement among member states in respect of the intergovernmental pillars to which the hon. Member for Leicester, South referred would involve—if it meant changing United Kingdom legislation—a Bill being brought before the House.

Mr. Shore: We would like both kinds of treaties brought before us.

Mr. Benn: Even if there were no move towards Community institutions controlling defence and security policy, members of the armed forces and of the Foreign Office would be citizens with duties to the union. Those duties will apply to everybody—not just to the ordinary citizen but to those in the armed forces. The union proposal asserts that there must be a common

[Mr. Benn]

international identity and common security. It may be that Governments will claim that they have some rights in the matter, but soldiers and diplomats will have a duty to the union to carry through its policy. That aspect affects every citizen, and it should not be dealt with by the royal prerogative of ratification.

Mr. Shore: That matter is of profound importance. As my right hon. Friend explained in his usual helpful and analytical way, the concept of European citizenship relates to the individual obligations that can be imposed on our people if we accede to the treaty's different heads.

Mr. Spearing: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Shore: No—I would like to make a little progress. The question of whether or not the union should have the international personality that title I says we must promote is already being seriously discussed in the context of whether or not, in reforming the United Nations Security Council, the Community should be given a permanent place there. That debate is being conducted all over Europe, though that is not reflected here.

If one knows that one is committed to a common foreign, security and a defence policy, how can one resist giving the Community—the superior body in the federal structure—a place on the Security Council? Ministers will have to face that argument before long, because it will be pressed very hard.

The Minister and the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs emphasised again and again how important are the pillar arrangements for home affairs, justice affairs, and foreign and defence policy. I invite the Committee to re-examine article N.2, to which reference is made in title I, which refers to another intergovernmental conference in 1996. The IGC is already pointed at, in strengthening the provisions under articles A and B. The Euro-federalists know very well that they have not come to the end of the road but have merely taken a giant step forward, and are already preparing to launch a final assault to establish an entity that has all the powers of a state.

The characteristics of a state are a single currency, federal or union bank, authority to decide external and defence policy, rights of entry in respect of citizenship, and —as the hon. Member for Stafford mentioned in one of his final points—means. The treaty states clearly and unambiguously that the union shall have the means necessary to perform the tasks that it sets itself in articles A to E.

We are all familiar with the concept of means—it is the concept of own resources, stretched still further into the wealth and income of the nation states.

Sir Russell Johnston: The right hon. Gentleman's list of definitions of the powers of a putative state did not include the right to conduct external trade, which the Community already has. Does he oppose that?

Mr. Shore: No. We must accept that in the interests of commerce and trade, given that they will be ruled by the provisions of GATT. I have always taken a fairly liberal view of trade—except in times of great emergency, when it makes sense for nations to protect their interests and not be too heavily damaged by unrestricted competition in world trade. I am broadly in favour of free world trade —and therefore I am in favour of GATT and all that has followed from it, and of those parts of the treaty that reflect GATT.

Sir Trevor Skeet: One of the Government documents states that the European union will not have an international legal personality. If it is to have no international legal personality, no persons, the difficulty will be that we shall have to work through the Commission. What are the implications of the fact that this body is to be all-powerful but that it cannot be all-powerful internationally? Ought not one of the Law Officers to come here to answer our questions on the very matter that we are considering this afternoon?

6 pm

Mr. Shore: Of course I agree with the hon. Gentleman that it is an important point. My attention, however, was drawn to one of the articles in the treaty, article J.5, under the heading

"Provisions on a common foreign and security policy."

Paragraph 1 states that

"The Presidency shall represent the Union in matters coming within the common foreign and security policy."

It seems that we have already gone a very long way towards abandoning control over our own foreign policy.

To pick up the point about federalism that was made by my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Gapes), apparently we need not worry about federalism because it means something entirely different in other European countries; therefore, we should be entirely relaxed about it. My immediate comment is, rubbish. We understand very well what federalism is. We also understand that Germany in particular has a highly-developed form of federal state. We are also familiar with the concept of federalism in our own national experience, particularly when we drew up the constitutions for Canada and Australia and, before that, for India. They were all federal states. This country is probably the greatest architect or creator of federal states in the world.

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth): And we can do it for ourselves.

Mr. Shore: Yes, we are perfectly entitled to do it for ourselves, too. It must always, however, be within the context of a nation state arranging for the great devolution of power to different levels of government. To do that within one's own nation state is in no sense to abandon sovereignty and control over one's own affairs. What we are talking about now, however, is a new kind of federalism. It means abandoning the strategic power of control over one's own country and its Government to a higher level of government—a new, supra-federalism that would take the key decisions in future. That is my answer to my hon. Friend. I hope that he is satisfied with it.

Mr. Gapes: Not at all.

Mr. Shore: Very well.

I turn to the second great excuse that is made for these arrangements. The first excuse is the pillars; the second excuse is subsidiarity. It is said that subsidiarity is a crucial part of the treaty and that it moves in the opposite direction from the direction that I say the thrust of the treaty is towards. Is that really so? I have something to say to hon. Members about this which I hope will interest them.

We are familiar with the basic concept of subsidiarity. We know that, in any serious clash, what is subsidiarity and what is not will be decided by the European Court. We know very well what the European Court will decide. We know exactly what the remit of the European Court of Justice is, but I want to turn to a second point which has not been made before.

The Government claim that they have subsidiarity back to us and that, somehow, it has changed the course of the Community—that it has made a vast difference, that they fought for it and that, at last, the Community is beginning to change its mind. I am sure that hon. Members know that that is not so.

When I looked at the Commission document, its Opinion on Political Union of 21 October 1990, which preceded the intergovernmental conference on political union and which was long before the Government were fighting desperately for subsidiarity, I found that it urged further great advances towards European union and political federalism. It says:

"The question of subsidiarity is closely linked to the redefinition of certain powers. The Commission considers that this common-sense principle should be written into the Treaty, as suggested by Parliament in its draft treaty on European union. It should serve as a guideline to the institutions when, under a new article 235, freed from its purely economic purpose, they have to take a unanimous decision of principle on new Community action. Compliance with the principle could be checked by retrospective control of the institution's activities to ensure that there is no abuse of power."

Here is the Commission, in part of its own document, driving forward towards a new union and saying, "Why shouldn't we have a bit of subsidiarity as well? We're for it. We'll put it in the treaty."

It is not only the Commission that favours subsidiarity. To quote again from the speech that Mr. Andreotti made to the European Parliament on 20 November 1990, after referring to economic and monetary union and the single currency he went on to say that

"European union should be founded upon the principle of subsidiarity but should also acquire a flexible but evoluted tool"—

I do not know quite what that means—

"in order to allow the acquisition of new competences."

He saw no inhibition at all. He is a keen federalist. He was making a pro-federalist speech to the European Parliament and recommended that we should have subsidiarity. That was in October 1990, long before the Government in their desperate, marvellous struggle at Maastricht tried to claw back powers from the European Community and hand them to the nation states. It is a major fraud. I hope that the Committee understands just how much it is a fraud.

Mr. Ray Whitney (Wycombe): Does not the right hon. Gentleman realise that he is out of date? He refers time and time again to issues that are at least two years old. What the right hon. Gentleman fails to recognise is the encouraging development of the concept of subsidiarity achieved at Maastricht and at Birmingham, a concept that will be further elaborated. Charming though he is, the right hon. Gentleman is an old-fashioned socialist and a deeply committed little-Englander whose out-of-dateness on this issue is in keeping with his antediluvian approach to the whole issue.

Mr. Shore: I do not intend to swap abuse with the hon. Gentleman, but it is hardly antediluvian to quote what was said by the Prime Minister of Italy——

Mr. Whitney: Two years ago.

Mr. Shore: —and also by the President of the Commission and Commission members long before subsidiarity became a tremendous gain for the British Government. The Prime Minister of Italy conceded then that there should be subsidiarity as part of the great advance towards federal union in western Europe. I see that the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) nods in agreement. He is an openly-declared federalist. He acknowledges that what I say is true. It is only those who are ashamed of their federalism and of their unionism who seek to deny it.

Mr. Garel-Jones: May I try to help the right hon. Gentleman by quoting to him what was said by the President of the Commission post-Maastricht and post-article 3b:

"In the Community system, national competence is the rule and Community competence the exception."

That sort of comment flows from the inclusion of article 3b in the treaty.

Mr. Shore: That is what the Minister maintains, but he and I know that members of the Commission are not lawyers but politicians. The Commission is aware of the Government's difficulty and is trying to be as helpful as possible. None of the arrogance of Mr. Delors' private office that we witnessed before the Danish treaty has been repeated, but we know very well that he was planning another major statement on the federal advance of the European union before the Danish referendum. Since the Danish referendum, the Commission has been drawing back and trying to pretend that it has had a change of heart and that things are different. Why? Because its members are politicians, and they know that they are in danger of defeat.

Mr. Garel-Jones: It is perfectly clear that whenever anyone makes a statement with which the right hon. Gentleman does not agree it is a pretence, but whenever anyone makes a statement that reinforces his prejudice, even if it was made two or three years ago, it is gospel.

Mr. Shore: I do not think that that will do. Less than two months ago, Mr. Bangemann—I believe he is a vice-president of the Community—said that subsidiarity presupposes a federal European state. Is that up to date? Yes, indeed it is, and I do not invite the Minister to comment because I have established my point.

Mr. Llew Smith (Blaenau Gwent): Does my right hon. Friend accept that one of the institutions to which we would lose power is a European central bank, and is he concerned that the recent publication of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, "Britain in Europe", makes no reference to the fact that the bank will not be responsible to the Parliaments that make up the EC?

Mr. Shore: I know that, and I have not gone into the horrors of economic and monetary union because I shall have another opportunity to raise them under title II. I have been seeking to establish the meaning of European union, because an essential preliminary to discussing the rest of the treaty is to know its thrust and purpose.

[Mr. Shore]

I conclude by asking the key question: do we want a federal culture? I know that we are a depressed nation and that we have suffered a lot of setbacks in recent years, but do we believe that we have reached such a state that we are no longer able, no longer have the will and no longer have the courage to govern ourselves as a free democracy?

Mrs. Currie: I should like to make a fairly brief speech—probably the shortest in the debate so far, but that would not be difficult.

I can well understand why the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) is keen to include title I in the Bill. His general approach, which has been consistent and for which I respect him, has been that he believes in a full federal Europe. I do not, which is one of the reasons why I think that he is wrong; but Ministers are right to oppose amendment No. 93.

Conservative Members should be cautious about what the amendments propose. In principle, we should be cautious about what the Opposition's amendments propose. We should be cautious and suspicious of all proposals to change the law of the land. We should never enact unnecessary or repetitious legislation. We should be wary of proposals that increase the power of European institutions, and I say that as a supporter of the treaty.

I am surprised, therefore, by the attitude of some of my hon. Friends, because the Government rightly oppose amendment No. 93 and the other half dozen being considered with it. My right hon. Friend the Minister of State has explained that they are not necessary, that the law that we need to change will be debated under different titles and that to accept title I would go too far, would create all sorts of legal complications and confusions, would delay the progress of the Bill and would offer in Britain opportunities for litigation that do not exist in countries that have already ratified. That attitude is perfectly clear. Therefore, some of my colleagues, including my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash), are in the daft position of having tabled amendments that they do not agree with.

Mr. Cash: Absolute nonsense. Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Currie: In a minute. I listened to the hon. Gentleman for a long time.

Mr. Cash: We listen to you all the time.

Mrs. Currie: With respect, this place is the only spot in the country that has a surplus of cash at the moment. I am not giving way yet.

6.15 pm

My hon. Friends appear to have got themselves into a strange position. They tabled amendments—a pile of material—with which they do not agree and spent all yesterday evening and all day today, and presumably will spend yet more time, explaining to the nation why they do not agree with this stuff. One must ask, therefore, why table the amendments? They did not need to table them, because amendment No. 93 would have been more than sufficient for their purpose of holding a debate on the general principles of title I.

The Labour party did not make that mistake. It tabled amendment No. 108, and no Labour Back Benchers have tabled amendments. It is deeply disappointing to Conservative Members who support the treaty and the Bill that Labour Members—whose party conference supported the treaty and whose party would be introducing the Bill if it had won the election—have kept so quiet. Labour Members have been silent. The Labour party is allowing itself to be portrayed to the country, to Europe and to the Parliaments of the world as being hostile to Europe.

Mr. Stuart Randall (Kingston upon Hull, West): The quietness of Labour Members does not suggest that they are not committed to a Europe comprising a group of nations co-operating for the betterment of the people of Europe and outside Europe.

Mrs. Currie: I have justified my existence already: I have goaded Labour Members into getting to their feet and giving a bit of support. I hope that they will continue to do so.

My hon. Friends are entitled to wish to debate the general principles of title I, but they are not entitled to hog the Floor or to give the impression that all Conservatives agree with them, which is not true. The House of Commons has voted on the general principles of the treaty and the Bill a number of times, and the majority of hon. Members have been firmly in favour. The only occasion when there was a small majority was when Opposition Members sought to make it an issue of confidence in the Government, and on that basis some Opposition Members felt able to vote in the no Lobby.

We had a general election only a few months ago, at which all the main parties supported the treaty. The issue of Europe was not raised, and my hon. Friends must consider why all the main parties supported it. They did so because they regard it as being good for this country and for Europe that we should be part of this development and because they regard it as part of the development of the free world, of which we are lucky to be part.

I have listened to the debate. I must apologise to my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford for not having listened to his closing comments this afternoon, but I reckoned that they would be much the same as we heard yesterday. I believe that I detected the techniques that he was using.

Those techniques seem to have fallen into two main categories. First, my hon. Friend accuses everyone in the Committee of not having read the treaty. Well, most of us have read it. The second technique is to accuse us of not understanding the treaty. Most of us do understand it. The fact of the matter is that most of us do not agree with my hon. Friend, any more than we agree with the amendment of the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber, which would put an excess of federalism into the treaty and change British legislation in an inappropriate way.

Mr. Bernard Jenkin (Colchester, North): Can my hon. Friend produce one lawyer who can give a clear definition of subsidiarity?

Mrs. Currie: I have the greatest respect for my hon. Friend, but I have to tell him that there is no lawyer in the country who can ever produce a clear definition of anything. That is not what lawyers do for a living. The more obfuscation there is, the more complex legislation that we pass, and the more often that those guys can charge the rest of us big fees when they get us into court one way or another, the better they like it.

The job of the House of Commons is not to put more legislation than is necessary on the statute book. If my hon. Friend agrees with me, I invite him to take the same view that I do on the amendment, which would do just that.

Sir Russell Johnston: The hon. Lady says that she has read the treaty and understands the whole thing—that it is all pellucidly clear to her.

Mrs. Currie: I did not say that.

Sir Russell Johnston: There was the implication that everything was transparent to the hon. Lady. If that is so, could she explain to me what the Minister failed to explain? She says that if title I were introduced into the Bill it would make an extraordinary difference. Apparently it would do all sorts of things. Will she please give me one example?

Mrs. Currie: With all due respect to the hon. Gentleman, I should never dream of suggesting that any handiwork of human beings was perfect. The treaty is not perfect either. Any one of us could cite one line, one sentence or one paragraph that we would prefer not to be there—but what is on offer is a huge treaty negotiated by many people in the interests of all of us.

I am not a lawyer, thank God, but I am advised that putting title I on the face of the Bill is unnecessary and would be confusing, because any parts of it that may be justiciable are already included in other titles. I am happy to accept the argument that putting more legislation on the statute book would be more confusing. That is axiomatic in much of what we get up to in this place.

Several hon. Members from both sides of the Committee have produced evidence—although it tends to be the same stuff. Often it comes from just one speech made by Mr. Bangemann. I have no writ running for Bangemann; he is not a member of my party. The Labour party should have no writ running for him either, because he is not a member of their party either. He is a sort of German Liberal, a member of one of the minority parties, although much of what he says does not sound very liberal to me.

Mr. Richard Shepherd *rose*——

Mrs. Currie: I shall give way in a moment.

In a continent containing so many people, it would not be difficult to find all sorts of opinions being expressed. Much "evidence" of what other people mean by, and want from, union is being called in aid. One need look no further than Members of the House. There are plenty of people here who believe all that—but I do not. I do not believe in a federal Europe—and the treaty does not mean that there will be a federal Europe.

I tell the Committee, and especially my hon. Friends who oppose the Bill, that I believe that over the next few years Europe needs to develop a civil service or Commission that will take on board the best qualities of the British civil service, in that it will be totally non-political, and tend to keep quiet and to give advice rather than trying to dominate. I add one factor which I should see both in the Commission——

Mr. Budgen *rose*——

Mrs. Currie: I shall give way in a moment.

Another factor which I should like to be incorporated both into our civil service and into the Commission is that for 10 years after they leave those organisations staff should be banned from accepting posts in the public or the private sector related to their work in the civil service. That would get rid of any hint of corruption.

Mr. Budgen: In view of my hon. Friend's expressed interest in the European Parliament, does she see the role of the Member of the European Parliament becoming more dynamic and active in future? I wondered whether that might have been one of the reasons that attracted her to that forum.

Mrs. Currie: My hon. Friend flatters me. If I were to replace one of the Labour MEPs, I am sure that what my hon. Friend says would be the case—and I am sure that he would agree with that.

Mr. Budgen: My hon. Friend knows that that is not the point.

Mrs. Currie: My hon. Friend is refusing to pay me a compliment. Let us move on.

Because several people are available to have their views quoted on European union, that does not mean that they are right about the way that things will go—except for one significant fact. If this country did not play a full part in the future of Europe, the people whose voices have been quoted would play a bigger part than they do now. Indeed, that is more likely if we are not involved.

I have to tell my hon. Friends who oppose the Bill that I have been appalled to hear so much small-mindedness, bigotry, fear and ignorance expressed in the speeches that have been made so far from this side of the Committee. In fact, apart from mine, so far only one speech has been made by a Conservative Member.

The world is in transition and we are in a time of considerable difficulty—*[Interruption.]* One has to ask what has happened—*[Laughter.]* The hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) may think that that is funny, but I do not. One has to ask what has happened to this country's pride and self-confidence, and our awareness of what goes on in the world. We have always been members of alliances, and have always drawn our strength from them. We have never had any strength on our own. That has been true throughout our history, especially recently.

The European Community already accounts for 340 million people. It is as large as the United States of America and Japan put together, and we are lucky to be part of it. We should think so. Our fellow Europeans think so. They know it, and they want us in the front rank.

The Bill seeks to incorporate into United Kingdom law only those parts of the Maastricht treaty which require changes in United Kingdom law. That is the right approach. I congratulate the Minister of State, my right hon. Friend the Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones), and assure him of my support.

Mr. Enright: This is a mean Bill, and it typifies the Government's approach to Maastricht, which was also expressed by the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie). Essentially, that approach says, "We have kept close to the Single European Act. We had to go a little further, because if we had not done so the wolves would have arisen on the continent and driven us out, and we should not have had the influence that we now have."

[Mr. Enright]

The Bill is mean not only because of the withdrawal from the social chapter and from monetary union—I favour monetary union—but because of the Government's approach. Nevertheless, there is much left in the Bill which can and should be supported.

We are looking not for a oneness, or one state, but a diversity in unity. That diversity does not preclude a union. I have no qualms of conscience in saying that we are going into a union. That is clearly expressed; there is a commitment, and that is right and proper.

The problem for hon. Members is that we are used to working with an unwritten constitution. The other day, when the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) was talking about the treaty, he said, "I am a lawyer, so I know." That is the exact problem of the hon. Member for Stafford, especially when discussing amendment No. 93. At present we are discussing the spirit of Maastricht. It is extremely important. It pervades the movement forward from what was a single market—essentially, a hypermarket—and will put some humanity into the European Community. Above all, that is what Maastricht tries to do.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) said that we had moved from the days when France talked about a Europe des patries. That is true; France has moved on to talk about federalism. France has moved towards a federal system within its country. A short 15 years ago, France was the most centralised country on the continent. Today, it has gone a considerable way towards devolution.

I am a citizen, first, of Yorkshire; secondly, of the United Kingdom; and, thirdly, of Europe. I find no tension among those three states. However, I have difficulty with what circumscribes our sovereignty in Yorkshire. Our sovereignty in Yorkshire is circumscribed by bodies such as the Department of the Environment.

I well remember when I chaired the West Yorkshire metropolitan county council planning and transportation committee, and difficulties that I had with my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney, who was in charge of such matters at that time. We were trying to do things that central Government did not want us to do. The position has become even worse since my right hon. Friend departed office. There is a centralised power in the United Kingdom which makes it difficult for us to accept, or even understand, the concept of federalism.

6.30 pm

Mr. Marlow: The hon. Gentleman says that he is a citizen of the United Kingdom and that he rejoices in that fact. He is happy to become a citizen of Europe, and would rejoice equally in that. He is also a subject of Her Majesty the Queen. Would he be happy to be a subject of Mr. Jacques Delors?

Mr. Enright: Leaving aside the false analogy, I should be delighted to be a subject of my good friend Jacques Delors. I enjoyed many good conversations and meals with him in the French Treasury when he was putting right the French economy. However, I digress.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I am interested to hear of my hon. Friend's friendship with Jacques Delors. As a citizen of the United Kingdom, does my hon. Friend agree that he is a citizen of a highly centralised multinational state? Is he confident that the Government's interpretation of subsidiarity will lead to a dispersal of political power, as we have seen in France, Germany and Spain?

Mr. Enright: I agree with my hon. Friend. We have recently shared the same platform. I have been impressed by the relaxed way in which the Scots nation shares its sovereignty with us. The way in which that is done is tremendous. Therefore, the Scots nation should have even more devolution under subsidiarity.

Dr. Godman: May I disabuse my hon. Friend of his illusion about the Scottish Members of Parliament? The overwhelming majority of Scottish Members of Parliament want a Parliament established in Scotland. They want to establish powers of the sort that the 16 lander in Germany enjoy. However, the establishment of such powers will not result from the Government's implementation and interpretation of article 3(b) of the treaty.

Mr. Enright: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Our problem with sovereignty lies not with Brussels but with the Government. The problem lies with Conservative Members who support the Government, and that is an important matter.

Mr. Richard Shepherd: Sovereignty only means constitutional independence. It is part of the sliding of meanings. By all means, let us use another word. How does one merge constitutional independence?

Mr. Enright: I accept what the hon. Gentleman says, because sovereignty has nothing to do with control over one's life. For ordinary people, control over their lives is important. That control is real, not an illusion. What control do we have over our currency now that we are away from economic and monetary union? We have moved away from the exchange rate mechanism.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Enright: I will give way when I have made my point.

Since we moved out of the exchange rate mechanism, I have found that my hon. Friends do not blame the true culprit, which is Government policy. Government policy has ruined our economy and destroyed the pound. My hon. Friends prefer to give the Government an excuse—the exchange rate mechanism. That is untrue. I am an unashamed socialist, as I am an unashamed unionist in the sense of Europe. As a socialist, I believe in managing the exchange rate.

It is extremely important to manage the exchange rate; otherwise, it is left to the speculators. The United Kingdom on its own cannot manage the pound or defend it. The rate at which we trade at present is the rate that is decided by a fickle market.

Mr. Shore: It is difficult to take seriously my hon. Friend's assertion that we have no control over our currency and less freedom than when we were in the ERM. I am sure that he is aware that our interest rates were a minimum 10 per cent. when we were forced out of the ERM. To stay in the ERM, we had to raise interest rates to 15 per cent. We would have gone beyond that figure if necessary or if possible. The interest rates of the weaker currencies in Europe are 13 to 14 per cent.

Since we left the ERM, we not only have a more competitive pound, but we have been able to reduce interest rates by 3 per cent. According to many people, such a reduction was impossible before we left the ERM, because we were totally dominated by the deutschmark. Many of my right hon. and hon. Friends said that we had 20 minutes of currency freedom before we left the ERM.

Mr. Enright: I am interested to hear my right hon. Friend suggest that devaluation at whatever is the market price is good. The market price is the price at which the speculators can make a profit.

It was interesting to read in *The Guardian* the account of the possibility of changing the rate. The way in which the currency could have been managed—and, frankly, should have been managed—meant that we could have been a reliable trading country.

I give my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney an example of what management of the currency means to ordinary people in the control of their lives. As a result of the state of the economy, our area must collect funds for a hospital scanner. The collections were going well as a result of the desirable lowering of the exchange rate. However, we must now find another £25,000. That is important in a poor area such as ours, and it is repeated time and again.

Economic policy cannot be decided with short-term ends in view. One must look to at least a five-year cycle. I agree that a five-year cycle is difficult to maintain, but it must be thought through. However, that is an argument for another day.

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): Does my hon. Friend accept that there is a better chance of keeping pits open when imported coal is dearer and therefore domestically produced coal is more competitive than it was when we were in the ERM? Does my hon. Friend also accept that the system that rewards the speculators is an exchange rate mechanism that requires the British Government to buy back any pounds they care to sell, at whatever profit?

Mr. Enright: I am extremely pleased that my hon. Friend has brought up the subject of coal, which is my next topic. He will realise that energy is one of the new headings in the Maastricht treaty. What we should be doing for 1996 is putting some meat on the skeleton of energy policy. That is how we shall keep our coal pits open. An artificial means of money exchange will not keep them open.

Mr. Bryan Gould (Dagenham): May I express the hope that my hon. Friend's regrets for what happened on 16 September do not mean that he believes that it was either desirable or possible for us to have adhered to the parity of DM2·95 to the pound which was required of us by the ERM? Will he at least recognise that that terrible burden was removed from us very much by the force of circumstances?

Mr. Enright: My hon. Friend misunderstands the ERM. It did not require us to stay at that parity. When the exchange rate was fixed, it was a reasonable exchange rate, but because of the destruction of industry and of manufacturing, and because of the failure to pursue a successful economic policy, it had to go down. That could and should have been managed.

Mr. Jim Marshall: I like the way in which my hon. Friend seeks to defend the impossible—the pound's valuation under the ERM. He says that devaluation could have taken place under the system, and clearly he is right. However, am I correct in saying that the maximum devaluation permitted was 7 per cent? The present indication is that the pound has devalued by substantially more than 7 per cent.

Mr. Enright: No, that is not entirely correct. There are examples the other way. There is no problem here. It is relatively simple for ECOFIN to sit around the table and to produce sensible solutions.

Mr. Marlow: If the hon. Gentleman has read today's evening paper, he will have seen that the French franc is under pressure and that the financial tanks are on the lawns of the Elysee palace. The hon. Gentleman is a great fan of the ERM—we understand that. What advice would he give the French President about the franc?

Mr. Enright: I am grateful for the confidence that the hon. Gentleman reposes in me in that respect. It is not a question for me at all. I am sure that the French President will be able to deal with the matter in his own way.

Mr. Knapman: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Enright: No, because I want to make some progress.

I turn now to co-operation in foreign policy. There is a great deal of misunderstanding about that. There are areas that should be examined in which practical co-operation will and should take place. Specifically mentioned in the treaty, far more strongly than in any other treaty, is development co-operation. It is clear that nonsense is going on in Africa, in Asia and in South America in terms of development aid. It regularly happens that six or seven of the member states of the EC set up their own programmes while the European Community is setting up its own programmes, and that the programmes are contradictory.

Even worse is the insistence on selling certain goods. I give Guinea-Bissau as an example. British electrical generators were sold to Guinea-Bissau although the country already had German, French and Japanese generators. The British generators require a sophistication that is impossible in developing countries. The treaty is a practical way in which to come together to ensure that we do not destroy development in trying to assist it.

6.45 pm

I began by saying that the Bill was a mean Bill, because I believed that the Government's approach was mean. However, with the social chapter and the social dimension of what can be done under Maastricht, we shall be able to opt in, either when the Government see sense or when a Labour Government take over.

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): I am trying to clarify my hon. Friend's position. Do his comments mean that he does not support the present opt-out on economic and monetary union?

Mr. Enright: I do not support the present opt-out. I take the line that 12 out of 12 socialist parties back Maastricht. The other 11 socialist parties say to this

[Mr. Enright]

socialist party, "Please do not annihilate Maastricht simply because of the opt-out. It will be easy for you to opt in to the social chapter."

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): Does my hon. Friend agree that the fact that the Conservative Government are so extreme in their opposition to workers' rights that they opt out of the social chapter is no justification for us, by defeating Maastricht, to deny those rights to the working people of the other 11 countries?

Mr. Enright: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. This country needs quality jobs, not cheapjack jobs.

Mr. Giles Radice (Durham, North): Is it not totally illogical to argue that we should vote against the Bill because it does not contain the social chapter? That would not only deprive our friends on the continent of Europe of the social chapter, but would deprive us of any prospect of opting in.

Mr. Enright: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend. A further point was made to me by the managing director of a multinational firm. He said, "We are operating on the continent. We must operate the social chapter there. We shall operate it here." I am convinced that, ere long, the Government will be taken to court over the matter. I shall be entirely happy to surrender our sovereignty to the courts of Europe, which will give us justice under the social charter.

Sir Teddy Taylor: I will not go over what the hon. Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Enright) said. However, I make this appeal to him. If, as a socialist, he cares about working people, he should look at what is happening in Europe today. The evening paper says: "ERM in last stand as the franc plunges". The Danish currency is plunging. Interest rates are soaring in the countries of Europe.

Who is suffering? The speculators do not suffer. The ERM was the best thing that ever came to the speculators. They have been making millions. The people who suffer are the working people of Europe who are put out of their jobs and out of their homes because of a mad policy of pretending that currencies are worth what they are not.

I appreciate that there are always people who have held views for a long time with some sincerity. Even in the Church of England, one finds people who say, "Things have always been this way and I will stick to it." I find it sickening—I mean that sincerely, because I do not usually attack people—to hear a member of the Labour party—the party that has fought for working people, for human rights and for the ordinary people of Britain—support a policy that is destroying jobs and the communities of working people because of an absurd, irrelevant and artificial process.

The Conservatives have learnt. We have learnt that the ERM is a load of rubbish. I very much doubt whether one could find anyone apart from a few residual fanatics who would say anything good about the ERM. It is nonsense. We all know that to try to pretend that the pound is worth something it is not or that the franc is worth something it is not means that one has to distort something else.

It either means that, as we once had, we create artificial prosperity as happened with the previous Chancellor, or there is artificial inflation. Think what it means to the people with homes and jobs—it is a policy of madness. While I accept that probably some people have rethought this, I am the last person in the world to support this absurd nonsense that, if they are working people, they are members of the British Labour party.

Mr. Geoffrey Hoon (Ashfield): I am grateful to the hon. Member for giving way. While he is indulging in these flights of rhetoric, he needs to explain one thing: how can it be better for speculators to have a system of managed exchange rates than it is to have a system where all rates float? He needs to address that issue.

Sir Teddy Taylor: The hon. Gentleman needs to look at what really happens, not at me, and not what he reads in books. The speculators try to keep a currency at an artificial level, and are pushing and pulling. If he looks not at books nor at me but at what is happening, he will see that the speculators have a wonderful time making millions of pounds because of this absurd policy. It is not the working people: it is the speculators.

I am pleased that this party has woken up and realised that it is nonsense, but it is the socialists who are repeating this nonsense. I would say to anyone that, if they think that allowing the pound to find its market value is contrary to socialism, I just cannot see it.

Mr. Knapman: Does my hon. Friend believe that 30 per cent. inflation at this time is helpful to the people of a country or to the speculators?

Sir Teddy Taylor: My hon. Friend has got it. How does it help the working people of Ireland, where they have 20 per cent. unemployment and interst rates of 30 per cent? What about people with homes, people who have borrowed money? How does it help them to see interest rates forced up, not to help the economy but basically to preserve an artificial exchange rate? Opposition Members have used a cloud of slogans and make people laugh, but they should rethink their position. There is plenty of room for honest political disagreement. There is nothing wrong with that, but to have someone supporting an absurd policy which only harms working people seems to me ridiculous and shameful.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): I have had honest political disagreements with the hon. Gentleman for a quarter of a century, but will he just keep it cool and reflect on what the Community has been able to do for his own city of Glasgow and for the Strathclyde area? They think, rightly or wrongly, that they have received great good from the Community.

Sir Teddy Taylor: Of course, and the people of Ireland like it as well as the people of Glasgow, but one has to appreciate that every pound that goes to Glasgow and to Ireland costs us £1·68p. While I appreciate that great things have been done in Glasgow, in the absurd business of taking in money and sloshing it around, someone is losing because of all the machinery. If people say that Europe has brought us a new factory or a new bridge, they should realise that they could have had twice as many bridges if we had not had this absurd nonsense of intervening.

Mrs. Gorman: Is it not true that it is not just a matter of money sloshing about? Our net contribution to the EC

costs us about £50 million every week, and that will go up to £200 million a week if we go into Maastricht and get into the cohesion fund.

Sir Teddy Taylor: It does not matter to me or to my hon. Friend, because we have worked hard all our lives and have savings and money. But what about the poor people who are paying £4 a week in membership? There are also the poor people, the pensioners and the unemployed, who are paying £18 a week extra for their food. She is quite right: we should be thinking of them. We should not be thinking just about the MPs and all the rest, but about the people with small incomes. However, we must get on with the amendment.

Sir Russell Johnston: It becomes impossible to comprehend the hon. Member as a member of a party which has governed for 13 years, during which the differentiation between the rich and the poor has become greater than ever before. It is unfair of him to say this. If he is talking about the relationship in the exchange rate, he knows, as someone whose party supports business, that business wants to be able to project its prices ahead. That was one of the basic reasons for trying to achieve a controlled relationship.

Sir Teddy Taylor: This idea that one can somehow fix everything—interest rates, prices and everything else—is the basis of a communist society. What happens when one does that? I ask the hon. Gentleman in all seriousness: if he says that about sums like £18 a week for poor families in Billericay and in Southend, what can I or he or the Prime Minister or the Leader of the Opposition do about it? That is the issue of Maastricht. There is nothing we can do. People will vote in the next election. Remember how the people voted last time, but there is nothing we can do.

The real tragedy is that people are being misled by MPs jumping up and down and saying, "I want an inquiry," and, "I want a rethink." I remember someone, some silly twit, saying the other day, "I want to stop the scandal of this pornography being sold." Hon. Members heard him, but I will not say who he was. He said that something had to be done. The fact is that the Minister who was in charge of standards until recently—my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor)—was basically saying, "There is nothing we can do." Yet the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition and the Liberal Democrats all say, "We want to stop this pornography being sold in Britain, but we cannot do it because of the European broadcasting directives."

Basically, one of the topics in considering this amendment——

Mr. Marlow: I am sorry to intervene, but I am trying to save time by being helpful. A Labour Member has raised the question of the ERM and the speculators, so can we save time for the future and nail this business once and for all? Because we are in the ERM, our economy is moving at a different speed from those of other economies, and it is obvious that that currency at some stage or another has got to give.

If it has to give, there is a one-way bet for the speculators, so they are going to make money. If there are floating exchange rates, so that the rates are going up and down according to the economies trading with each other, there is no one-way bet, because they will not know whether it is to go up or down, but the speculators will make money out of the ERM and not out of the other systems.

Sir Teddy Taylor: We are coming to that in considering future parts of the Bill. The only thing against what my hon. Friend says is Maastricht. Will we have to rejoin the ERM? The answer is that we do not know. At a packed meeting of Back Benchers, the Government said that we did not have to rejoin the ERM at all and some people went, clap, clap, clap.

The Foreign Secretary, said, in a little pamphlet, that we would have to rejoin the ERM to sign the Maastricht treaty. Then a barrister said that we had to rejoin the ERM to sign Maastricht. The trouble is that no one knows. We have to wait until the European Court tells us. That is the fact that people must face.

I must come to the amendment, because I have spoken for far too long. Basically, the amendment is saying that title I should go into the treaty. That is what it says: nothing more or less. If I were to ask, "Do I approve of title I?", the answer would be, "Absolutely not," because title I is damaging. It will damage Britain and democracy, and will do all kinds of bad things to our people and to their rights and freedoms.

But of course, we are not debating whether we support this. We are supporting a simple little structural Liberal Democrat amendment, which says that we would like to put this into the Bill.

I have listened for a day and a half to all the speeches, including one or two very unusual ones. What I would say to everyone is: "Please tell me: what difference is it going to make if we put this into the Bill?" I listened to the Minister, who spoke for an hour, which I thought was far too long, and I read his speech again this morning; then I read it a second time.

Having read the Minister's speech, I asked myself what difference the amendment would make. The Minister said that things may go to court if the amendment were accepted. However, the preamble already applies if a case goez to the European Court. Even though it is not in British law, it will be considered by the European Court. In that respect, the amendment makes no difference.

As every other country is incorporating the treaty into its domestic law, will we be in a speical position when cases go to the European Court? The answer to that is no. I do not criticise the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson), who has made some interesting speeches—we are looking for his support and co-operation on other issues in future—but the hon. Member argued that we must cut down on unnecessary legislation. That was a splendid comment to come from a Labour party spokesman, and I hope that that will be Labour's policy in future.

7 pm

What legislation can be produced from a preamble? I have discussed that point with clever lawyers. I went to the Library and asked, "On the basis of the preamble, what law or regulations can be produced?" The answer was, "Nothing at all." What possible reason can there be for not incorporating the amendment in the Bill?

The reasons given for the amendment by the Liberal Democrats are obvious and simple. They claim that the amendment will simply add "I" to "Titles II, III". If the amendment is accepted, the Liberal Democrats will feel

happier. They will think that British law has been changed and "isn't that nice?" That will make them feel somehow more European, and for a Liberal Democrat, that is fair enough. If they want to do that kind of thing, good luck to them.

However, are there any other reasons for the amendment? Another reason might be found in article B, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) referred in his splendid speech. Article B refers to the Community providing itself with the means necessary to attain its objectives. Although I am not an expert on these matters, is it not just possible that, if the amendment is incorporated in the Bill, we might have to have that dreadful thing—a money resolution?

If we had a money resolution, that would be terrible. We all know that the treaty will cost us a fortune. As a result of the cohesion fund and the common agricultural policy, every family in Britain will have to pay at least another £2 a week. We will shove lots of money into grand schemes in Portugal and Spain, and into goodness knows what. It would be much better if a European plane dropped £10 notes or 10 ecu notes at random.

Mr. Rowe: My hon. Friend has always been very anxious about the amount of money that the Community costs families. It is perhaps worth remembering that we are still recovering from the amount of money that we poured out in the last war. We poured out that money in an attempt to control dictatorships. When the European Community began, there were dictators in Spain, Portugal and Greece. There are no such dictators now. The European Community can take a great deal of the credit for having achieved that result.

Sir Teddy Taylor: I have heard that argument before. In fact, my Euro-ladies whom I meet when I go to speak in constituencies around the country use the argument to reassure themselves about the Community. We joined the Community because it was supposed to help out trade. Sadly, that has turned out to be a great disaster. We have had a deficit of £50,000 million over the past five years. That is a disappointment.

We were also told that joining the EC would somehow stop unemployment. It has not done that: unemployment is getting worse. We are now saying that we really joined Europe to promote peace. It is interesting to note that the only thing excluded from the treaty of Rome was defence. What has really preserved peace is NATO—a splendid voluntary organisation.

While I appreciate the sincerity of my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe), and while I know that many other equally sincere Conservative ladies are trying to reassure themselves by saying that that was the real reason for the European Community, we know, sadly, that peace had nothing to do with it at all.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): The intervention of my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) reminds me of the recent occasion when the United Kingdom appealed to Belgium for help with weaponry and, in particular, ammunition to assist us against a dictator in Iraq. That country—Belgium—which happens to be a member of the European Community, refused to help us and, in the main, we had to fight that fight with our allies from north America. Perhaps we should look to north America to sustain peace and to wage wars against dictators.

Sir Teddy Taylor: My hon. Friend is absolutely right.

Mr. Enright: Will the hon. Member accept that, at precisely the same time, the United Kingdom was selling arms to the dictator in Iraq?

Sir Teddy Taylor: I will not be tempted down that road.

Mr. Rowe: On a point of order, Mr. Lofthouse. I want to make it quite clear that, despite what my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) has said, I really should not be described as another Conservative lady.

Sir Teddy Taylor *rose*——

Mr. Jim Marshall: I know that the hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) does not wish to mislead the House. He said that the one thing missing from the original treaty of Rome was defence. He then went on to say that that was because NATO was responsible for peace and defence. He knows a lot about those issues, and he knows that that is incorrect.

If the hon. Gentleman refreshes his memory about the modified Brussels treaty which established the Western European Union, he will recall that the WEU was originally established as an economic, social and defence organisation. When the European Community was originally formed, its economic and social aspects were transferred to the EC, and defence remained the prerogative of the WEU. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will accept that.

Sir Teddy Taylor: The hon. Gentleman knows far more about that than most hon. Members. On the particular point about the WEU, he is right. However, I hope that he will accept my point that the WEU was not responsible for defence policy.

Mr. Michael Stephen (Shoreham): My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) was right to point out that defence is excluded from the European Community. However, he is being less than fair. Surely the point of the European Coal and Steel Community was so to intermingle the coal and steel industries of France and Germany that those countries could never take up arms against each other again.

Sir Teddy Taylor: It is odd to mention coal in this argument. We are in favour of free trade so that goods can cross frontiers easily. However, what is happening to British coal mines today? We are closing pits which are producing coal at £40 a tonne or less, when Germany is producing coal at more than £86 a tonne and other European countries are producing coal at more than £100 a tonne. They are doing that with artificial subsidies. After the British miners have produced cheaper coal, they have been kicked in the teeth, because we are not getting the free trade in Europe that we thought we would get.

My hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) made a wise point about defence. Not only did the Belgians not provide the ammunition in that defence problem, but the Irish said that, because they were what they called an independent country, they were unable to implement United Nations resolutions.

The French are delightful people, but they sent an army with severe restrictions imposed on it. The poor American commander panicked so much that he had to have the French army defend a sultan's palace because he was not

quite sure what to do with it. The Germans very strangely did the right thing, and 200 of their firms provided the poison gas and extended the Scud missiles for the Iraqis.

The amendment does not make the slightest difference, unless the issue is the money resolution. The money resolution is the key. Why on earth can we not have a money resolution? We know that the Bill will cost us a fortune. Civil servants will be employed and many things will be done which will cost money. We do not have a money resolution, and we know that, by not having one, many of the things that we should be discussing in the Bill cannot be discussed. If Ministers and hon. Members knew the nightmares that other hon. Members, Labour and Conservative, have been engaged in, trying to find a form of words to enable us to have a debate on a referendum, they would realise why this is important.

I see no objection to the amendment of the Liberal Democrats. It would not make the slightest difference one way or the other. It would not mean the Government promoting more legislation, it would by no means affect court decisions, and even in Europe, where it could affect court decisions to have this, it is going to be in the treaty anyway. On the other hand, the one thing that we must not say to the Liberal Democrats is that this means that we support it.

I want to mention one particular proposal and one particular part of it—the question of citizenship. Some people have laughed at the citizenship concept, but citizenship of the European union contains symbolism of enormous power. The practical rights to be given to citizens of the European union could instead have been conferred on a reciprocal basis on the citizens of other member states. We could have had this question of being able to vote in elections, and all the rest of it. What has been introduced, however, is something very strange.

It is, of course, argued that British citizens will remain British citizens even after they become citizens of the union. No doubt this is so, in the same way as British citizens are still citizens of London, Birmingham or wherever they happen to live. But the effect of this tiny amendment to take out this part is to remove from the treaty the commitment to what some people say is the unitary, and some people say is the federalist, nature of the European union.

The notion of citizenship was introduced not by the Government but by Mr. Felipe Gonzalez, the Spanish Prime Minister, and endorsed by the Commission and others. The Commission considered that it would encourage a feeling of involvement in European integration. The Commission proposed that this should be written into the treaty—the rights of residence and of movement, and the right to take part in local and national elections stayed exactly the same.

We must bear in mind that the establishment of a European union does not mean just that people will be able to vote in elections. Some of us think it a bit daft to say that because someone is French he should be able to vote in Derbyshire.

Mrs. Currie: It is worth pointing out that we have lived happily for a very long time with the fact that Irish citizens can vote in all our elections and even become hon. Members. Perhaps my hon. Friend will explain to us what is so awful about the rights which are clearly set out under the citizenship articles and which are very simple: the right to vote and stand in local and European elections, the right to diplomatic and consular protection, the right to petition the European Parliament and the creation of a new ombudsman.

Sir Teddy Taylor: I hope that my hon. Friend will genuinely think about this. There is nothing wrong at all, if we want it, in saying that people should be able to vote in elections if they have a house here. An American, an Australian, a Pakistani or a Frenchman who has a house in Britain and pays local taxes should be able to vote in elections, and I have no objection to that. We can pass a law saying that they can do this. But we are not doing that. We are saying that if a Frenchman has a house in Derbyshire he can vote but an Australian or an American or someone else cannot. What can possibly be the logic of this kind of discrimination?

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): That is not actually true. Australians, Canadians and other members of the Commonwealth can vote if based in Great Britain.

Sir Teddy Taylor: My understanding is that a citizen of the United States is unable to.

The point that I am trying to make is that even if we wanted to sort this out we could do so quite easily by some little provision in British law. The key element of the citizenship Bill is not whether one can vote or petition an ombudsman but what is contained at the end of the section, i.e., the Council of Ministers having the power to strengthen and add to the rights laid down. There is to be a three-year review of one's citizenship duties. If we let this go through, every three years there will be a complete review of the position and the Council of Ministers will be able to add anything it likes to the duties of European citizens. Hon. Members have been told in the past that the common agricultural policy would mean fair prices for the consumer and the housewife, and we have seen what happened. Hon. Members were told that the exchange rate mechanism would guarantee growth and stability, and we have seen what happened. We have been led down the garden path time and time again. We are told that citizenship will mean only certain things, but it will mean more. Hon. Members must wake up to the fact that the introduction of European citizenship will mean the basis of a unitary state with European citizens and not the establishment of a federal Europe—that would be a step forward from what we have. I can never understand why the Government keep on saying that they will fight against a federal Europe to the bitter end; a federal Europe would be a step forward.

7.15 pm

At least with a federal Europe some things would belong to us and some things to them. At present nothing is guaranteed for us at all, the way things are developing.

Mrs. Gorman: Is it not a fact that already, whether or not other Europeans can vote in our country, whether or not they pay tax in our country, they can come and live here and receive the benefits of the welfare system of our country? It is possible for someone from Europe to retire to this country, never having contributed a halfpenny towards the taxes, and to draw income support and benefits which have been paid for by the British taxpayer.

Sir Teddy Taylor: My hon. Friend is absolutely right, as always.

Mr. Devlin: It is completely unfair to agree with one hon. Friend who makes a contention like that and not agree with the other contention which is also true, that British citizens can go and live in Spain, Portugal, France, Greece or any other country and draw their benefits and pensions in those countries as well. A great number of my constituents are currently taking advantage of this.

Sir Teddy Taylor: I accept that my hon. Friend is a sincere person who has considered his views carefully. I hope that he will appreciate, with all these extra rights and entitlements, that if we had equal application of laws throughout a united Europe things would be much better for these people. Sadly, we do not have that equality of treatment. To illustrate what I mean, I ask him to look at agricultural policy and the way we have not equality but wide variation.

I ask my hon. Friends to look at the citizenship issue. It is not just a small question; this is the big stuff. Listen to Bob Marley. It is all there. Perhaps hon. Members do not know that Bob Marley was a great singer, a Rastafarian, and some of his songs are the most wonderful one could have. One of them tells the whole story of what Government say to us year after year: please do not worry about anything because everything is going to be all right. That is what we have been told time and time again, and every time it has blown up in our faces. I say to those hon. Members who are not worried about citizenship that it does not just mean voting in council elections. I ask them to think about the three-year review and about the fact that the Council of Ministers will be able to act without limit.

The Government may ask if we have no faith in them and in their ability to protect us, but that is not how the European Community works. The Government have to do nasty things to get agreement on other things. Hon. Members who doubt this should look at the 40-hour week directive. How many hon. Members know that we have already agreed that French bakers will be exempt but British bakers will not? Why? Not because we think it is sensible or right but because, in EC bargaining, one thing has to be given for another.

I hope that right hon. and hon. Members will think about this matter. There is no reason why they should or should not vote for the Liberal Democrats' amendment. It will make not the slightest bit of difference to anyone. It will have no impact, except that it might just make a money resolution possible.

I sincerely hope that, as they proceed through the Bill, hon. Members will think back to the Single European Act and all the pledges that were given, will think back to the treaty of Rome, and will think back to the time when the poor former Prime Minister was a great lady who said, "If you only give a wee bit more money to the CAP, we will wipe out all the mountains, we will start again, and the problems will not arise again." They are always going to arise.

The people who suffer are not people such as myself —they are not politicians. The people who suffer are the ordinary people of Britain who have suffered hugely, who have lost jobs, and who have found that the economy is part of a declining area of the world. Europe's share of world trade is going down and down, the economies of Europe are going down and down, and the ordinary people of Europe are suffering. We have to find some other way out. The other way out for me is to say no to Maastricht and then, in respect of our present Prime Minister, to say, "Let us promote a treaty on real subsidiarity which would take powers back."

I am sorry that I have taken a bit longer than I expected, Mr. Lofthouse. You have seen that I was deliberately interrupted to try to keep the debate going. However, I should like to put across a simple message. Remember the threat to people, remember the injuries, and remember Bob Marley's song. If we remember that, we will remember that there is a big battle for the people of Britain, for democracy, for freedom and for liberty.

Mr. Benn: After listening to the past two days of debate, one thing has become clear in my mind, and that is that this issue divides every party and every country and could, in certain circumstances, realign British politics. That point needs to be made because, if anyone imagines that commitment to either side of the argument is shallow, he is quite wrong. There are some who are passionately committed to the federal Europe in its most unitary sense and always have been, and there are those—I am one of them—who believe that we are Members of Parliament only because our electors sent us to Parliament and that their rights must be paramount. They are very deep matters. The House of Commons is not the place to reach that decision.

After listening to the debate, with the many complex arguments—we have heard long and important speeches —it has become clear to me that those are matters that the public alone can determine.

I cannot see any reason for speaking in the debate other than to try as best I can to explore what the treaty means, to clarify its implications and to explain to the people who sent me here, in particular, what effect the treaty will have upon their lives and upon their future. I am here only because they have lent me powers, and I have no moral authority to give them away. I have told the Opposition Chief Whip that nothing in the world would alter my conviction, because one cannot ask an hon. Member to give away what he does not own. That is my position, and I say it in a way that I am sure the Committee will understand.

I am very glad that the Liberal Democrats have moved the amendment, because, whether people vote for or against it, it will make no difference; it will be embodied in the treaty. Therefore, the Liberal Democrats' amendment has merely provided for us the opportunity to have an extremely important debate which had to be held, and for that we must be grateful.

Before we examine the question of European union, we should look at the position of the House of Commons in deciding how to deal with the Bill. Much will be made of the subject of ratification and of a money resolution, but the House of Commons has been held in check by the Crown. I am not talking about the Queen and the royal family; I am talking about the Crown as a legal institution since the 17th century. It is important to understand that none of us can be Members of Parliament without taking an oath of allegiance to the Crown. I am a republican.

Mrs. Gorman: Yes.

Mr. Benn: When I went to the Table after the April general election, I said, "As a committed republican, I solemnly declare and affirm that I will bear faithful and true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, her

heirs and successors according to law," because that was what my electors told me to say when they elected me. At the same time, that was the Crown.

I now refer to the treaty itself. The matter is not as obscure as it might have appeared when I tried to develop the argument. How was the Foreign Secretary able to go to Maastricht and sign the treaty? It was because he had the authority of the Crown to sign the treaty. The Queen had given plenipotentiary powers to the Foreign Secretary, so the treaty was initialled—it has not yet been ratified—by the Foreign Secretary under Crown powers. We are not even allowed to discuss the Bill without the Queen's consent—the Crown's consent—because it touches on the prerogatives of the Crown.

I have introduced various Bills which touch on the prerogative, few of which have reached the statute book. I have had to write to the Home Secretary on each occasion and I have received letters from him saying that Her Majesty had graciously placed her prerogatives at the disposal of the House of Commons for the purpose of discussing this or that Bill. That is the next element of the Crown. Of course, if the Bill is passed, it will require the assent of the Crown—Royal Assent. We cannot have a referendum, we have been told, because the right to promote expenditure belongs to the Crown. That is why a money resolution cannot be tabled by a Back-Bench Member. Only the Crown, through the voice of a Secretary of State, can table a money resolution.

If the Bill becomes law, it will confer upon British Ministers greater prerogative powers in Brussels than they now have. Those laws passed by treaty-making powers of the Crown will be capable of wiping out legislation passed by both Houses of Parliament and assented to in a subordinate way by the Crown.

The hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) gave an example of legislation that had been overridden by Common Market legislation—I think that it was the Bank of England Act 1946. I give him another example. In 1945, just after the atomic bomb was dropped, the post-war Government, with general consent, passed a resolution saying that all atomic material, including uranium, found in Britain belonged to the Government. Of course, Euratom is a federal system. When I raised the matter with Commissioner Brunner I was told, "I am sorry, but the Atomic Energy Act 1946 has now been subsumed in Euratom. Everything that we now do in Brussels is done by the Crown."

The reason why the House of Commons is frustrated is that, in terms of legislation, we are back to where we were before 1649. *[Laughter.]* Conservative Members laugh. I was on the Council of Ministers for five years—I was once the president. Every time I assented to everything, I assented by the powers of the Crown. I am not trying to provoke anybody. I am trying to explain to people outside why the House of Commons is impotent in the matter. It is already impotent because of the treaty of Rome, but it is a fact that all laws that are made in the union—that is what it is—and made with the assent of British Ministers will represent a growth of prerogative power.

Before we consider what the union might do to us in terms of our system of government, let us realise what that enterprise has done to us already in a strictly domestic context. The House of Commons has passed over to the Crown the powers of law making which it won hundreds of years ago, for which there is no parallel. In the first years in which I was a Member of Parliament, as far as I could make out, there was no capacity for the Crown to make laws except within the very narrow domestic context as with security services, or whatever.

Mr. Richard Shepherd: When I catch the Chairman's eye, I hope to continue discussion of some of these points, but does the right hon. Gentleman accept that if the House of Commons votes down and damns this lamentable Bill, the treaty will be killed? Therefore, we can affect the use of prerogative power and the effects which the Government seek to bring about.

7.30 pm

Mr. Benn: If we defeat the Bill, we can prevent the extension of prerogative power; but some of it has already slipped through our fingers, in 1972, without it ever being made explicit what was happening.

The last point that I make about Crown powers—I hope nobody will understand me—is that when Government Whips press Back-Bench Members to support a Bill, one weapon which they use is the granting or withholding of patronage under the powers of the Crown. I do not know much about the Conservative party, but I dare say that an elderly Conservative Member, planning to retire at the next election, might find it harder to have a peerage given to him if he voted against the Maastricht treaty, because knighthoods, baronetcies and peerages may be withheld according to the discipline of the Whips.

Indeed, for younger Members the prospect of getting a Crown appointment as a Minister of the Crown may be affected if there is disloyalty on the Maastricht treaty. I am told that in the Conservative party even an invitation to a royal garden party may be dangled or withdrawn if Members are not in line.

The point I am trying to make—and I am doing little more than giving an account of how this place works—is that when we look at a story from the beginning, through the legislation, through the ratification which is done by Crown prerogative, through to the pressure of the Whips, the Commons has never completed the work which it began in 1688. Therefore, for that reason if for no other, it is not a body capable of dealing with this act of union for which the Bill provides.

Mr. Carol Jones: When the right hon. Gentleman was a distinguished holder of office under the Crown in the last, now distant, Labour Administration, had it become apparent to him at that time the way in which the Crown prerogative was being abused, and did he take steps at that time to make that known to his colleagues and try to rectify it, or has it become apparent to him, as it were, in later life?

Mr. Benn: The right hon. Gentleman invites me to make a speech twice as long as the one I intended to make. I was thrown out of Parliament by Crown prerogative. My father was made a peer, and when he died I was thrown out of the House because that prerogative had given me a peerage. The Speaker would not let me in. The right hon. Gentleman should not try to tell me that I just learnt this to make a speech tonight. That is an insult to me but also an insult to a life-long commitment to the democratic principle that I hope people accept.

Mr. Carol Jones: I do not think anyone would put that in doubt. Indeed, the battle that the right hon. Gentleman

[Mr. Garel-Jones]

fought in those days was admired and, I think, supported by some of my hon. Friends. The question that I was asking was about the time when he was a Minister of the Crown and was exercising Crown prerogative as a Minister of the Crown. That is the question to which I was seeking an answer. Certainly I would not seek to question the right hon. Gentleman's commitment to the democratic process. I hope he did not understand that in any way.

Mr. Benn: I do not know what the right hon. Gentleman meant. If I responded strongly, it was because of the suggestion that I was cooking up a phoney argument to promote opposition to this Bill. If the right hon. Gentleman really wants to know, when I was made a Cabinet Minister and a Privy Councillor, and saw the Privy Councillor's oath, it was so revolting that I asked not to have to take it. It pledged me to all sorts of things about foreign prelates and potentates. The right hon. Gentleman has probably seen it. When I went to the Cabinet Office and it was read to me, I said at the end that I had never agreed to it. The clerk to the Privy Council said, "You do not have to agree." I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "I have administered the oath." I never knew that a Privy Councillor's oath was an injection. I did not want it; I did not agree; I got it administered, and all it does is occasionally, not always, give me a chance to speak in the House.

This is a point of substance. In 1968 I argued for a referendum. I may sound like Harold Wilson in remembering where it was, but it was at the Welsh conference of the Labour party in Llandudno. Some Cabinet colleagues demanded that I be dismissed from the Cabinet for mentioning a referendum. In the end I persuaded my party to go for it. My right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the Opposition voted for the referendum. The deputy Leader of the Opposition was a Whip who voted for a referendum. It all took time. We lost Roy Jenkins on the way. I do not know how to describe it, but he resigned because he did not want the public to be consulted.

I should like to come back to my line of argument, but I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will agree that both on the renunciation of the peerage and on the referendum my commitment for many years has been that the people should decide who is to be their Member of Parliament and whether he should go.

Coming back to my argument, I can revert to my role as a lecturer for the Workers Educational Association. Let us look at what union would mean. There has been talk about citizenship and so on. Let me try to make it clear to those who might be watching the debate at home on television—the whole debate should be televised—that it makes a fundamental difference in the relationship between an elector and a Member of Parliament.

One reason that we do not have many riots in Britain is that people can have a say. Over many years I have said, "Do not riot; vote. You can defeat the Government. In that way you can change policy and you will achieve what you want by peaceful means." People do not realise that democracy hangs on a very slender, delicate thread. If the link is broken and people realise that, no matter for whom they vote in an election, decisions will be taken by the European union, I do not say that they will riot, but we could not argue against action taken directly by them because there was no democratic route for the solution to their problem.

Mr. Michael Lord (Suffolk, Central): Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that one precious thing about the House of Commons is the way in which we as Members of Parliament can talk to our constituents when we are in our constituencies and come back the next week and get hold of Ministers to get things done? If we have a problem about, say, roads or hospitals, we can grab the Minister responsible and get something done. I represent an agricultural constituency. Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that, because our agricultural powers have been given to Europe, I as a Member representing farmers now have great difficulty in getting anything done for the people whom I represent? It goes exactly to the point that the right hon. Gentleman is making; frustration builds up not just among Members but among constituents. In many ways I feel that I am unable to do the job that I was sent here to do.

Mr. Benn: The hon. Gentleman points to a problem that has already arisen deriving from the treaty of Rome, which I do not want to go into because we are discussing its extension. He is right. The work of Members in their constituencies is one of the most unreported aspects of an hon. Member's life. I do not know how many letters other hon. Members receive. I assume that we all get approximately the same number. If they were grossed up, we would find that hundreds of thousands of representations made to hon. Members are never reported because the media is not interested in democracy but only in politicians, which is a different speciality.

I have sat in Cabinets when papers have come from Ministers written by their civil servants. Other Ministers may say, "It may look good to the Department of Health but it would not deal with the problem that came up at my surgery last Friday." That relationship is important. It educates Members, and we represent our constituents' views.

Another point which has not been touched on is that, because of the way law making is done in the Community, even if it is by qualified majority, it is easy to make a law but there has to be the same majority or unanimity to repeal it.

For many years it has rightly been a principle of this House that no Parliament can bind its successors. In European union every decision binds its successors because one cannot change it. Even if a British Government were elected on the issue of repealing a piece of this legislation, prospective Members of Parliament would not be able to tell the electorate that they would repeal it because the mechanism to do so would not exist. European Community legislation is like a lobster pot—it is easy to get in but very difficult to get out.

I do not have to dwell at great length on the second aspect of the treaty as I have dealt with it already. The Council of Ministers is a Parliament and not a Cabinet—it makes the laws. It is the only Parliament in the world to meet in secret.

During the British presidency in 1977, I tabled a motion that the Council should meet in public. Ministers would have died rather than agree. They all went to the Council, saying that they were going to defend this or that. When they got there they did all the deals and did not want

anyone to know what happened. It is as if this Parliament met in secret. From that point of view the Council is totally undemocratic—but decisions made there by British Ministers are made by royal prerogative in any case.

The third difference is that between the elected and appointed part of our constitution. Anyone who has been a Minister knows that civil servants work to a Minister. They may be difficult, but one can tell them, "I want this paper put to the Cabinet."

At the Council of Ministers no one is allowed to submit a paper. Ministers can only act on the initiative of the Commission. I have sat on every committee that I can think of—from the local party to the national executive and the shadow Cabinet—but the Council of Ministers is the only committee where, even as president for energy, I could not submit a paper to the other Members because the powers of initiation are vested in the Commission. That will be a fundamental change and it is not altered in any way by the Maastricht treaty.

At the Council, Ministers have to try to bully Commissioners who are appointed to submit a paper in the hope that their idea may come back before it.

Mr. Spearing *rose*——

Mr. Benn: I do not want to take too long, as I am trying to get a lot into one speech, but I shall give way.

Mr. Spearing: Is not that argument vital? It is an illustration of why so many of us say that the European Community is intrinsically authoritarian. The authority for any initiative lies with the Commission. Furthermore, it is important for title I, as in articles A to F, and the two pillars—home and foreign affairs—it is written in the treaty that the Commission shall be fully associated with these matters and has the duty of co-ordinating the totality.

7.45 pm

Mr. Benn: My hon. Friend is opening up the question very fully. It is true that the Commission has great powers. I shall give the House two examples. Viscount Davignon, who was the Commissioner for industry, and Guido Brunner told me, when I was an elected Secretary of State, that I could not insist that North sea oil be refined in Britain, and that that oil should come under the terms of the treaty of Rome. Secondly, I tried to continue a scheme introduced by the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath) when he was Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, whereby he supported Scottish industries working in North sea oil—it got a slightly lower rate of interest. *[Interruption.]*

The First Deputy Chairman: Will those hon. Members holding a sub-committee on the other side of the Bar please hold it outside the Chamber?

Mr. Benn: That is subsidiarity at work—one just goes on talking and no one takes any notice.

The Commissioners told me that if I continued the scheme introduced by the former party leader they would take me to court—and they did. They chose polling day in 1979, when I was on my bicycle anyway.

Do not think that the power of the Commission to initiate actions to frustrate an elected Government in Britain is not real—it is. I can imagine circumstances when a Government, elected by a huge majority—it does not matter of which party—to do something, did it and was then told by civil servants, "I'm sorry, Minister, what you are doing is illegal." What would happen if the elected Government were not able to carry forward their policy? There would be a major constitutional crisis.

Mrs. Gorman *rose*——

Mr. Benn: I shall give way when I have finished the analysis.

The treaty transfers power from politicians to the courts. In Europe, courts are different from those in Britain. They are political and do not pretend to be impartial, as they do here. The continental legal tradition is that law is a new way to implement constitutions and policies. Elected British Ministers could be taken to the court on citizenship, or on any other issue, and they would find that their power had been transferred—from the electorate and Parliament—to judges. Once one got into that situation, one would not be able to get out of it.

I am not misery-mongering, but trying to look ahead at the nature of the constitution and of the political crises that could lie ahead if we made such changes.

One only has to listen to some of the speeches on the issue to realise that the Bill is advocated by people of a managerial bent. I see myself as a representative: I am here to represent the people. I hear many of those who advocate the treaty say that they view the handling of Europe as the good management of Europe. They say that we must manage the exchange rate, trade, this or that. I have no doubt that most of them would be well qualified to be Commissioners. However, managers without consent never get very far, even in industry.

Those five changes in relationship—between the electors and Members, between Members and the Government, between the legislature and the executive, between the Commons and the Commission, between the political and judicial and the representative and managerial—are all inherent in the treaty. People must not merely troop in at the end of the Third Reading; they must understand what the treaty is about. Because of the nature of the changes, I believe that the public and the electors, who put us here, must decide whether they wish them to be made.

Mrs. Gorman: The right hon. Gentleman has in part dealt with my point—which is that there is a fundamental difference in the way in which law is construed in this country. We have the common law, by practice, from the people and upward. The continental system is decided by codes and handed down from above, as the right hon. Gentleman illustrated. In our system of government we have a tradition of "by the people and for the people", whereas they have a tradition of government of the people. That is quite different from the way in which we view our citizenship.

Mr. Benn: If the hon. Lady heard what I said about the role of the Crown, she would realise that I do not share her view that we are very democratic; but that is another matter. The continental system is different and the laws cannot be changed by the mechanism with which we have become familiar for many years.

Mr. Dalyell: I do not know whether it is a term of abuse, but I am surprised to be accused of being of "managerial bent". Does that bent also apply to the overwhelming majority at the Labour party conference?

Mr. Benn: I shall come to the Labour party in a moment—I have to be delicate about it. If I had any doubt about my hon. Friend, it would be that his towering intellect may so induce him to observe the scene from the top that managerial ideas might enter into his mind, although I know that he is a good constituency Member of Parliament.

To sum up, Bagehot, in his book on the English constitution, said that the Crown was the dignified and the House of Commons the effective part of the constitution. Now the Crown is the effective and the House of Commons is the dignified. Crown powers now determine our policy, but the Commons has all the glory of television, the Speaker and all the glamour of our debates. But we are simply performing a dignified function. That is the nature of the transformation that has taken place since 1972.

Mr. Hoon: My right hon. Friend rightly criticises the fact that only the Commission currently has the right to initiate legislation in the European Community. Does that mean that he supports the provision in the Maastricht treaty that enhances the European Parliament's ability to initiate legislation? Does it follow from his criticism that he wants the European Parliament to initiate more legislation in the future?

Mr. Benn: I want the Commission abolished, because no civilised democratic country would allow any power whatever to be in the hands of unelected people who cannot be removed. I have drafted a Bill, which my hon. Friend may have seen, called the Commonwealth of Europe Bill, under which we would have a secretary-general and would harmonise the 50 countries of Europe by consent through an assembly. The assembly would agree to conventions to which member states would adhere.

The United States would never agree to be governed by commissioners. If we were to have a fully federal united states of Europe, the first casualty would be the Commission, the second would be the Council of Ministers, and the treaty of Maastricht would be burned as the British flag was burned in 1776. So please do not tell me that the treaty is a route to democracy. It is a pathway back to the feudal past.

One of our difficulties is that all the party leaders agree about the Maastricht treaty. I realise that there is a difference on the social chapter and economic and monetary union, but if party leaders were in a Cabinet of all the talents, the Bill would go through in two minutes. The Labour leader would simply add the social chapter in the event of Labour winning an election, which is why the Opposition Front Bench is almost deserted. I think that the Opposition's tactics are to have a one-line Whip so that the Bill will go through with a Government majority. Otherwise, we would have a crowded Front Bench eager to hear my speech and make their own.

I must explore the problem raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) about the Labour party's position. If we are to explore how decisions are reached, I must explore with him how the Labour party's decision was reached. I am on the national executive and have been for longer than anyone in the Labour party's history. I voted against the manifesto at the March meeting because we were told that the party was in favour of the Maastricht treaty, despite the fact that it had not been signed at the time of the previous conference and had not even then been published in English. My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) and I made no fuss, but voted against the manifesto, as the executive record shows. When I went to Chesterfield, I took the precaution of getting somebody to make a video of my speech explaining my view on Europe. I honestly do not believe that there is Labour support for the Maastricht treaty.

At the 1992 annual conference, a Bolsover delegate put forward a motion about a referendum. I argued for it at the conference and Alan Tuffin of the Union of Communication Workers argued and voted against it. I discovered later that his delegation had voted for the referendum.

If we are to discuss how Parliament works, we had better also discuss how the party works. The hon. Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) may rub his hands, but the truth can never be harmful when we are discussing the future government of the country. I am lucky because I cannot be bullied by the Whips. If they offered me a peerage, they would be misjudging my ambitions. I do not need cash and will not get office. I am a free man. Had I known what fun it was to be 60 years old, I would have done it years ago. I intend to speak my mind. For me, the Bill is about whether we shall remain an imperfect democracy or become part of a Euro nationalism. Euro nationalism is being put around our necks under an authoritarian system.

Mr. Michael Carttiss (Great Yarmouth): I wonder whether the right hon. Gentleman considers himself fortunate in a way that I would not normally have done: at least he had a party conference at which the members of his party had an opportunity to debate the issue and reach conclusions. That is more than what happened to my party.

Mr. Benn: I once attended a Conservative party conference in 1955 for the BBC. Enoch Powell and I went along and I had a research assistant who is sitting behind me, my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore). I have never forgotten the atmosphere, which was quite different from that of the Labour party. Nobody discussed politics after the conference had adjourned. They all put on evening dress and had dinner.

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. This is all very entertaining, but the Committee has sufficient problems without dealing with party mechanics.

Mr. Benn: I was responding to a problem put to me by the hon. Member for Great Yarmouth (Mr. Carttiss) about his party. I was trying to explain that it is an old problem.

I believe passionately in Europe. I lost a brother and many friends in the last world war and I share the view that Europe must get beyond nationalism. We must explore ways of co-operating.

Europe contains 50 countries, not just 12. I want harmonisation to be at the pace of those who can go along with it, for a practical reason. It is already clear that, because of the existing Community institutions, when anything goes wrong people blame the Germans. It is the fault not of the Germans but of the treaty of Rome. There has been hostility towards the Italians. The awful wartime

language spoke of the huns, the wops, and the Iti's, and, reading *The Sun*, one sees that we are not far from that now.

Democratic consent is delicate. Therefore, if we try to hurry beyond the capacity to absorb and accept the implications, I fear that the matter will end like Yugoslavia, which was an imposed federation, or the so-called "socialist camp" of communist countries, which was imposed. I know that it is not exactly the same, but the problems of unemployment are caused not by the Germans, but by the role of bankers in forcing down economic policy to the point where there is mass unemployment. We must keep our eye on the real issue and not allow it to degenerate into an attack on other nationalities.

Why have the British people allowed the treaty to go so far? I am no historian, but we were conquered by a Roman, Julius Caesar; we were then conquered by William the Conqueror in 1066; James I was then brought down from Scotland; William III then came over from Holland; and George I, who was a German, then ruled. Indeed, until the first world war, the royal family was called Saxe-Coburg-Gotha. It changed its name to Windsor and got rid of some German dukes—the Duke of Cumberland was de-duked. I went into the matter to see whether I could get the same right. We now have a Prince of Wales whose father is a Greek.

Thus, we have as a nation been trained to accept that we shall be governed by other nationalities. Because of the defect in our democracy, Britain has a culture of subservience that makes us accept that Jacques Delors should have those powers. When Jacques Delors came to Britain, the BBC asked him whether we were good Europeans, bowing and scraping to him like the Dimblebys bow and scrape to the royal family. We are a nation trained to bow and scrape, so, naturally, when we are told that the Crown prerogative will ratify the treaty, people say, "How could we be unkind to the Queen Mother?", as if she were ratifying the treaty. It will be ratified not by the Queen Mother but by the godfather in No. 10. It is a matter of national confidence.

Hon. Members have asked how we can deny the Danes or other member states the right to the social chapter by voting against it. No rights were ever given to anybody from the top. All rights have been won. If the Danes want rights, they must elect a Government that will give them those rights and we should have to do the same. We sit at home watching "Newsnight" and Peter Snow with his ruddy computer and are told that Jacques Delors has given us social justice. That is absolute rubbish. All our rights, including the right to vote, to trade unions, to the welfare state and to full employment, were struggled for by our people using our mechanism.

8 pm

The idea that somehow the third world will benefit if we enter this arrangement is an illusion. It is not true, and it encourages the idea that we are no good. I have never believed in the conspiracy theory, but I do not believe that democracy is such a powerful force that some people have wanted to try to take it back. Not long ago the suffragettes had their problems. I put a plaque in the broom cupboard in the Crypt to the memory of Emily Wilding Davidson. There are no memorials in this place to the people who fought for democracy.

The best way to get round democracy is to pass the real power to someone who is not elected and cannot be removed. This treaty is an anti-chartist, anti-suffragette campaign. We have been told for years that this nation is not good enough to govern itself, that it has to be governed from Brussels. We have been told that we cannot defend ourselves but must have NATO, and that we cannot organise our economy and must have the IMF. We are told that this is a nation of lazy workers—militant shop stewards, inefficient managers and football hooligans—a nation waiting for discipline. Of course, the discipline will come from Europe.

I apologise for making such a long speech, and I hope that no hon. Member will accuse me of trying to delay the debate. I genuinely try to argue without being offensive to anyone. These are big questions. I have spoken to Mr. Morris again about a referendum being paid for by the Community because we must find a way to give people that right. We are not entitled to decide this matter ourselves. If we do and people turn against the treaty, there will be no mechanism by which they could share the responsibility for a decision that affected their lives.

I beg all hon. Members—those who are for, as well as those who are against, the Maastricht treaty—to agree with the principle that the matter must be determined by everybody in our land. All the arguments could be taken to the people, and they are not so foolish that they could not absorb and understand them. We are talking about their lives, not ours.

Mr. John Butcher (Coventry, South-West): On a point of order, Mr. Chairman, which I assure you is a real one. Yesterday through the courtesy of the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, my right hon. Friend the Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones), and with the indulgence of the Chair, there was a fairly complex exchange, almost an interrogation, on the question of whether title I bit on some parts of the treaty and prevented certain parts of it being enforceable in law in this country. I genuinely seek guidance on this point because it will determine whether title I of the treaty can be debated in the terms in which many of us wish it to be debated. My right hon. Friend the Minister of State was entirely correct to say that under article L, title I is not justiciable by the European Court. That is reported in columns 183-84 of yesterday's *Official Report*.

There is contrary legal advice that it would be taken into account in interpreting all those parts of the treaty that are amendments to the treaty of Rome and subsequent associated treaties. Title I is binding in international law, and although it may not be justiciable in the terms that my right hon. Friend announced, that is not the same as saying that it is not binding. I have a document which should be tabled for our elucidation. It is the Van Gend En Loos judgment of the European Court of 5 February 1963. It follows——

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. It is not the Chair's job to interpret the Bill or the law. Therefore, that is not a point of order for the Chair.

Mr. Butcher: Further to that point of order, Mr. Lofthouse. Is it not a matter for the Chair that the debate should proceed on a basis of clear understanding of the constitutional implications of title I? I have a terrible fear that even in the area of foreign policy cited by my right hon. Friend the Minister of State, the clauses, if traced

[Mr. Butcher]

through the treaty, could bind us to foreign policy by majority voting. That should be explained to the Committee because we have been given the impression that that is not the case.

The First Deputy Chairman: That is a matter that can be raised in the debate, and if the hon. Gentleman is successful in catching my eye he will be able to put that point.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): As usual the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) delivered a fascinating and fundamental speech. He always treats us to such speeches and we are grateful. At the start of it he alluded to the amendments but did not reach them because he was carried away by other issues. Those of us who wished to refer to some of the themes presented in the amendment tabled by the Liberal Democrats and related amendments found, as we usually find, that the Committee descends, generally on the second day, into a general and broad Second Reading debate. Some hon. Members return to such issues as whether it is right to be a member of the Community while others, including me, say that it is a good idea.

That is both good and bad, although it involves the constant tedious repetition of points that are made in almost every European debate. I exclude late night debates under the old system of scrutiny. If people outside pay attention to our debates, they do not seem to have become alarmed over the years about the so-called surrender of national and constitutional rights that were mentioned repeatedly by the right hon. Member for Chesterfield. I do not think that people as a whole share his anxieties.

I have always paid tribute to the profundity of the right hon. Gentleman's thoughts and I recently re-read the excellent biography by Sydney Higgins about the right hon. Gentleman's political life and work. According to that writer, the right hon. Gentleman hardly ever did anything wrong. The right hon. Gentleman personifies the proud struggle for the achievement of parliamentary rights in the more modern context and more traditionally in his emotional and intellectual attachment to the old historical rights that Parliament has won.

Those who are keen to see the legislation proceed rapidly feel entitled to complain about the Government's timidity and slowness in dealing with an entirely brief, routine technical Bill. It provides for certain provisions to enter United Kingdom law and the amendments to the treaties that we have already signed. That would be followed by ratification of the treaty, although that is not the subject of this debate.

The Government could have proceeded much earlier this year after Second Reading. We know, either by speculation or from direct knowledge, the rather sad reasons why that was not done. That has given the right hon. Gentleman and others who see terrors in the gradual development of the European Community through this latest treaty the excuse or reason to say that the nightmare is developing beyond the control of the British people and constitution.

Those of us who welcome the Maastricht treaty disagree profoundly and directly, as everybody knows. Our advantage is that the huge majority of hon. Members are on our side and that none of them shares the terrors, anxieties and apprehensions of a small minority of hon. Members. At present most of that small minority are Conservatives, but the thread of the speech by the right hon. Member for Chesterfield was that the Labour party might start to unravel some of its solidarity on these matters and show that it is not quite capable of holding what appears to be the strong position of Labour Front-Bench spokesmen.

I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) who delivered an excellent speech yesterday.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): My hon. Friend was solid.

Mr. Dykes: Perhaps the thread of the hon. Lady's thoughts will also turn out to be correct.

The hon. Member for Hamilton explained why the amendments were incorrect and should not be accepted, in spite of the impeccable credentials of the Liberal Democrats in European matters. That is not the same as saying that the amendments were intrinsically faulty.

Mrs. Ann Winterton (Congleton): My hon. Friend may have forgotten that, although it may be only a small majority of Conservative Members who oppose the Maastricht Bill, the one thing that strengthens their case is that the majority of people outside this place support them. It is extremely arrogant for hon. Members to talk in that way when the people have not had their voice heard, nor been given an opportunity to voice their concerns. At the last general election, Maastricht was not an issue. The very fact that it was not discussed—the only issue at the last election was who should govern Britian, it was a simple election—meant the people of the country have not had a voice in this matter. They have also had no opportunity to make their voice heard through a referendum, which has been refused by the Government for the simple reason that they know that the issue would be defeated.

Mr. Dykes: All that I can do is express a profound sense of shock that my hon. Friend wishes to undermine the sacred constitutional sovereignty of the House. The right hon. Member for Chesterfield is in favour of a referendum, as are a small number of hon. Members on both sides of the House—*[Interruption.]* Sedentary interruptions are often more disconcerting than standing ones, but for the moment I shall carry on. If the opportunity provides itself, I shall give way later to the hon. Member for Blyth Valley (Mr. Campbell).

A small minority of Members of Parliament is in favour of a referendum, but I can think of nothing that more undermines the sacred constitutional sovereignty of the House of Commons—the centre and kernel of political parliamentary power as described by the right hon. Member for Chesterfield.

Mrs. Winterton: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Dykes: No. My hon. Friend's intervention was lengthy and verging on the repetitious, and I must be allowed to reply. That a referendum would undermine the sovereignty of the House is a fundamental error in my hon. Friend's argument. The other mistake which is joined to that—*[Interruption.]* I am now facing the Chair, Mr. Lofthouse. I am placed in a difficult position because the line between my hon. Friend the Member for Congleton (Mrs. Winterton) and the Chair is direct. The other

fundamental error made conjointly by those who are in favour of a referendum is that waiting for the Danes' opinion would also undermine our sacred constitutional sovereignty. I object to the idea that we must wait for the opinion of others before we decide what to do.

I wish to emphasise to the right hon. Member for Chesterfield, lest he gets the wrong impression, that the pro-Europeans are in favour of the treaty because we do not feel that we are surrendering power to anybody else by signing it and by developing the Community further, and because we feel that it strengthens our sovereign power. The right hon. Gentleman explained the old theory of the House of Commons at work. His description was like one of those old books by Taylor, "The House of Commons At Work: How it Really Works". He was not explaining the real world. However, I agreed with his second reason for the slipping away of power from Members of Parliament with their sacred trusts and rights—the power of the whipping system. Unless one is part of the majority in the House, one does not have power and even if one is a member of the majority party, one does not have power in the complexity of modern politics in which power flows to governmental institutions.

I am reassured about the developments, about signing the Maastricht treaty and about approving this excellent but short and technical Bill—a process that should not take so long, although I would not deny the House of Commons its rights—because none of those dangers and perils would occur if we went ahead with them. I see the sovereign member states of the European Community working much more together but gaining in individual national strength as a result of that process. I am surprised that the right hon. Member for Chesterfield, who years ago was an enthusiast for the European Community, has not begun to accept that explanation of the real world rather than the abstruse romantic theorising about the House of Commons as it was hoping to be several hundred years ago.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): Did my hon. Friend support the referendum on the Scotland Act? If so, what was different about that?

Mr. Dykes: There are many different complexities about those matters, and we are talking about a referendum on Europe in the context of what my hon. Friend the Member for Congleton said. She claimed that it was invalid just to take the views of Members of Parliament—a surprising assertion in view of the sacred nature of Members of Parliament in the constitutional process—if all the parties apparently agreed and the general election therefore did not provide the opportunity for the matters fully to be debated. I disagree with that. All that told me was that all the political parties agreed that signing Maastricht was a good thing, as was going ahead with European development.

Mr. Ronnie Campbell (Blyth Valley): The hon. Gentleman is obviously a complete European and would vote for it if it came in a little package with a bow around it. Does he agree that the fundamental point for people in the United Kingdom is that the Maastricht treaty changes every aspect of their lives? Does he further agree that the decision on that should be taken by them and not by the House under the whipping system?

8.15 pm

Mr. Dykes: The House is the place where the decisions should be made. The hon. Gentleman and I, as true democrats, would lament the excessive power of the whipping system. The modern organisation of the state, and the need, in the intensity and complexity of modern politics, to marshal collective decision making by politicians in groups has meant the strengthening of the whipping system over the years.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Dykes: I shall not give way too much as Mr. Lofthouse will become impatient with me if I go on for too long, and I am trying to speak to the amendment.

The hon. Member for Blyth Valley and I worry about the excessive power of the whipping system. We all know that we have little say in practical terms, but no hon. Member can assert that the treaty is the only treaty that the country has signed that has brought in relatively, fairly or reasonably profound changes. We have signed many treaties involving many changes. I reject the doom-laden assertion that there is something extra specially ominous and difficult about the Maastricht treaty. It is the logical conclusion of the preparation that this and other sovereign countries have made together, ever since the Stuttgart declaration of June 1983, to go forward to the development of European union, which had already been referred to in the treaty of Rome.

Dr. Michael Clark (Rochford): My hon. Friend has just suggested that a referendum would undermine the traditional sovereignty of the House. Does he not think that the traditional sovereignty of the House has been undermined by Members of Parliament who are not representing the country on this issue? If they were doing so, there would not be this call for a referendum. Because the House is failing the country, the country is seeking another way to express its view.

Mr. Dykes: I reject that totally. I am saddened that my hon. Friend, who is also a personal friend, seeks to undermine what is left of the powers of the House——

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Exactly.

Mr. Dykes: By that, I do not mean what is left because of Europe but what is left as a result of the practical reality of modern-day politics. The same pattern is repeated in every other country—the Executive have gained more and more power and Parliaments have become not just dignified and ceremonial, in the words of the right hon. Member for Chesterfield, but bodies in which individual Members of Parliament have lost their powers.

Some people would say that it was ever thus because only in the last century or so have Parliaments developed from being advisory chambers of nobles, with monarchs running the country. Parliament has taken many decisions on behalf of the people, decisions of much greater profundity, moment and weight than the signing of an additional treaty, which flows from the treaty of Rome, the Stuttgart declaration and the Single European Act. That Act was a much more profound document——

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Dykes: I should like to develop this point, but I shall give way in a moment.

[Mr. Dykes]

Admittedly the central legislative component of that Act was the single European market but all the others in the six key policy areas were anticipated and mentioned clearly and unequivocally in the Single European Act—and only one or two hon. Members called for a referendum.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Dykes: I will in a moment.

Mr. Winterton: I have been trying to catch my hon. Friend's eye.

Mr. Dykes: I am aware of that but, as my hon. Friend knows, I must address the Chair as part of the rules of this excellent and distinguished Chamber.

One could say that war and peace are far more profound and should always be the subject of a referendum. It is nonsense to argue that there must be a referendum simply because all parties agree on a particular policy element. In all general elections, there are many policy areas where there is unanimity or broad agreement, and no one suggests that means there should be a referendum. I will refer to one other aspect of a referendum that has put off some Opposition Members after giving way to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Ian Taylor: Many of my hon. Friends believe that the treaty is a matter for Parliament and not a suitable subject for a referendum. A referendum would not deal in detail with the complex nature of the Bill, which is shown by the number of amendments that have been tabled. Is my hon. Friend aware that he is supported in chapter 21 of "Erskine May", on page 523:

> "Amendments to a Bill proposing that the provisions of a Bill should be subject to a referendum have been ruled out of order as proposing changes in legislative procedure which would be contrary to constitutional practice."

Referendums are not part of our country's constitutional practice. Ours is a parliamentary democracy, and this is the right place to debate the Bill.

Mr. Dykes: To upstage even "Erskine May", no less an authority than my noble Friend Lady Thatcher denounced the idea of a referendum in 1974 and 1975, but one was imposed on a reluctant Parliament by the then Labour Government. I voted against a referendum then, and—*[Interruption.]*

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. It is noticeable that when one particular point of view is expressed, it is given a reasonable hearing but that a contrary point of view is not. Every right hon. and hon. Member must be given a fair hearing.

Mr. Dykes: Equally, Mr. Lofthouse, I was anxious to give way as much as possible to interventions, which may have added to the excitement of the debate.

I also want to show that not all right hon. and hon. Members will simply take the official line—though I wholeheartedly support my right hon. and hon. Friends in the Cabinet and in the Government, and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, in proposing that the treaty be ratified.

Mr. Winnick: How surprising.

Mr. Dykes: I suppose that is not at all surprising.

Earlier this year, I warned Government colleagues about unnecessary hesitation in respect of this legislation. It is a most modest Bill. I am not being undemocratic in saying that. It is a routine, technical Bill, and I suggest that most of the amendments should have been ruled out of order.—[Hon. Members: "Oh."] I was speaking theoretically, Mr. Lofthouse, and did not mean to question the decision of the Chair. I wanted to emphasise that because of the Bill's purely technical nature, as it is simply the instrument for amending European legislation——

Mr. Butcher *rose*——

Mr. Nicholas Winterton *rose*——

Mr. Dykes: I am entitled to express my personal view, which is also the view of others.

The European Movement, of which I am chairman and whose members include European enthusiasts of all parties and none—including trade unionists, businessmen, and members of the young European movement—also warned that if the Government were negative about defending the Community and the treaty, more and more second thoughts would set in, which would naturally affect the public.

It is interesting to crystallise and to explain public opinion. I do not believe that the public are intrinsically anti-European Community, but United Kingdom citizens of all backgrounds, professions, and trades have a grotesque fear, which I understand, of losing their jobs and of living and surviving in the recession. People naturally lose their enthusiasm for anything that they regard as irrelevant international exercises of one kind or another. In any event, such issues are always left to a small number of enthusiasts——

Mr. Spearing *rose*——

Mr. Ken Livingstone (Brent, East) *rose*——

Mr. Dykes: I will not give way for the moment.

As the Government's hesitations and timidity—and I am sorry to use those words—gathered pace, the Bill became more and more delayed. Even five weeks ago my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary said in a broadcast, "Let's get this Bill through before Christmas." Even five or six weeks ago, that seemed a reasonable aspiration.

Mr. Terry Lewis (Worsley): The right hon. and learned Gentleman said that he had not read it.

Mr. Dykes: He said that he had not read the treaty. The Bill was then in draft form, and extremely brief. Presumably everyone read the one-page Bill.

The Government's timidity and hesitation added to the problem of appearing to be legitimately enthusiastic about taking the treaty's policies forward.

There have been ridiculous and absurd attacks on the European Commission. Only recently have my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and one or two other Ministers begun to defend it, saying that all the ridiculous stories about the Commission are either made up or so exaggerated as to be absurd.

Mr. Spearing: Will the hon. Gentleman give way now?

Mr. Dykes: I give way to the former Chairman of the European Legislation Select Committee.

Mr. Spearing: The hon. Gentleman criticised my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) for going over broad ground that could have been covered at any time during the past 20 years. Has not the hon. Gentleman been doing much the same thing up to now? In his capacity as chairman of the European Movement—as the hon. Gentleman knows, I respect his opinion—will he explain why he and that movement advocate the provisions in articles A to F?

Mr. Dykes: The hon. Gentleman is incorrect to suggest that I am not dealing with the elements in the amendments, because I am. I was giving the background to my reasons for considering them unrealistic. I do not know what will happen to the first cluster of Liberal Democrat amendments proposed yesterday. They may not be voted upon. They may be withdrawn—I cannot anticipate what will happen with them. That shows that the Committee is going through the motions as a result of the desperately anxious wishes of a small minority of hon. Members who want to go through all the original points again.

Mr. Livingstone: The hon. Gentleman says that the Committee is going through the motions, but a moment ago mentioned fear of unemployment. Does he recall going through the Lobby to support the first stage of monetary union—Britain's entry into the exchange rate mechanism—after many right hon. and hon. Members warned that it would create another 1 million unemployed within a year or two? That is the reason for fear in this country. People see themselves being locked into permanently high unemployment and permanent recession. Does the hon. Gentleman agree it was wrong of him not to listen to us two years ago?

Mr. Dykes: The hon. Gentleman is mistaken about the timing of this country's entry into the ERM. I was in favour of Britain's entering it much earlier—probably four years before, when we would have joined at a much more realistic valuation. The ERM is still working. Far too many of my right hon. and hon. Friends and Opposition Members imagine that the ERM means irrevocably fixed exchange rates, but it does not. It is a system of fixed but adjustable rates by agreement with all its participating members. I will give way to my patient hon. Friend.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: My hon. Friend is a long-serving Member of Parliament, having entered it in 1970, so does he not recall that it has agreed to a range of referendums since then? I refer not only to the renegotiation of the treaty of Rome—albeit under a Labour Government—but devolution in Scotland, devolution in Wales and, on at least two occasions, devolution in Northern Ireland.

In each instance, Parliament rightly asked the people who would be affected by those dramatic changes to voice their opinion. Will my hon. Friend give an honest answer as to why he believes that in the case of the Maastricht treaty, which will—as the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) said—dramatically change the constitution and way of life of the people of this country, the people will not be allowed to cast their vote even in an advisory referendum so that Parliament will know their thoughts?

My hon. Friend has also told the House that he believes that there have been unnecessary and vicious attacks upon the Commission. Will he comment upon the extraordinarily partisan position adopted by the President of the Commission, Mr. Jacques Delors, to the Uruguay round and the GATT treaty, which is vital to free trade throughout the world, not just to free trade within Europe?

Mr. Dykes: It is not my task in the debate to defend Jacques Delors.

Mr. Winterton: My hon. Friend has been doing just that.

8.30 pm

Mr. Dykes: No. I was referring to the Commission as a body. The idea that the Commission is far too powerful is untrue. It is an inherently weak body. It has the constitutional task of proposing legislation to be submitted to the Council of Ministers, but the Council of Ministers is the boss; it makes the decisions. The Commission often grumbles about that reality. It would like those decisions to be more pan-European, and it is entitled to its aspirations. It is becoming more and more lumbered not with its own initiatives but with suggestions flowing from the Council of Ministers, the European Council and particularly from the most dangerous development of all—the grand Saturday night dinner at the European summit where such wonderful claret is consumed that they grow expansive and say, "Let's have another report from the Commission on such-and-such a subject."

I have already referred to the referendum, and I do not propose to deal with it again.

Mr. Winterton: Why not?

Mr. Dykes: Because I have already referred to it.

Mr. Winterton: But my hon. Friend has not answered the point.

Mr. Dykes: I repeat that we made the mistake of entering the exchange rate mechanism too high and too late. The Government are unwilling now to confront what is effectively only a very small number of real hard-core rebels, some of whose arguments are dishonest and frighten the people outside this place. Those errors and omissions mean that the Bill is being debated now in Committee instead of several months ago. Although I have already made the point, it is legitimate to repeat briefly that I regret the slowness with which this issue has been dealt with.

I regret, too, the timidity of the Government. As a keen European, I make no apologies for saying that. I want to reassure those who are terrified and trembling about what foreigners are planning for us next—probably fluoride in the water without the House being able to vote upon it—by saying that I believe that the activities of the House of Commons should, in the constitutional sense, be strengthened. Therefore, I very much welcome the greater participation and involvement of national Parliaments in the plurality and dispersal of power, the consideration of new policies and decision making. That is the hallmark of the European Community.

Timidity is also shown in the document that I am holding. I make no complaint about its contents. It is helpful. It explains the background lucidly. It is similar to

[Mr. Dykes]

the traditional notes on clauses. It reiterates also some of the elements, though in more detail, of a smaller pamphlet that again was issued rather late in the day. The pamphlet could have been published earlier this year. I do not understand why the Government took so long to publish it. Their printing system is supposed to be extremely efficient.

The tone of this document is very negative, as though, once again, the Government are nervous and apprehensive about a small minority of little Englanders. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"] They want to live in the past.

Mr. Winterton: That is a cheap remark.

Mr. Dykes: No, it is not a cheap remark. It shows the sad reality of the political situation.

Mr. Winterton: It is arrogant.

Mr. Dykes: No, it is not arrogant, either.

Mr. Winterton: My hon. Friend is pompous.

Mr. Dykes: The tone of the document is a little too negative. Apart from that, I commend it. Its tone, however, could be much more enthusiastic.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) is not in the Chamber. Perhaps he is rehearsing yet another blockbuster that will alienate even more opinion outside the House on European matters. My hon. Friend was interrupted constantly, just like me, so he did not have a chance to develop the theme, but in his closing remarks today—he obeyed the sagacious admonition of the Chair to be brief because he had had a blockbuster yesterday—he began to refer to what the Bundestag had decided. Again it was a wonderful example—I listened very carefully to my hon. Friend and I shall look tomorrow at what he said to make sure that I have got it right—of either deliberately or accidentally misleading the House. I use that phrase with reluctance. One does not like to say that about one's colleagues.

Far be it from us to wait on what other national Parliaments may do. We have our own national self-confidence. We should not worry about what those wicked foreigners think, though it is funny how we are hanging so closely on what the Danes think. Last week I was in Copenhagen. Every person to whom I spoke in the Folketing asked me, "Why are the British waiting for us? Why don't they go ahead? It's nothing to do with us." They also said, "Yes, we confidently expect a yes result this time."

Mr. Winnick: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Dykes: No, not at the moment.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stafford gave the impression that the Bundestag had had massive second thoughts about Maastricht, ratification of the treaty and all the rest of it. Far from it. One should refer to the account of the debate that is already in the news media. Colleagues have told me about it while the debate proceeds. Ratification—the final stage in the Bundestag—was a triumphant endorsement of Maastricht. There was a huge majority for the Bill in the Bundestag. There were no second thoughts. All that they did in their debate was to clarify the particular relationship of the Bundesrat to the Bundestag and the relationship of the länder to the federal Government and the federal constitution. There were no second thoughts. The final ministerial speech—details of it have been faxed to me, so I do not have it word for word—was an exhortation: now that we have ratified Maastricht, we hope that it will encourage the Danes and the British to do so as quickly as possible. My hon. Friend the Member for Stafford—I shall tell him that I have referred to his remarks—did not say that at all. He said that the Germans had had huge second thoughts on Europe.

Mr. Butcher: My hon. Friend has been most courteous in giving way, but he was very provocative when he said that this was a routine and technical Bill. I ask my hon. Friend to accept what the Government are telling us: that transfers of sovereignty are involved and that there is considerable dispute about whether sovereignty will be transferred in areas that so far have been described as being outside the treaty. It is not a routine and technical Bill. To pretend otherwise is to do my hon. Friend's own cause, which he has honourably espoused, a disservice. Let him be absolutely open about the move towards the transfer of further powers. Let us not pretend that the Bill is routine and technical.

The Second Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. I deprecate very long interventions.

Mr. Dykes: The problem is that I have to try to face you in your Chair, Dame Janet, and my hon. Friend. I think that my hon. Friend has misunderstood the position. I was not being discourteous when I said that the Bill was technical and brief, which it literally is. All I am saying is that all those arguments were presumably aired during the earlier stages, including Second Reading. The conclusion must therefore be that, in the absence of any significant change, the House overwhelmingly supports the legislation, which itself refers to consequential amendments, in the legislation of the European Community, to the treaty. I say no more than that. That is why I regret that, all too often, we return in our debates to the fundamental question as to whether membership of the European Community is a good idea.

Mr. Winnick: Crucial to the debate on this group of amendments is the question of power and whether that power will be taken away from us. The hon. Gentleman keeps on saying that that is not so, but where in the treaty is there any suggestion that power, let alone more power, will remain with this Parliament? The reason why so much criticism was levelled at the treaty both before and during the two-day debate was that power will increasingly be taken away from this Parliament and given to Europe. That is why the hon. Gentleman ought to be as honest as the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath) and the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston). Although the right hon. Gentleman is a great enthusiast for the treaty, he, unlike the hon. Gentleman, admits, defends and justifies the taking away of further powers from Parliament. Why is the hon. Gentleman not willing to admit that?

Mr. Dykes: We all have our ways of explaining these things. I do not think that it is a transfer of power from one entity, a nation state, to another, Europe. It is a development of the collective power of all the sovereign

member states working together in the new concept of European union. I am grateful for the patience of the Chair——

Mr. Dalyell *rose——*

Mr. Dykes: I do not intend to give way again as it would be unfair to hon. Members who are waiting to speak.

If the treaty proposed the creation of a single governmental entity or structure—a new European Government, presumably based in Brussels—to replace national Governments, that would be a different kettle of fish. That simply is not so.

Mr. Winnick: It is in the treaty.

Mr. Dykes: This is my answer. The hon. Gentleman may not like it, but he must accept it.

The enhancement of intrinsic sovereign power for all member states comes from their collective, reciprocal sharing of that power, based increasingly on majority voting and the terrifying concept of democracy, which the anti-democrats in the anti-European camp do not accept or like.

The amendments are illogical. The hon. Member for Hamilton amply explained why they do not fit and are not apposite and would have the opposite effect of that intended by the hon. Members who tabled them. That is why the House needs to settle down and accept that the vast majority of Members want the treaty to go ahead without further undue delay.

The Second Deputy Chairman: Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: On a point of order, Dame Janet. A few minutes ago, you said that you deprecated long interventions. As a member of the Chairmen's Panel, I fully accept that ruling, but will you accept that hon. Members who have been sitting for many hours are deeply concerned that when the Minister, who is one of the great architects of this misguided treaty and policy, sits down, the closure motion will be moved?

Hon. Members who have a valuable contribution to make to the debate have not had the opportunity to do so. The amendments allow Members on both sides of the Committee to debate the principle behind title I of the treaty and to articulate our fundamental opposition to what the House, under the guidance of the Government, is likely to be forced to do. Constitutional issues are being forced through, not in a free debate but on a three-line Whip. I ask you to say that you will allow the debate to go on after the Minister has sat down.

Several hon. Members *rose——*

The Second Deputy Chairman: Order. I shall deal with one point of order at a time.

As a member of the Chairmen's Panel, the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) will be well aware that, in Committee, the presence of a Minister at the Dispatch Box does not mean, as it would in an ordinary debate, the end of the debate. I cannot anticipate what might happen after that.

Mr. Winnick: Further to that point of order, Dame Janet. You are aware of the importance of the debate and I know that you and your colleagues in the Chair wish to defend the integrity of the House and the Committee. You said that the fact that the Minister intends to speak again does not mean that the debate will be concluded. As many hon. Members on both sides want to speak, if a closure motion is moved, I beg you, in defending the Committee and bearing in mind how crucial the debate is, not to accept it. The decision, I understand, lies with you.

A rumour—it may be unfounded—is circulating that a closure motion will be moved shortly, certainly before 10 o'clock or just at 10 o'clock. In those circumstances, if you are in the Chair, Dame Janet, I beg you not to allow the motion to be moved, because it would make a mockery of the debate.

Several hon. Members *rose——*

8.45 pm

The Second Deputy Chairman: Order. I shall deal with this point of order first.

I do not anticipate what may happen; I deal with what happens. I confirm that the acceptance of such a motion is entirely at my discretion.

Mr. Devlin: Further to the points of order raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) and the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick), Dame Janet. Some hon. Members sat here yesterday evening—as you know, because you accepted two points of order from me. A number of the hon. Members who are rising in their places have already intervened in long speeches. This is an extensive debate, with many amendments, and many hon. Members are keen to make progress. I therefore hope, with all the hope in my heart, that you will accept a closure as soon as possible so that we can get on.

Mr. Rowlands: On a point of order, Dame Janet. I have sat here almost continuously from 3.30 pm to 10 pm yesterday and from 3.45 pm today until now. Like other hon. Members, I therefore feel able to make a plea to you.

You said that the fact the Minister intends to speak again does not mean that the debate will be concluded. Some of us wish to follow up aspects of the Minister's speech and put some points to him, to which we should like a reply. Will you consider not calling the Minister so that other hon. Members can make their speeches and put some specific points to the Minister that arose from his speech yesterday afternoon?

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): On a point of order, Dame Janet. We spent a considerable amount of time on this debate yesterday, and at 10 pm we will have devoted a whole day to it today. I would not for a minute suggest what you should do, but I merely point out that, by then, we will have had as long as we normally have on a Second Reading debate. It must surely be obvious to everyone that certain hon. Members, far from observing the 10-minute rule, have occupied—*[Interruption.]* I am as aware as anyone that there is no rule, but I also know, as you do, Dame Janet, that, when colleagues are anxious to let as many hon. Members speak as possible, they practise a little self-denial.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Dame Janet. It is a convention of the House that speeches move from one side of the Chamber to the other. The last speaker was a Conservative Member, so it was confidently expected that a Labour Member would be called next. You called the Minister, which has given rise to a number of

[Mr. Bob Cryer]

fears. Indeed, the Minister had a brief conversation with the hon. Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) to indicate, from what I could tell, that he was going to get in immediately after the hon. Gentleman, and that he could curtail his remarks.

The debate is being keenly argued, and many hon. Members want to speak, which is another consideration that Chairmen of Committees bear in mind. I was told that the Minister was going to speak at 8.30 pm, the closure would be moved, and it had all been set up. If that happened—I am sure that you, Dame Janet, would not be a party to it—it would provoke great anger.

This is an important issue, and many hon. Members have a lot to say about it. Once we leave these amendments, we shall lose the opportunityy to talk about title I, which is important. This debate is vital to us all. I am not making any jokes about false points of order. If we do not have the opportunity to debate the treaty, I and many other hon. Members will be extremely angry about the Government conspiring to deny us the opportunity to speak. I hope that my hon. Friends on the Front Bench are not involved in that agreement, or consensus—because there is no consensus tonight.

The Second Deputy Chairman: I know nothing of any private conversations or conspiracies—and if I did, they would not move me one iota.

Mr. Richard Shepherd: On a point of order, Dame Janet. When the Chairman of Ways and Means, unusually, convened a meeting on Monday, he emphasised that he recognised the great importance of title I, and the fact that, as it constructed the architecture of the Bill, it gave us probably our only opportunity to view the treaty and the Bill in perspective.

Some of us could not speak on Second Reading because of the demand of so many hon. Members to speak, and the Chairman of Ways and Means suggested that we would have the opportunity to come back. There is therefore a sense of alarm that the Minister is being called at such an early stage, when so few people have spoken. One has not had an opportunity—*[Interruption.]* The point is that Mr. Morris showed us that he recognised that the matters before us are terribly important. *[Interruption.]* If any hon. Member had spoken out of order, I am sure that the occupant of the Chair would have notified the individual concerned.

There is a real sense of anxiety that we may be frustrating the purpose of the Committee stage, and our examination of the important title I. The amendment was moved by the Liberal Democrats, and it will be to the disadvantage of other hon. Members who wish to speak on the subject if we subvert the processes of proper debate.

Mr. Spearing: On a point of order, Dame Janet. The whole House recognises that if anyone claims to move the closure the occupant of the Chair has to make a decision in the circumstances at the time, and do a balancing act. May I, through this point of order, put to you two matters which I hope that you will bear in mind if that occasion should arise at any time during the debate on the amendments?

As Mr. Morris said, and as the hon. Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd) reminded us, this debate is in a sense a broad conspectus on the total meaning of the treaty as contained in title I. The breadth and gravity of the matters concerned are considerable, and they affect this country's constitution.

The Minister found some difficulty talking about those matters yesterday——

Mr. Garel-Jones *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Spearing: The Minister shakes his head, but I believe that there was some difficulty in the manner in which he replied to some of his hon. Friends, and to some Opposition Members. It is not appropriate for the Minister to speak again before some of us have had an opportunity to follow up those important matters—unless there will be another opportunity for us to speak, and the debate is to continue.

I therefore hope that, if you have to make such a decision, Dame Janet, you will bear in mind that important consideration, and the fact that several of my hon. Friends and I have been in the Chamber all day yesterday and most of today, yet we have not had the opportunity even to comment on what the Minister said in his opening speech yesterday.

Mr. Butcher: On a point of order, Dame Janet. The part of the Committee discussion which deals with title I is of fundamental constitutional importance. I readily concede that some over-lengthy speeches have been made in the House in the past two days, but some hon. Members who have an immense contribution to make to the debate have waited patiently to speak. There is a clash on the exact meaning and applicability of title I—and we may never have another chance to discuss it. Six or seven major questions remain in the air, and have not been resolved.

If you were asked a question about the closure, would you think it fair to close the debate after the Minister had spoken? May I put that question to you now?

The Second Deputy Chairman: The hon. Gentleman may put the question, but I retain my discretion, and I do not answer hypothetical questions.

Mr. Ian Taylor: On a point of order, Dame Janet. Will you give guidance to the Committee? It seems to me that the debate on title I and on the amendment tabled by the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) has contained many of the same points as were raised in earlier debates on the Bill.

I am aware that we are in Committee, but many of the points raised in the debate have been raised at earlier stages, especially on Second Reading. That is important, because the Bill has already been discussed by the House for longer than all the stages of the Single European Act. There can be no question of there not having been a proper debate. If certain of my hon. Friends decided to make very long speeches covering all the points, naturally it will not be possible for other hon. Members to contribute if we are to make progress.

I hope that we can make progress on the Bill, Dame Janet. Many of us would like to contribute to debates on amendments on the Order Paper, which will be discussed in later groups. This debate on the opening group has already been very long.

Mr. George Robertson: On a point of order, Dame Janet. Unfortunately, you are embroiled in dealing with hypothetical situations, but may I offer you the information that it is my view, and that of my hon.

Friends, that the Opposition have not had an adequate opportunity to air our variety of views on the fundamental part of the debate which is now taking place? Lest there be confusion in anyone's mind, let me tell the House what I told the Minister earlier this evening: if the Government Whips choose to move the closure at this stage, we shall oppose it.

Mr. Shore: The House has entirely legitimate anxieties about the Minister's intentions. Is it not possible for the Minister himself to rise on a point of order and allay those anxieties by assuring us that he has no intention of moving the closure—[HON. MEMBERS: "Or anyone else."]—yes, or anyone else on the Government Front Bench.

The Second Deputy Chairman: That is, of course, not a matter for the Chair.

Mr. Garel-Jones *rose*——

Mr. Bill Walker *rose*——

Hon. Members: Sit down.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Further to that point of order, Dame Janet. I tell the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) that I have no notion what the intention of the business managers may be——

Mr. Winnick: Why don't you ask them?

Mr. Denzil Davies (Llanelli): On a point of order, Dame Janet.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

The Second Deputy Chairman: Order. I am taking a point of order from Mr. Davies. It is a point of order, I take it?

Mr. Davies: Yes, Dame Janet. Like many of my hon. Friends, I have sat here for almost two days. This debate is not the debate we had on Second Reading. We are discussing some difficult legal matters, including the justiciability of title I. The Minister of State made some important points, although he has not clarified many of the matters which we wish to raise. If the debate is closed after his second intervention, we will have no further opportunity to debate those matters.

9 pm

Mr. Bill Walker: On a point of order, Dame Janet. We have had a two-day debate, and some of us have sat through the whole two days. You will notice that I represent one of the Scottish constituencies. Some aspects of title I must be addressed, as they affect the unitary Parliament and the Union. It is necessary for me to raise matters with the Minister and to get some sort of answer. I fail to see how I can do that if the Minister addresses the Committee now. It will give the Government no opportunity to answer the matters that I wish to put to the Minister. That would certainly send the wrong message to Scotland and to the rest of the country.

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): On a point of order, Dame Janet. Can you explain why the Minister looks as if he is about to be called to speak again when other hon. Members have not spoken once, although they have sat through the whole debate? Some of us want to hear those other Members. Why have we broken the rule that we call hon. Members alternately from both sides of the Chamber? Will two Conservative Members be called consecutively? Are you aware that our fears have been strengthened as a result of the non-assurance and the weasel words of the Minister?

The Second Deputy Chairman: The right hon. Member I was about to call is the Minister in charge of the Bill.

Mr. Budgen: On a point of order, Dame Janet. May I express my extreme distaste for the way in which the Minister of State dealt with the Committee a moment ago? He had an opportunity to calm the Committee and to offer a reasonably conciliatory gesture. However, he tried by a clever sleight of tongue to give an ambivalent answer to you, simply to irritate the Committee.

With the exception of the Government, the Committee wishes the debate to continue. If we are to have satisfactory discussions, we must create some trust between the Minister who is dealing with the matter and the rest of the Committee. The Minister's ambivalent—I even go so far as to say impertinent—remark does nothing but create contempt.

The Second Deputy Chairman: The Committee will appreciate that I am not responsible for the answers given by a Minister or, indeed, by any other hon. Member.

Mr. Barnes: On a point of order, Dame Janet. We are in some difficulty because you have called the Minister to speak, and the points of order are an attempt to make you change your mind. I appreciate that you have already made your decision. In those circumstances, would it not be helpful if the Minister announced that he did not wish to speak at this stage, but that he would be willing to speak later? The Minister's remark was not helpful to the Committee. He can now rise on a point of order and assist us all.

Mrs. Gorman: On a point of order, Dame Janet, I appeal to your sense of fairness in the matter. Many of us on the Back Benches, who, because we are not Privy Councillors and have not held offices that would enable us to attract the attention of the Chair in such a debate, have tried in vain many times to contribute to debates on Europe. That means that we sit for hours during such debates. On Second Reading, I tried to speak on the subject—*[Interruption.]*

The Second Deputy Chairman: Order. I have great difficulty in hearing, due to the sedentary comments of the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie). That is not acceptable to me.

Mrs. Currie: On a point of order, Dame Janet. I apologise; I merely wished to make the point that what was said by the hon. Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) was not a point of order; it was a load of humbug—

The Second Deputy Chairman: Order. I shall be the judge of what is a point of order; it is not for the hon. Lady to do so. Has the hon. Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) finished her point of order?

Mrs. Gorman: The hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) has spent more time out of the Chamber in the past two days than I have.

The Second Deputy Chairman: That is not a point of order. I must move on to another point of order.

Mr. Lewis: On a point of order, Dame Janet. The hon. Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor) and others have referred to the fact that we are in Committee. Is it not the case that, in Committee, extra time should be given to allow hon. Members on both sides to make their contributions?

Mr. Christopher Gill (Ludlow): On a point of order, Dame Janet. I am sure you recognise that several hon. Members have sat through the whole two-day debate and have not been called. Although there is debate and argument about whether title I should be included in the Bill, the fact of the matter is that title I is an integral part of the treaty. Once the treaty is ratified, it will be interpreted as though title I stood part of it. Therefore, it is extremely important for the Committee to be given a full opportunity to debate the matter almost exhaustively, because it is of such fundamental constitutional importance.

Mr. Livingstone: On a point of order, Dame Janet. Can you rule that it is completely out of order for hon. Members who have been called and made their speeches to try to curtail the debate? We have a noble tradition in the Labour movement that such action is completely out of order and insulting to everyone else.

The Second Deputy Chairman: I am not aware of any such rule in the House of Commons.

Rev. Ian Paisley: On a point of order, Dame Janet. May I draw your attention to the fact that the other parts of the United Kingdom have a right to be heard in the debate on this constitutional matter? I am the only Northern Ireland Member who has attended the Committee both days. I believe that I have a duty to the people who sent me here and a duty to the overwhelming majority of voters of Northern Ireland who, on three occasions, have endorsed my view of the European Economic Community. I believe that I should have an opportunity to put my view.

I have not spoken at length in this Committee. In the European Parliament, I spoke many times for many hours. In this Committee, I have always respected the Chair, and I have always done right by the Chair. I should feel very angry tonight if not one speaker from Northern Ireland was allowed to put his view.

I have heard something of the plottings, and I have overheard remarks. It was disgraceful of the Minister to act as he did tonight. This is a constitutional issue. It will not affect us for 10 minutes or for an hour: it will affect our future, our families, our children and our grandchildren, and we have a right to be heard. The Bill was drafted in such a way as to gag us. What we could have said in order we shall not now be allowed to say.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: On a point of order, Dame Janet. I appeal to you as someone who safeguards the interest of Back-Bench Members. May I remind you that the Minister said during these points of order that he had no knowledge whatever of what the business managers of the House intended? May I ask whether I and other long-serving Members are expected to believe that?

The Second Deputy Chairman: As we are all supposedly honourable Members—I trust that we are—we must accept what another hon. Member has said.

Mr. Budgen: Further to that point of order, Dame Janet. I dare say that there are right hon. and hon. Members who are generous enough to believe the Minister of State when he says that he does not know what the business managers intend to do. As I speak, he has an opportunity to ask the Whips what their intentions are. If he cannot move the two feet necessary to get to the Whip, I am sure that the Whip is sufficiently athletic to move that two feet himself. The Minister might then be able to give the Committee some information. I repeat: the Minister's earlier reply was offensive to the Committee.

Mr. Cash: Further to that point of order, Dame Janet. Is it in order for the Minister to say that he has had no contact with the Whips on this question when there are those in the Committee who have some access to other information? Would it be possible for us to be able to put it to you that the Minister may have information which he is not disclosing to the Committee about what is going on this evening in relation to the proceedings?

The Second Deputy Chairman: The duties of the Chair are onerous enough, without checking every rumour or suggestion. The Chair cannot be involved in that.

Mr. Leighton: Further to that point of order, Dame Janet. May I suggest that you adjourn the Committee for two minutes to allow the Minister to find out what the Whips intend to do?

Mr. Budgen: Further to that point of order, Dame Janet. May I respectfully suggest that the hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) has made an extremely sensible and helpful suggestion? The Committee is, in general, very fond of my right hon. Friend the Minister of State. However, he has offended the Committee tonight. This is an opportunity for him to speak to the Chief Whip. It is sensible to suggest that the Committee might rise for a few minutes to enable my right hon. Friend the Minister to discuss the matter in a calm and civilised way.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Further to that point of order, Dame Janet. My hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) and I have both done time in the Whips Office. It will not come as a surprise to him to be told that it is not infrequent in these matters that sometimes the last person the usual channels choose— *[Interruption.]*

The Second Deputy Chairman: Order. As I understand it, the Minister seeks to answer a point of order. We do not have interventions on points of order.

Mr. Garel-Jones: It is of course the case, as my hon. Friend was saying, that I have attempted in the course of the afternoon to ascertain what are the plans for the future, and I assure hon. Members that my whole purpose in seeking to intervene when I did was to hope that other hon. Members might be able to continue to speak after I had sat down.

Notice being taken that strangers were present, The Second Deputy Chairman, pursuant to Standing Order No. 143 (Withdrawal of strangers from the House), put forthwith the Question, That strangers do withdraw:—

The Committee divided: Ayes 9, Noes 416.

Division No. 94] **9.10 pm**

AYES

Budgen, Nicholas	Paisley, Rev Ian
Cash, William	Skeet, Sir Trevor
Etherington, Bill	Sweeney, Walter

Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Ronnie Campbell and
Mr. Harry Barnes.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Alton, David
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barron, Kevin
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Bennett, Andrew F.
Beresford, Sir Paul
Booth, Hartley
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Bradley, Keith
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Coborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Chapman, Sydney
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clappison, James
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushl)*
Clelland, David
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colley, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Connarty, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cunningham, Jim *(Cov'y SE)*
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shr)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davie, David *(Boothferry)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dixon, Don
Doriohoe, Brian H.
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eastham, Ken
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Sir Peter
Enright, Derek
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fatchett, Derek
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gapes, Mike
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gillan, Cheryl
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gordon, Mildred
Gorst, John
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hague, William
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Harvey, Nick
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heppell, John
Hicks, Robert
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hoon, Geoffrey
Horam, John
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Hutton, John
Ingram, Adam
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Janner, Greville
Jenkin, Bernard
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Key, Robert
Kilfoyle, Peter
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Leighton, Ron
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lewis, Terry
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Mackinlay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McLoughlin, Patrick
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Madel, David
Mahon, Alice
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxton, John
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meale, Alan
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Moss, Malcolm
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Oiner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parry, Robert
Patten, Rt Hon John

Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pendry, Tom
Pickles, Eric
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Randall, Stuart
Redwood, John
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Sheerman, Barry
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Nicholas
Spearing, Nigel
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steen, Anthony
Steinberg, Gerry
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Tipping, Paddy
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trimble, David
Trotter, Neville
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Walley, Joan
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Wareing, Robert N
Waterson, Nigel
Watson, Mike
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Welsh, Andrew
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wigley, Dafydd
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Wise, Audrey
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Wright, Dr Tony
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. James Arbuthnot and
Mr. Tim Boswell.

Question accordingly negatived.

Mr. Budgen: On a point of order, Dame Janet. May I make a suggestion? There seems to have been a slight misunderstanding between the Committee and the Minister of State. I am pleased that he has had the opportunity to have a discussion, perhaps with the Patronage Secretary, but the Patronage Secretary has a rather different and more partisan role than that of the Leader of the House. If the Leader of the House were to explain how he reconciled the rights of Back-Bench Members with the Government's wish to get on with the business, he might explain what the Government's plans are for the rest of this evening. I dare say that he would do that in a more conciliatory way than the Minister of State would.

The Second Deputy Chairman: It is not for the Chair to ask or command any hon. Member to come to the Committee. No doubt the point will have been heard by Front-Bench Members. I call Mr. Garel-Jones.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I am grateful to you, Dame Janet, for recognising me.

Over the past two days, several hon. Members have made the point that the Committee owes a debt to the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) for moving his amendment which has enabled us to discuss the broad structure of the treaty. The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) was quite correct to say that the amendment goes to the heart of our subsequent debates in Committee.

We have spent some time discussing amendment No. 93, which proposes to include title I in the scope of the Bill. The plain fact is, however, as I stated at the start of the debate, that, for the purposes of our domestic legislation, those parts of title I which need to come within the scope of the Bill are already included. There is every value in a serious debate on the content of title I of the treaty. As I have said, we are indebted to the hon. Gentleman for moving the amendment. But, as the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) made clear, there is no need in our domestic legislation to accept the amendment as proposed.

The Committee should recall—your predecessors in the Chair, Dame Janet, have reminded the Committee of this fact on several occasions—that we are not discussing ratification of the treaty.

Sir Russell Johnston: Is the essence of the Minister of State's argument against our amendment that it is not necessary and that it would not make any difference? That has not been clear to me throughout our proceedings.

Mr. Garel-Jones: No. There are several arguments against the hon. Gentleman's amendment, not least of which are those that were made by the hon. Member for Hamilton. In respect of our domestic legislation, it is completely otiose and it would create legal anomalies.

Another aspect of the hon. Gentleman's amendment is worth considering, particularly by my hon. Friends. In one sense, it begins to chip away at—to collapse—the pillared intergovernmental structure of the union. To that extent, I can see why the hon. Gentleman tabled his amendment. He and his hon. Friends support a single structured Europe. Most of my hon. Friends and I do not support the Liberal Democrats' view of Europe. To that extent, I see what the amendment is aiming at. Even if one were a federalist, as the hon. Gentleman is, there are other legal arguments as to why his amendment should not be accepted.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Garel-Jones: I should like to make more progress and then I will give way. Points have been raised during the debate which I should like to respond to; then I will give way.

Sir Russell Johnston *rose*——

Mr. Garel-Jones: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman, whose amendment we are debating.

Sir Russell Johnston: The Minister commends me to support my amendment because it is in the logic of my

party's position. I understand that. He then says that it may make a mess of legal matters, but throughout the debate no one has explained that. If he manages to do so, I will take great note of it.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I shall certainly do that.

As I said, the Chair has reminded the Committee on several occasions that we are not discussing ratification of the treaty. We are engaged in detailed examination of a piece of domestic legislation required to incorporate into the framework of United Kingdom law those provisions of the treaty which need to be so incorporated. That means the provisions of titles II, III and IV and other provisions so far as they relate to those titles. That point was made effectively by the hon. Member for Hamilton in explaining to the Committee why the official Opposition would not be supporting the hon. Gentleman's amendment.

The hon. Gentleman also noted that legislation in other countries covered the whole treaty and suggested that ours should do likewise. The constitutional requirements in Britain are the ones which I have addressed. Although he would wish it not to be the case, I am glad that we do not yet have harmonisation of constitutional practice throughout Europe. He might wish that but that wish is not shared by my right hon. and hon. Friends, nor, I believe, by——

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Garel-Jones: Not yet; I want to make a little more progress and then I will give way.

The process of ratification, as distinct from the Bill, does not always require legislation to be enacted. Some important treaties over the years did not require legislation before ratification. I sought to make that point earlier. For example, the treaties establishing NATO and the Western European Union, and the recent "two plus four" treaty on the reunification of Germany, did not require legislation. In such cases the House was given the opportunity to examine the treaty which had been signed, subject to ratification, before it was ratified, in accordance with the Ponsonby procedures.

When domestic legislation is required, as is the case here, prior to ratification, the legislative process subsumes that practice but does not replace it. That has been the practice followed for nearly 70 years. The hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber may not agree with that procedure and he may wish to see the day when the Community can impose different procedures upon us, but such procedures are not followed in this Parliament. Provisions which are not necessary would create confusion in our domestic legislation. The legislation already includes in its scope all that it needs to include in order that we can honour our obligations under the treaty.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Garel-Jones: I want to address points made by some of my hon. Friends. Then I shall sit down so that other hon. Members may take part in the debate.

My hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, South-West (Mr. Butcher), who is not in his place but who has attended the debate assiduously, made the point that the common provisions of title I do not in themselves create new rights or obligations in Community law. I sought to make that point in response to interventions during my opening remarks. They are intended as an introduction to the main body of the treaty and, as such, refer in places to activities outlined in the detail later. For example, article E refers to the Community institutions and to how they will exercise their powers. Nothing in the common provisions is inconsistent with the substantive articles later in the treaty.

Although Community laws cannot be adopted under the common provisions, they can be taken into account by the European Court of Justice by reflecting the intentions of the drafters.

Mr. Denzil Davies: The Minister has explained that parts of the first title will appear in the other titles and so the Bill will give them effect in domestic law. He then said that if those parts of title I which do not need to be given effect in domestic law were included in the Bill, it would chip away at the intergovernmental nature of those parts. Could he explain that? If they do not have to be incorporated into domestic law, how on earth can they chip away at anything?

Mr. Garel-Jones: Because if the Committee were to support the amendment, it would make domestic law in Britain more federal and centralising, placing it ahead of the Maastricht treaty. That is why I hope that on reflection he will think that my other arguments outweigh that. That may be why he thinks that he would be wise to support his amendment, but I would be surprised if he or any of my hon. Friends were prepared to countenance putting provisions in United Kingdom domestic legislation that would make it more federalist and centralist than the Maastricht treaty.

Mr. Enright: May we put it another way? Is it not the case that, if the amendment were included in our law, the intergovernmental conference would be more responsible to this body than it will be, and that it would also be more responsible to the European Parliament?

Mr. Garel-Jones: I do not think that that would be the case. As the hon. Member for Hamilton said, there could be a danger that we were beginning a process whereby any action taken intergovernmentally by Ministers of the Crown that would provoke a change in the laws of the United Kingdom would prompt the introduction of a Bill to the House in the normal way. I am not sure what would be the effect were we to introduce that centralising measure into the body of the treaty, and I am not sure that it would produce the effects that the hon. Member mentions.

Another issue has been raised by many of my hon. and right hon. Friends, including my hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd) in an intervention, when he inadvertently misread the word "means" as "money". I accept that it was an inadvertence on his part, and we both laughed about it. My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) also mentioned it. Article F, paragraph 3, states:

"The Union shall provide itself with the means necessary to attain its objectives and carry through its policies."

My hon. Friend is exercised about that paragraph because of the word "means", and he and a number of other hon. Members argue that that means, with the funds necessary, and that a money resolution should therefore be attached to the Bill.

The union has no financial resources of its own. The commitment reflected in article F dates back to the Rome European Council and is a reference to means, in the broad sense of the word, available to the Community, through its Community and intergovernmental arms, to

[Mr. Garel-Jones]

carry out the purposes laid down. I assure my hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills that the provision does not refer to financial means. I can well understand why hon. Members might have thought it did, because we have Mr. Morris, who is the "Chairman of Ways and Means."

Some of my hon. Friends have made considerable jest about the occasional use of foreign words or phrases in the treaty. The phrase "acquis communautaire" has provided the Committee with much amusement. One must consider the fact that the treaty must be drafted in nine different languages by a profession called jurist-linguists. The French version of the treaty uses the word "moyens", which means "means" in the broadest sense rather than the revenue-raising sense.

Mr. Richard Shepherd: I have not yet had an opportunity to develop an argument, which is part of the frustration of this process. I must deal with points on which, so far, I have not succeeded in catching the Chairman's eye to put forward an argument on the basis of what I understood was an amendment which should be thoroughly discussed. My right hon. Friend's rising at this stage and seeking to answer questions that have not been developed or put is an unfair and short-cut way to proceed, because he will not deal with all the points that I hoped to make.

Mr. Garel-Jones: My hon. Friend did not take advantage of catching your eye, Mr. Morris, to ask me a question, so there is little that I can say in response.

I listened with care—sometimes with interest and amusement—to the lengthy speech made by my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash), who has tabled a series of amendments that are grouped with amendment No. 93. I would describe all those amendments as wrecking amendments; their purpose is to wreck the Bill.

I was struck less by the content of my hon. Friend's speech than by two interventions in it. The first was by my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) and the second was by the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone). My hon. Friend the Member for Billericay believed that the Maastricht treaty, and therefore the Bill, was a communist plot, whereas the hon. Member for Brent, East believed that it was a capitalist plot. Those two interventions seemed to sum up the comment by the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), who said in his speech that he did not believe in the conspiracy theory. I thought that he invented it.

Mrs. Gorman: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Garel-Jones: No. I wish to conclude now.

A number of my hon. Friends believe that there is a conspiracy behind the treaty. There is no such conspiracy, and on that basis, when a Division is called, I invite hon. Members on both sides of the House to oppose the amendment.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question put, That the Question be now put:—

The Committee divided: Ayes 296, Noes 164.

Division No. 35] **[9.42 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Alton, David
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Beresford, Sir Paul
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcl)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shr)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Harvey, Nick
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horne Robertson, John
Horam, John
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*

Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Key, Robert
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Lynne, Ms Liz
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Maclennan, Robert
McLoughlin, Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Randall, Stuart
Redwood, John
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Tyler, Paul
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Wallace, James
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Welsh, Andrew
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wigley, Dafydd
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Archy Kirkwood and Mr. Simon Hughes.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Margaret
Begg, Roy
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Body, Sir Richard
Bradley, Keith
Budgen, Nicholas
Burden, Richard
Butcher, John
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Dr John *(C'p'l'nd)*
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Foulkes, George
Fyfe, Maria
Gapes, Mike
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Heppell, John
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hutton, John
Ingram, Adam
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Bdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Leighton, Ron
Leetor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Oiner, William
Paisley, Rev Ian
Parry, Robert
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Raynsford, Nick
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sheerman, Barry
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Spearing, Nigel
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Tipping, Paddy
Trimble, David
Turner, Dennis
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Winnick, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wise, Audrey
Wright, Dr Tony

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Gordon McMaster and Mr. Thomas McAvoy.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Question put accordingly, That the amendment be made:—

The Committee divided: Ayes 28, Noes 392.

Division No. 96] **[9.56 pm**

AYES

Alton, David
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Body, Sir Richard
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Dafis, Cynog
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Lynne, Ms Liz
Maclennan, Robert
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Salmond, Alex
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Tyler, Paul
Wallace, James
Welsh, Andrew
Wigley, Dafydd
Wilkinson, John

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Archy Kirkwood and
Mr. Simon Hughes.

NOES

Adams, Mrs Irene
Adley, Robert
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Bellingham, Henry
Beresford, Sir Paul
Booth, Hartley
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Bradley, Keith
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cann, Jamie
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Chapman, Sydney
Chisholm, Malcolm
Churchill, Mr
Clapham, Michael
Clappison, James
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcl)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Cohen, Harry
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Connarty, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Dr John *(C'p'l'nd)*
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dixon, Don
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Dunn, Bob
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eastham, Ken
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Sir Peter
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fyfe, Maria
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gapes, Mike
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
George, Bruce
Gillan, Cheryl
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gordon, Mildred
Gorst, John
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Grocott, Bruce
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Gunnell, John
Hague, William
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heppell, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hoon, Geoffrey
Horam, John
Horden, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Hutton, John
Ingram, Adam
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jenkin, Bernard
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Keen, Alan
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lewis, Terry
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Loyden, Eddie
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Mackinlay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxton, John
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meale, Alan
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Michael, Alun
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*

Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Moss, Malcolm
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Oiner, William
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parry, Robert
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Sims, Roger
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Spearing, Nigel
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Steen, Anthony
Steinberg, Gerry
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Stott, Roger
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sykes, John
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Tipping, Paddy
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Wareing, Robert N
Waterson, Nigel
Watson, Mike
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Willetts, David
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Wilshire, David
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Wolfson, Mark
Wright, Dr Tony
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tim Boswell and
Mr. Timothy Wood.

Question accordingly negatived.

It being after Ten o'clock THE CHAIRMAN *left the Chair to report Progress and ask leave to sit again.*

Committee report Progress; to sit again tomorrow.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. During the Committee stage of the European Communities (Amendment) Bill, the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the right hon. Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones), said that he intended to make his remarks short because he wanted to leave time for other hon. Members to speak on the amendments——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. The hon. Member may have noticed that I have now assumed my role of deputising for Madam Speaker. I am no longer the Chairman, and Madam Speaker is not party to what has taken place in Committee, so there can be no discussion now of what happened then.

PARLIAMENTARY COMMISSIONER FOR ADMINISTRATION

Ordered,

That Mr. Ronnie Campbell, Sir Anthony Durant, Mr. Michael Lord, Mr. David Nicholson, Mr. James Pawsey, Mrs. Elizabeth Peacock, Mrs. Bridget Prentice, Mr. Mike Watson and Dr. Tony Wright be members of the Select Committee on the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration.—*[Mr. Robert G. Hughes.]*

Testbourne School

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Robert G. Hughes.]*

10.12 pm

Sir David Mitchell (Hampshire, North-West): I thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and, through you, I thank Madam Speaker for having selected for the Adjournment debate tonight the subject of Testbourne school and its application for grant-maintained status.

I shall explain the background, take the Minister through events, ask him three questions, and seek certain assurances. It may be helpful if I start by saying that grant-maintained status is no discredit to a county education committee. Rather, it is a sign of success. Many county councils are proud of the fact that they have brought schools along to the point at which they can paddle their own canoes and manage their own affairs, with grant-maintained status. Indeed, almost all the schools that have moved in that direction have proved a great success.

Testbourne is a successful school: 97 per cent. of the pupils gained five or more GCSEs, more than half of those with five or more A to C grades. That puts the school in the top 20 in Hampshire. The governors and the head are seekers after excellence, and recognise that grant-maintained status can help them, enabling them to take decisions more quickly, free of red tape. It would also give the school control over its total budget, with all the advantages of local decision making. It would give the school scope to shop around for the best value for its needs and, in doing so, to have more to spend on the pupils. The head and the governors become directly accountable to the parents and the local community.

The idea of applying for grant-maintained status was given impetus by disagreement with the local education authority over funding. The disagreement was undoubtedly important, but it was more the trigger than the whole reason for the application.

The sequence of events is interesting and worrying. On 10 August the chairman of the local education authority confirmed that the school was correctly funded within the overall limits of the authority's budget. On 1 September the governors passed the first resolution required for grant-maintained status. Shortly afterwards, the local education authority mysteriously found an additional £10,000 for 1993-94 and a further £10,000 for 1994-95. It is rather odd that that should happen. I should add that a condition of that money being available was that the application for grant-maintained status would not proceed.

In Hampshire, 11 secondary schools have successfully balloted for grant-maintained status. Curiously, none of those schools has been in the central educational division of Hampshire with its headquarters in Winchester. Three proposals have been defeated—all of them in the same division. I am pleased to see my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester (Mr. Malone) nodding his head. I know that he is also worried about the matter.

There would have been a fourth unsuccessful ballot if it had not been for the courage, dedication and determination of the governors, the headmaster and many of the staff. The ballot for grant-maintained status was won with a poll of 78 per cent.—64 per cent. in favour and 36 per cent. against.

Tonight I want to expose some of the methods used by the council to influence the decision of the parents. I do so not for Testbourne, but to prevent inappropriate campaigning against future applications. Does the Minister consider that what has occurred is in line with the code of recommended practice on local authority publicity—that it should be objective, balanced, informative and accurate?

At the end of October parents received a letter—paid for by public funds—that was signed by the county education officer and it made the following points. First, finance is the only reason for seeking grant-maintained status. I have partly dealt with that matter already. Secondly, a section set out a defence of the funding of the school and ended with the words:

"It is difficult to escape the conclusion that the issue is not about finance but about management."

That is a direct slur on the head and the governing body with not a shred of evidence that management was at fault. The school that we are talking about is 20th in the success rate on exam results in Hampshire.

Thirdly, the letter further says that the school will be eligible to receive extra funding of at least £65,000 as part of a new management partnership scheme that the county is to introduce. However, that is simply not true. The scheme provides for the schools to have extra funds with which to buy services from the local education authority which were previously free.

Fourthly, the letter seeks to scare parents by suggesting that Testbourne will be unable to replace the specialist services provided by the county local education authority. I quote the letter:

"At present, expert local services, many of which are very specialised and difficult to obtain in the local market, are there when they are needed. In the future GM schools will experience increasing problems in obtaining the current range of support, not only from the education department, but also, for example, from the county architect, the treasurer and the secretary (for legal advice)."

Then there is the chilling inquiry:

"Where would this leave Testbourne?"

The fifth complaint in this letter is that there has been little time for detailed consultation with the local community. In fact, there has been more consultation in the case of this school than there has been in the case of almost any other school in Hampshire. The original resolution was on 4 September and the ballot was held on 4 November. Nobody can say that there was a shortage of time.

The letter ends by urging parents to vote against GM status.

In addition, there have been meetings and campaigns focusing on parents of children in primary schools. You might ask, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what on earth a primary school has to do with the issue. Testbourne school is fed by a series of primary schools. It is an interesting fact that 20 per cent. of the parents who voted have children at primary schools. The essence of the campaign with the primary schools was that if the proposal went through the county's funds would be robbed and the primary schools would suffer as a result. That is a pretty low form of campaign.

I have three questions for my hon. Friend the Minister. Is a letter such as I have described compatible with the proper provision of impartial advice from a senior county council official, or is it more in the nature of campaigning appropriate to elected politicians? Secondly, is my hon.

Friend aware that, far from losing out because of the alleged non-availability of LEA services in future, the school has already found that it can get most of the services currently provided by the LEA more economically elsewhere? It will get better value for money, so it will have more money to spend on the pupils. Thirdly, is it in order for officials who are not elected politicians to play on parents' fears of the unknown, to question the competence of governors, to question the competence of the senior management team, and to question financial competence?

I make a final plea. The county secretary, in a letter to the deputy chairman of governors, ends by saying:

"Now that the result of the ballot is known we can look forward to the Secretary of State approving grant maintained status for the school. The County Council will do all it can to assist an easy transition."

We may feel like saying "Hear, hear." The House may be a little surprised to know that it has quietly been made known to the governors that the county proposes to use its statutory opportunity to object to the school's application for GMS going forward. That is in contradistinction to the county secretary saying that he looked forward to the Secretary of State approving grant-maintained status. I know what the appropriate word for that is, but I will not use it here.

The school needs time to settle down in a period of calm. I hope that the process can now go forward constructively, sensibly and helpfully with co-operation on all sides—from the county and from the Department. My special plea to the Minister is that, when the application lands on his desk, he will turn it round quickly so that the uncertainty is ended.

I have raised the matter tonight because, although I want to see the school launched calmly and quietly on calm waters, it is imperative that the matter should have been raised so that other schools do not have to go through the wringer as the board of management, the governors and the headmaster of Testbourne school have had to do.

10.23 pm

Mr. Gerald Malone (Winchester) *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. Does the hon. Gentleman have the permission of the hon. Member for Hampshire, North-West (Sir D. Mitchell) and of the Minister to speak?

Sir David Mitchell: Yes.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Schools (Mr. Eric Forth): Yes.

Mr. Malone: I am grateful to my hon. Friends for giving me the opportunity to intervene briefly in this Adjournment debate.

I reiterate all that my hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, North-West (Sir D. Mitchell) said about what has happened at the school. My reason for intervening is that a number of the parents who send their children to Testbourne are my constituents. I have had strong representations from them about the establishment of a level playing field when gaining grant-maintained status, and I will concentrate on that point.

I had always understood that officials at county level would ensure that a level playing field was established when such status was sought. Not only has this not been the case in Testbourne but in the case of a number of other schools a level playing field has not been established and there has been partisan campaigning, and the instructions from the county education authority have not been adhered to by their officials.

I wonder whether we shall ever get to that stage unless my hon. Friend the Minister decides to take further action in the Bill which he has currently before the House. May I simply make the suggestion that the Minister will listen to what my hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire North-West and I have said this evening and understand that we have a difficult time within county authorities where one would normally expect that Government initiatives would be welcome and not thwarted at every turn. This is not the case, and perhaps he will consider putting some mechanism that guarantees that a level playing field is established in all attempts to obtain grant-maintained status in schools throughout the country and not just in Hampshire. It would be very welcome to my hon. Friend and myself if Hampshire could start this and become a precedent.

I am delighted that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has seen fit to be here for this important Adjournment debate, because one thing is certain: we are determined to make this policy stick of grant-maintained schools where the parents want them. We are determined, as a party and as a Government, to make it work and to allow it to be implemented in a way that parents want. This is at present being thwarted. I hope that my hon. Friend will assure us this evening that that will no longer be the case.

10.26 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Schools (Mr. Eric Forth): In the traditional way, I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, North-West (Sir D. Mitchell) on having obtained this important debate on what is both a specific and a general matter. The fact that our right hon. Friend the Secretary of State saw fit, very unusually for an Adjournment debate, to attend this debate illustrates the importance that he attaches to the matter that my hon. Friends the Members for Hampshire, North-West and for Winchester (Mr. Malone) have raised. I can do no more than to say that to reinforce the importance that both my right hon. Friend and I attach to this matter.

My hon. Friend and the schools in Hampshire and elsewhere need look no further than those schools which have already opted for grant-maintained status up and down the country. They are found usually to have been able to employ more teachers, almost inevitably have attracted more pupils, without exception have raised standards, have been found to have bought more books, and generally have been reported on more favourably when the inspectorate has looked at them.

That is proof enough that any assertion that schools lose out in some way with grant-maintained status is completely unproven. Anyone who wants to establish the truth of this matter need do no more than to ask heads and boards of governors of schools which have become grant-maintained. They need not take the word of a local education authority or even of myself. It would be far better for them to ask a grant-maintained school. If there is any difficulty about that, I should be only too delighted to give them a long list of names of such schools which would be only too happy to give their experiences.

[Mr. Eric Forth]

My hon. Friend asked whether it was in order for local education authorities to question the competence of governors and head teachers. I should have thought that it would be rather odd for a local education authority suddenly to find fault with governors whom they had had a part in appointing and heads whom they had had a role in appointing at the very time when there was a question of debate and a ballot about that new status. It would be extremely odd, I should have thought, if that same education authority had not seen fit to take action about such governors, heads, and others before and yet suddenly found fault with them and questioned their competence, if that was the case. That strikes me as being somewhat bizarre behaviour, to say the least, and I should certainly have thought that most parents would see through it.

There must be some doubt about the attitude of the county council. I understood that Hampshire local education authority had claimed from time to time that it was not opposed to grant-maintained status in general. However, I have had a local newspaper report drawn to my attention in which Councillor Tim Macnamara said that, once what he called the initial cash bribe to GM schools had been withdrawn, even fewer would choose to go their own way. He was then alleged to have said:

"I am disappointed when schools opt out and I think in the long term they are making a great mistake."

That does not sound like someone who is neutral about the possibility of GM status for schools. If the report is true, it gives the lie to the attitude of that individual, although it is not for me to say whether he is speaking for the whole authority.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, North-West asked whether we could speed this latest application on its way. I was delighted to hear the news that, with a 64 per cent. positive ballot, Testbourne school has elected to become grant-maintained. There will now be a two-month period during which objections and comments can be sent to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. That is the normal procedure. He will then have to consider whether to approve, reject or modify the proposals.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, North-West will understand that I cannot say anything tonight that would in any way prejudge the decision of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. However, I can assure my hon. Friend that we will give the proposals very careful consideration and my right hon. Friend will reach his decision as soon as possible after the end of the statutory notice period consistent with full and proper consideration of the issues raised to any objections that may be received.

We always aim to reach decisions as soon as possible. Although some are more complex than others, I can assure my hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, North-West that in the 12 months to May 1992 the average time for deciding grant-maintained proposals was four and a half months from the date of publication. Since May, the average time has been about three and three quarter months.

The fact that there are 107 GM applications awaiting decision shows an acceleration of interest in GM status by schools around the country. We are confident that there will be about 600 GM schools operating or approved by next April and our projections suggest 1,500 in April 1994. We are well on our way.

Of the 107 applications now awaiting decision where there is not a linked LEA proposal, only two are more than three months old. When dealing with such applications, we are concerned to deal with them properly but expeditiously. Therefore, I assure my hon. Friend that the application will be dealt with as rapidly as is consistent with proper consideration and there should be no delays in the process.

With regard to any misleading information produced during the very important process of consideration of a ballot by parents at a school, I want to make it clear that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State takes a very serious view of the allegations. We will want to look carefully at what my hon. Friend said tonight and at any evidence that he may want to bring before us. As recently as 3 November, a letter was sent at the request of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to all LEAs reminding them and their officers of what, in the Secretary of State's view, are the proper responsibilities and duties of the parties involved when parents seek GM status for their children's school.

Each local authority has a particular duty to ensure that the arguments that they present for schools remaining under their control are presented in a way that does not mislead parents. My right hon. Friend and I regard it as intolerable that local education authorities or anyone else should try to scare parents by claiming falsely that by voting for GM status they will damage their children's education. It would also be totally unacceptable if authorities, as teachers' employers, sought to put pressure on staff to resist GM status by perhaps threatening job security or prospects as regrettably and shockingly has been reported from some parts of the country. We want to follow up all individual cases where we have received these reports to establish the truth of the matter and to see what further action can be taken.

I am aware of the letter of 29 October that my hon. Friend has brought to the attention of the House this evening, and I must confess that I am surprised, to put it mildly, at the tone of the letter from an authority that has apparently professed that it is not in principle against GM schools. Certainly the terms of the letter will have to be looked at very closely indeed.

In reply to what my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester asked, however, let me say that there will be provision in the Education Bill, now in Committee, to seek to ensure that in future we have the fairest and most even-handed possible treatment of GM ballots. In other words, it will seek to ensure that, at the very least, information is produced in an even-handed and impartial way, and that parents are given the maximum opportunity to consider the facts surrounding their school and the possibilities about GM status. That is our determination, and we will hope to find in that Bill the best way possible of ensuring just that.

Until the Bill receives the Royal Assent and becomes effective, however, we in the Department for Education are determined to remain vigilant and to use whatever powers are available to us to ensure that all local education authorities, and particularly their officers, act in a proper way with regard to their responsibilities, and to ensure that all information produced for parents who are making this very important decision about GM status for their school

is full, fair and proper and is not misleading in any way. I would expect all professionals involved in education in local authorities to make it their business to ensure that that sort of information is provided, and we would want to be told of any cases where that was not so.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has sought to make it absolutely clear over and over again that he is determined to ensure that GM schools will always receive funding commensurate with the additional responsibilities that they take on when they opt for GM status. Any suggestion that they will in some way suffer as a result of becoming GM is groundless and should be seen as such.

This is an important matter, and I am grateful to both my hon. Friends the Members for Hampshire, North-West and for Winchester for taking the trouble to raise it this evening. I am sure that not only will they have the gratitude of their constituents and of the parents of all their schoolchildren but that that gratitude will extend much more widely throughout Hampshire and the whole country, where the Secretary of State, the Minister of State and I are well aware that widespread concern has surrounded many of the debates and the ballots on GM status for schools. It has often caused unnecessary bitterness and division simply because of misinformation and, regrettably, in some parts of the country, threats. That is deplorable and unacceptable conduct when we are talking about the education of our young people and children.

My earnest hope is that in future we will ensure that all involved with education, as well as my hon. Friends, can be confident that the information available is impartial, even-handed, fair, honest and truthful, and that we trust parents then to make a proper decision on the education of their children. I trust parents to do that, my hon. Friends trust parents to do that, and I hope that all local education authorities, councillors, officers and others will also trust them to do that.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-two minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 3 December 1992

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

BRITISH RAILWAYS (No. 4) BILL *(By Order)*

BRITISH WATERWAYS BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

CROSSRAIL BILL *(By Order)*

EAST COAST MAIN LINE (SAFETY) BILL *(By Order)*

GREATER MANCHESTER (LIGHT RAPID TRANSIT SYSTEM) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

WOODGRANGE PARK CEMETERY BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

Orders for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time on Thursday 10 December.

SECOND REPORT ON THE MAGUIRE CASE

Ordered,

That there be laid before the House a Return of the Second Report on the Maguire Case: The Inquiry into the circumstances surrounding the convictions arising out of the bomb attacks in Guildford and Woolwich in 1974, by the Right honourable Sir John May.—*[Mr. Jack.]*

Oral Answers to Questions

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Common Agricultural Policy

1. **Mr. David Martin:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent proposals have been agreed to combat fraud under the reformed CAP.

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. John Selwyn Gummer): First, I congratulate the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Dr. Strang) on his first appearance on the Opposition Front Bench.

The United Kingdom puts a high priority on combating fraud. I therefore welcome the new integrated administration and control system agreed at the November Council, the main purpose of which is to do just that.

Mr. Martin: I welcome my right hon. Friend's reply. I am sure that he is aware that, for city dwellers in places such as Portsmouth, it is often the horror stories and the costs of the CAP which are more obvious than its benefits. How will the new measures be enforced effectively through the institutions of the EC so that my constituents can be assured that their hard-earned cash will not go to line the pockets of continental con men?

Mr. Gummer: I would not be too nationalistic about con men. There are people who use systems and they need to be stopped. The new anti-fraud devices will be effective. The Commission has greater powers to inspect inspectorates, and rules will be more clearly and transparently controlled. I remind my hon. Friend that recently it was the Italian Government who discovered Italian fraud and reported it to the Commission, which makes a major change of which I am sure that my hon. Friend and his constituents will approve.

Mr. Skinner: Will the Minister confirm that last year there was a report that the fraud was of the order of £7,000 million? Although there is fraud in Italy, with olive trees being paid for which exist only on paper, is not it true that fraud also takes place in Britain? Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that cattle are moved across the border from southern Ireland into Northern Ireland, back and for'ard, back and for'ard; the cattle have done it so often that they know the road themselves and money is made every time? Is not it high time that the right hon. Gentleman looked into not just what is happening on the continent, because that is big, but what is happening here as well?

Mr. Gummer: I hope that the hon. Gentleman noticed that I said to my hon. Friend the Member for Portsmouth, South (Mr. Martin) that one should not restrict one's complaints to those in the rest of the Community. The very point that the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) has raised will be precisely covered in the part of the new measures concerning the identification of cattle. I am sure that that will have his full support.

Sir Peter Hordern: Will my right hon. Friend commend the measures in the Maastricht treaty that provide for the European Parliament the same kind of research that the Public Accounts Committee does in Britain, allowing the European Commission to carry out a proper standard of inspection and investigation into fraud under the CAP?

Mr. Gummer: My hon. Friend is right. Another advantage of the Maastricht treaty will be that countries that do not carry out the regulations to which they have given their vote and their name will be able to be brought before the European Court of Justice and fined; what they have supported will then be enforced.

Bivalve Molluscs

2. **Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food by when he expects the European veterinary committee to reach a decision on the application by his Department for approval to be given for the use of the Torry process for processing bivalve molluscs.

The Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. David Curry): The Standing Veterinary Committee approved the principles of the Torry process on 18 November.

Mr. Wardell: The Council of Ministers approved two directives relevant to that matter on 22 July last year, so why did it take the Minister's Department a year before an application for the Torry process was made to the European veterinary committee so that, today, none of the cockle gatherers of Penclawdd know that that process has

been approved? The Minister has sounded the death knell of that industry from 1 January next year, because there is no way that those cockle gatherers can implement the process by the time that the directives come into force. This week, I referred the Ministry to the Parliamentary Commissioner because of its maladministration. I want to know from the Minister what is the recipe for those of my constituents who have worked in an industry that has existed since the middle ages but which will be closed down on 1 January because the Minister's incompetence.

Mr. Curry: The hon. Gentleman asked a lot of questions, but clearly he does not understand the answers, which are very clear. Nobody will be closed down on 1 January or 2 January. We will make sure that the regulations are in place, and we will give clear indications to environmental health officers in the hon. Gentleman's local authority that where it is clear that the operator will take the necessary measures to protect public health—

Mr. Wardell: In three weeks?

Mr. Curry: —after 1 January, he will be continuing in business. We will apply the regulations with common sense. If the hon. Gentleman fears that a producer is going out of business, he can bring the case to my attention and we will investigate it—but the hon. Gentleman will have precious little to report.

Agricultural Training Board

3. **Mr. Fabricant:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to ensure that the services offered by the Agricultural Training Board in central England continue to be at the level required to meet the needs of the region.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Nicholas Soames): We are carefully considering reactions to our plans to change the status of the Agricultural Training Board.

Mr. Fabricant: Does my hon. Friend agree that training groups are a marvellous way of farmers getting together and provide a perfect forum for disseminating training information to other farmers? Does he also agree that United Kingdom farmers are very strapped for cash at the moment? Will he make a statement confirming that core funding for training, together with some additional funding for overheads, will continue?

Mr. Soames: It is clear from the response and from comments received that ATB training groups are highly valued by the industry and other agencies operating in the land-based sector. I confirm that if Agriculture Ministers decide, following the consultation exercise, to implement their proposals for changing the status of ATB funding, core funding will continue.

Mr. Stevenson: In the light of that response, should not the question posed be not so much about core funding for the board in central England but whether or not the boards have a future? Given the Government's negative response in respect of wages councils and similar bodies, will the Minister give a commitment that ATBs will continue with Government support, even if core funding is changed?

Mr. Soames: The hon. Gentleman raises an important point, and he is right to make such an inquiry. We have a high opinion of the Agricultural Training Board's work, and seek to explore with the ATB ways of making its operations more efficient and less bureaucratic. We have every intention of ensuring that the board continues its good work.

Alternative Land Use

4. **Mr. Steen:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many acres of land are to be taken out of agricultural use in the United Kingdom under the recent reforms of the CAP; and if he will make a statement on the progress made on his alternative land use policy.

Mr. Gummer: It is not yet possible to say precisely how much land will be fallowed in the first year of the arable area payment scheme. The Commission has estimated that some 634,000 hectares would be set aside in the United Kingdom as a whole.

Mr. Steen: I pay tribute to my right hon. Friend's excellent work for farmers throughout the country and particularly in my area. Am I right in thinking that an area of land five times the size of Devon will have to be taken out of agriculture? If so, will that be done by eating into green-field sites on the edges of towns and smaller market villages; by land being taken by recreational, leisure, and tourist interests; or by increasing the number of gardens that people can have? Is my right hon. Friend aware that it is less dangerous to walk across Dartmoor, where the military can fire freely 300 days a year, than in many other parts of my constituency because of the number of golf balls that fly around there?

Mr. Gummer: My hon. Friend knows that fallowing was part of the rotation of crops for many years, but was stopped recently. Land will be taken out in different ways all over the country. My main concern is that the process should be as environmentally friendly as possible and that we should keep the land in good heart, because there may come a time when we shall need it. No student of history could support the idea that surpluses go on for ever. I hope that people will be imaginative. I agree with my hon. Friend that even gardens may be available, and I hope that no one will try to frustrate that.

Mr. Martyn Jones: The Minister is aware that there are few alternative uses for hill areas in my constituency and in other parts of Britain. Golf is not an option, as nobody has invented a vertical golf course yet. Will he assure me that the GATT negotiations on the common agricultural policy will not further erode hill livestock compensatory amounts and the ewe premium?

Mr. Gummer: As the hon. Gentleman knows, there will be little set-aside in the hillier areas of his constituency. I assure him that the GATT agreement is consonant with the common agricultural policy reform and that the payments that he mentioned will not be disciplined under the GATT because they are not production connected.

Mr. Lord: My right hon. Friend will be aware that many people are deeply concerned about the principle of setting aside fertile agricultural land. Concern is being expressed about the amount of land set aside in Britain and other European countries. Although we do not want

our farmers to behave like French farmers, will he assure the House that no more than the 15 per cent. already agreed will be set aside in Britain?

Mr. Gummer: It would be much better if production capacity equalled available land, but it is surely better to set aside land than to have mountains and lakes, which cost a great deal, and surely better to keep the land in good heart and to pay the farmer for looking after it properly so that it is available when the nation needs it than to allow it to be removed from agriculture permanently. I think that my hon. Friend puts the saddest rather than the best aspect of a reasonable policy. I assure him that the CAP reform package that I have negotiated is very much in the United Kingdom's interests, and is very much better than that proposed at the outset.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Is not it clear that the Government's position has changed in the past seven days since the President of the Board of Trade gave his answer at the Dispatch Box? When I asked a similar question last week, we received a different response. If the NFU, European Community officials and his own Back Benchers believe it, why does not the Minister admit that the GATT agreement will lead to a substantial increase in set-aside —optimistic assumptions suggest 20 per cent., but pessimistic assumptions suggest as much as 40 per cent. Why does he persist in denying the truth from the Dispatch Box?

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Gentleman's intervention—for the second time—suggests a staggering unfamiliarity with the facts. The European Commission has made it clear that GATT is compatible with CAP. If the European Commission says that it is compatible, it cannot mean that there will be an extensive extension of set-aside. The situation is quite clear: set-aside, as part of the programme of CAP reform, will not be radically changed by the GATT agreement. The hon. Gentleman knows that from me, he knows it from the Commission and, indeed, he would know it from what the NFU has said if he read it more carefully.

Farmers (Planning)

5. **Mr. Moss:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assistance his Department is giving to farmers on planning matters.

Mr. Soames: This Department works closely with the Department of the Environment to ensure that the planning system enables farmers to carry out developments that are necessary to sustain the rural economy.

Mr. Moss: I thank my hon. Friend for that announcement, which will be warmly welcomed in my constituency of Cambridgeshire, North-East. But given the prospects of deteriorating farm incomes as a result of common agricultural policy reform and the GATT adjustments, does not my hon. Friend agree that planning authorities should adopt a far more sensitive and flexible approach to the development needs of farmers and landowners?

Mr. Soames: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. He is right. Planning authorities should adopt a positive approach, and their role must be to facilitate sensible diversification. My hon. Friend will be aware that that was the message of "The Countryside and the Rural Economy"—planning policy guidance note 7—issued by the Department. The document advises planning authorities that the development necessary to sustain the rural economy must be integrated with the protection of what is best in the countryside. Maintaining a healthy rural economy is by far the best way of protecting and enhancing our countryside.

Mr. Graham: Is the Minister aware that in Renfrewshire we have been inundated with a flood of applications to build housing on farmland? What type of advice is the Department giving to farmers subjected to such pressure? My constituents in some of my Tory heartlands are sick and tired of spending a fortune to prevent houses from being built on farmland.

Mr. Soames: I am grateful for the fact that that is a question for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Mr. Marland: Is my hon. Friend aware that it is important that local planning authorities, as well as allowing and encouraging developments involving surplus farm buildings, should allow the construction of other buildings, too, provided that they are suitably landscaped? Does my hon. Friend agree that all too often vociferous minorities have an influence far beyond what they deserve? Will he use his best offices to discuss with the Department of the Environment ways in which the resolve of local planning authorities may be stiffened to resist some of those vociferous minorities—which all too often come from the Liberal Democratic party?

Mr. Soames: My hon. Friend is correct. The countryside cannot be preserved in aspic, and only its enemies would propose that it should be.

Mr. Tony Banks: If it were you would eat it!

Mr. Soames: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman.

The proper way to create a vigorous and enterprising countryside is to ensure that farmers can diversify in a sensitive and realistic manner.

GATT

6. **Mr. Barnes:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the consistency of the GATT agricultural agreement with the recent CAP reforms; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The recent agreement between the European Community and the United States on GATT agriculture paves the way for wider agreement in the round. The Commission has made it clear that it is compatible with the reforms of CAP regimes agreed earlier this year, as I said in reply to question 4.

Mr. Barnes: Even with the reforms, the CAP is protectionist and has considerable subsidy equivalents. Although GATT is not a free trade system, it stands for trade liberalisation. Is the only way in which the circle can be squared between the different principles by taking more and more land out of production, at a time when more and more people in the world are starving?

Mr. Gummer: I agree with the hon. Gentleman that there is a need to protect the countryside of Europe and to ensure that agriculture can continue sensibly there. If that

protection is not afforded, the countryside on which we depend will not be the sort of countryside that town dwellers and surburban people want to see. Of course we must protect agriculture to enable townsmen to enjoy the countryside. That can be done, but at a lower cost and with less protection than in the past, both through CAP reform and through a GATT agreement. That is why the Government have pioneered the CAP reform and why we have been at the centre of the battle to ensure that there is a GATT agreement.

Mr. Dykes: May I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his skilful chairmanship of the EC Agriculture Council during our presidency? Is he now confident that the French will accept the GATT deal and that they will not exercise any vetoes?

Mr. Gummer: The French Government have made it clear that they are unhappy about some of the details of the arrangements made between the European Community and the United States. They have also made it clear that they wish to see the whole GATT deal in the round before they make up their mind. They will then decide what is in the interests of France. It is inconceivable that it could be in the interests of France not to have a GATT deal which, after all, will help Europe to get out of the recession that has led to more than 3 million people being unemployed in France.

Mr. John D. Taylor: Under the GATT agricultural agreement, what are the prospects for cheaper feeding stuffs to give an incentive to our intensive sector in agriculture?

Mr. Gummer: The main ability to reduce the price of feeding stuffs comes from the CAP reform, which is taken up in the GATT agreement. There will be a reduction of 30 per cent. in the support price of cereals, which will have a direct knock-on effect in the price of feeding stuffs. Those feeding stuffs take up a large proportion of the end price of both pigs and poultry.

Mr. Hawkins: My right hon. Friend will be aware from my previous discussions with him of my concern for the largest mushroom grower in the north of England, which is in my constituency. As part of his work on the continuing CAP reforms, will he pay special attention to the unfair subsidies that are paid to rival mushroom growers in a number of other countries? Will he join me in congratulating Pixie House Mushrooms on combating those unfair subsidies and winning this week the award for business of the year in our area, which was sponsored by First Leisure plc and by the local newspapers?

Mr. Gummer: After that short break, we come back to the main programme. I agree with my hon. Friend that there are some practices within the Community that fundamentally distort competition and trade. They underline the need for Community action and decisions made across the country so that trade may be fair. I will continue to fight to ensure that British firms have a fair deal in Europe.

Dr. Strang: I thank the Minister for his earlier congratulations. Is he aware that the Labour party wants international agreement on an overall GATT deal as soon as possible? However, measures will be required to protect the livelihoods of our farmers and farm workers, not least because of the hundreds of thousands of jobs in the food and drink industries which are dependent on home agricultural produce. If concessions are made to secure a French agreement on GATT, will the Minister ensure that such concessions do not discriminate against our agriculture and that the British, as consumers and taxpayers, do not bear a disproportionate share of the cost?

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Gentleman is right to say that a trade deal in GATT is essential. That point has all-party support. I do not see how any agreement under GATT could disproportionately disadvantage the United Kingdom. I am looking closely at the small print of the discussions so far to ensure that that does not happen. I do not believe that the French can object to the agreement under the CAP reform to which they added their vote. It follows that if CAP reform is consonant with GATT and GATT is consonant with CAP reform, there is no place for changes that would benefit one country rather than the others. Any changes that take place over the next few months must, as with any other changes, be fair for all countries, neither disproportionately costing nor disproportionately benefiting countries merely because they have made a lot of noise.

Food Production Industry

7. **Mr. Amess:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make an official visit to food producers in Basildon to discuss the needs of the food production industry in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Curry: I would consider an invitation to visit Basildon irresistable.

Mr. Amess: With that excellent news, will my hon. Friend join me at Basildon Dairy Products and, while tasting the finest yoghurt in the world, listen to the company's concerns about its projected increased cost of raw materials next year and then join me at Faux Brand Products and, while tasting the finest ham in Europe, listen to the company's plans for expansion next year and its concern that while this country honours European directives at increased costs, other member states appear not to do that?

Mr. Curry: I am looking forward to tasting the products at the plants in my hon. Friend's constituency. Experience tells me that when I am invited to taste products, I am usually required to sing for my supper and I will certainly listen to what those companies have to say.

EC Surplus Butter

8. **Mr. Gerrard:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the arrangements that have been made for the distribution of EC surplus butter.

Mr. Curry: Three thousand seven hundred tonnes of butter will be distributed by 1,300 voluntary organisations.

Mr. Gerrard: What does the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food do to ensure that there is adequate publicity so that the people who are entitled to the butter know where and when it is going to be distributed? What checks are carried out afterwards to ensure that the butter has gone to the people who are entitled to it and does not end up on market stalls and in shops?

Mr. Curry: The publicity must be handled by the organisations concerned. We send the butter to voluntary organisations. It would be an enormous task for MAFF to advertise the locations at which 1,300 organisations make the butter available. The arrangements are subjected to very detailed checks. We check about one third of all recipients annually. We check the records of the produce received and the record of the produce that has gone out. We also check the number of recipients, how much each received and how eligibility was established. Organisations that are shown not to have followed the rules will find it extremely difficult to participate in the scheme the following year.

Group Marketing Grant

9. **Mr. Tyler:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what sums have been awarded to what groups under the MAFF group marketing grant since 1 April.

Mr. Curry: The Department has so far issued 11 approvals under the scheme to a total value of just over £180,000 in England.

Mr. Tyler: Is the Minister aware that that is a very disappointing and pathetic take-up after all the hype about the introduction of the scheme? Will the Minister comment on whether too high a proportion of the cost is laid on the groups or whether it has something to do with the criteria for acceptance within the Ministry? At the end of the financial year, will any unallocated funds be sucked back into the Treasury?

Mr. Curry: The answer to the last question is no. I disagree with the hon. Gentleman's point about the take-up. We have had 39 applications and 18 approvals in the United Kingdom. We deliberately set ourselves to work sensibly to develop schemes and we deliberately decided not to go for a great theatrical send-off for a scheme that might not be well founded. The important point is that we are encouraging people to talk about, discuss and develop schemes with us and we are very encouraged by what is happening. We are now talking to the catering and retail sectors about how they can get hold of the products that they want to help British farmers and to give British consumers the best of British produce.

Mr. John Greenway: Does my hon. Friend agree that the coming together of a competitive exchange rate, the CAP reform and the GATT settlement provides the best opportunity for a generation of British food manufacturers to make inroads into our huge trade deficit in food products? The marketing grant scheme is crucial to that. Does he also agree that the labelling directive which is under consideration would help our manufacturers a great deal if we could put on the labels of our food the origin of those food products?

Mr. Curry: I note my hon. Friend's final point. I agree with him entirely. The whole purpose of the scheme is not to persuade people to do things for patriotic purposes, but to ensure that they can get first-rate products from the United Kingdom for our consumers and for the export market. We have some quite remarkable products and we are not justly represented overseas in many of the markets in which we should be. The whole point of the scheme is to ensure that British food acquires a worldwide reputation for quality, reliability and innovation.

Set-aside

10. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress he has made in introducing the new set-aside proposals.

Mr. Gummer: A detailed booklet on the arable area payments scheme for 1992-93 was published in early September and copies were placed in the House Library.

Mr. Pike: Does the Minister accept that while it may be seen as folly to pay farmers not to produce when millions of people in the world are starving, if we have to have a set-aside policy, we must be sure that the farmers will know the rules of the non-rotational scheme in time to plan for the next growing year?

Mr. Gummer: I certainly want to make sure that when we have the non-rotational scheme which was inserted at British insistence, it will be early enough for people to make that choice and to include within it the areas which they have set aside under the rotational scheme as the first year of a non-rotational project.

Mr. Gill: What consideration has my right hon. Friend given to the effect of set-aside on tenant values when dilapidations are settled at the end of a farm tenancy?

Mr. Gummer: My hon. Friend raises a point which we have looked at carefully and it is one of the things that are informing our present discussions about the reform of landlord-tenant arrangements. I hope very much to be able to make decisions on that and, when legislative time is available, wholly to reform our landlord-tenant arrangements which are wildly out of date and do not provide enough land for tenants to take up.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: Does the Minister accept that his policy on set-aside is quite unsatisfactory? It applies to no other industry; it has a very dubious effect on the environment and there is the further danger that farmers will increase the productivity of their remaining land to make up what they have lost on set-aside. Would it not be wiser to encourage less intensive agriculture?

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Member has obviously not read our statements, which show that we are doing precisely that. It is our purpose to encourage less intensive arrangements, but set-aside is a necessary part of the whole policy and he does not do his own farmers any good by perpetuating myths about set-aside which they would disagree with.

The fact is that we are over-producing and that we cannot use what we over-produce to help the developing countries, as every aid agency would tell us. The hon. Member must not blame us for not doing something for which every aid agency would attack us if we did. Secondly his comments about the environment would be entirely undermined by most of the environmental agencies in this country. Set-aside has been welcomed by a number of them. A mixture of rotational and no-rotational set-aside would have their widespread support. The hon. Gentleman should not intervene when he has not done his homework.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: Further to the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Ludlow (Mr. Gill), my right hon. Friend will be aware, having completed his consultation on landlord and tenant reform, that there is a window of goodwill from all organisations that this reform should succeed. May I urge him to come forward with a White Paper or legislative proposals as soon as possible?

Mr. Gummer: The point about set-aside is that it again underlines the need for the arrangements between landlords and tenants to be left to the landlords and tenants and not to a panoply of legal arrangements. I do not believe that we shall get sufficient land forward, so that tenants who want to come into the industry will be able to take it, unless we ensure that decisions are made between two grown-up people and not interfered with by a lot of people who have arrangements that are based on laws that are long out of date.

Mr. Maclennan: Does the Minister agree that we would be less dependent on set-aside if farmers in this and other countries in the Community were more able to meet their agricultural feedstuff requirements from their own resources? Will he look particularly at the exports of maize gluten and other feedstuffs from America in the context of the GATT round?

Mr. Gummer: We have been discussing this, not in the context of the GATT round but in the context of the GATT panel finding on two separate occasions that we in Europe have for too long excluded the products of the United States and other countries, having given them tariff-free entry.

The Commissioner has achieved what I believe to be a good deal for Europe on that issue and we should congratulate him on what he has done, because it has paved the way for a wider GATT agreement.

Mr. Morley: I am sure that the Minister will agree that without constructive and positive uses for set-aside land, we shall face a new wasteland policy in this country because of land that is left uncultivated. We are looking forward to proper proposals to ensure that land is used constructively, without a negative waste of public funds. Bearing in mind what the Minister has said about the impact of the GATT agreement, can we take it that he is giving the House an assurance that no more than 15 per cent. of agricultural land will be set aside in this country?

Mr. Gummer: There is no question of the GATT agreement increasing substantially the costs of the common agricultural policy reform for the farmer, and among those is set-aside. I do not change from that position. The hon. Gentleman talks about set-aside as if it were an innovation, when there has been crop rotation throughout the history of agriculture. Large areas of land have always been left to rest, and the hon. Gentleman cannot start some terrible scare about it. Farmers are being paid to look after the land. The rules that I have laid down are tougher than in other European countries because I have environmental support—*[Interruption.]*—if hon. Gentlemen ask questions and expect answers, they should not interrupt people when they are trying to answer.

Right to Fish

11. **Mr. Sproat:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on official procedures for informing fishermen when their right to fish is to be stopped.

Mr. Curry: Fishermen are informed of fishery closures by means of variations to their licences, wherever possible immediately before a closure.

Mr. Sproat: While fish quota management is extremely difficult, surely there is something seriously wrong with the system when the fishermen of Harwich and the Thames estuary are told their quotas for the rest of the year on 27 October, and they plan on that basis, only to be told two weeks later that the quotas have been slashed by three quarters and a week later that they have been abandoned all together, thus wiping out their livelihood for the last six weeks of the year. Can my hon. Friend assure me that he is looking for, and will find, a more fair and effective method of quota control?

Mr. Curry: If my hon. Friend wishes us to move to individual transferable quotas, where the fisherman is given a clear quota to exploit throughout the year, I shall be happy to examine that, but the fishing industry has shown strong hostility to it. Under the present rules, the one thing that we cannot control is how frequently fishermen go to sea and how much they catch. There is always a delay of a couple of weeks before statistics are available. If we say that we are going to close a fishery in five or six days, every fisherman in creation will set out to sea, stay there for as long as possible, and come back with a large catch, which will represent a significant overfish. I understand the problem, and have told each group of fishermen where problems occur. If there is any justification for reopening I shall do it, and I have already met a significant number of groups of fishermen. If we can improve management we shall be open to doing so.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: The Minister is going to have to stop a lot of other fishermen, in the dictatorial way in which he has just stopped the Grimsby producer organisations' cod quota, if the multi-annual guidance programme targets that he has just agreed in Brussels come into effect. How can the Minister justify an agreement which cuts by one fifth the British fishing effort —the nation which provides the majority of the fish stocks in the Common Market pool—and leaves the massive Spanish effort with a 4 per cent. cut only?

Mr. Curry: I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on the flag of convenience that he is wearing. As usual, he has got his facts wrong. The multi-annual guidance programme targets are identical for all member states. The effort that they have to apply to each sector depends on how their fleet is divided between various sectors. We shall monitor carefully what the Spanish and everyone else is doing. We have an outstandingly good deal for the British fleet, which I shall explain to him at length and very slowly if he so wishes.

Mr. Harris: Is my hon. Friend aware that the Cornish fishermen, especially those from my constituency, are hopping mad because of what they regard as the premature closure of the hake fishery? Two days ago they were suddenly told, without warning, that the Minister had closed that fishery, even though the Cornish fish

producers organisation has 20 tonnes of unused quota at its disposal. Surely they are being penalised because they have managed their sector of the quota well, whereas others have managed it badly.

Mr. Curry: The people who are hopping mad are the quota hoppers, because they are the people who are most affected by this closure. When we have the up-to-date figures, I am sure that my hon. Friend will find that there is no deficiency left on the tonnages which have been taken. I give him an assurance, as I do all fishermen, that if we find that there is so much as one fish left, we will authorise them to go and catch it.

Mr. Salmond: The Minister claimed in Standing Committee that opinion in the industry was divided on the question of borrowing forward on the haddock quota. Given that the entire Scottish industry was in favour of this proposal, can the Minister name the fishing organisation that was against it?

Mr. Curry: I can name the organisation that failed to administer its quota effectively this year, and that is the producer organisation that is supposed to be disputing that decision on haddock. Those haddock are on the margin of the minimum landing size. If they are caught next year they will be bigger fish, better fish and worth a great deal more to the industry. The sensible thing is to catch them next year when they have a reasonable and sensible quota.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Congdon:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 3 December.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Congdon: Is my right hon. Friend aware that many businesses are finding it difficult enough without the added burden of bureaucratic interference and excessive regulation? Can he assure businesses in my constituency that he will do everything he can to reduce the number of petty rules and regulations emanating both from Whitehall and from Brussels?

The Prime Minister: I can certainly give my hon. Friend that assurance. I think that it is time that we stood back again and looked at the whole burden of regulation—that imposed by the House, that imposed by the Community and that imposed by local authorities. That is precisely what I have asked my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade to do. I shall be calling in all Cabinet Ministers in the new year to discuss how we can cut that red tape still further. Today I have announced a new scrutiny involving the private sector, which will look at the way in which EC regulations impact upon business. My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade will announce details of this shortly.

Mr. John Smith: On the day when the Post Office has made a staggering announcement of 15,000 job losses, will the Prime Minister tell the House what action he proposes to take to stem the rising tide of unemployment?

The Prime Minister: Everyone, of course, regrets job losses wherever they occur. In the case of the Post Office, I am glad that these are both to be spread and to be sought voluntarily. The only way to create long-term sustainable jobs is to create the right policies that produce long-term sustainable growth. That is precisely what we are putting in place.

Mr. John Smith: Does the Prime Minister not realise that we have heard both these regrets and these excuses in every month of the two years in which he has been Prime Minister? Does he not accept the reality of modern Britain, that there are 52 unemployed people seeking every job vacant in the west midlands and 72 seeking every job vacant in London? What does he propose to do about it?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. and learned Gentleman should have been listening a moment or so ago. If he is really concerned about jobs, why does he not drop his commitment to a payroll tax, the social chapter and the minimum wage? The right hon. and learned Gentleman should remember what happened last time a Labour Government—of which he was a member—tried to buy its way out of recession: 27 per cent. inflation and no growth.

Mr. John Smith: Is it not pathetic that, after 15 years of Conservative Government and after the Prime Minister has been in office for two years, he is still seeking to blame others for unemployment? Does he not realise that redundancy does not just affect the Post Office; in this week alone, we have the Post Office, Ford and Cammell Laird? Does he not understand that unemployment is now a cancer eating up the fabric of British society? When, at long last, will he take some action against unemployment?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. and learned Gentleman expresses concern about Cammell Laird. The defence policies that his party espouses would put hundreds of thousands of people out of work. He conveniently forgets that labour spent the first half of this year calling for swingeing tax increases that would have put many other people out of work. Our priority has been to create the right conditions for growth. We have cut inflation to under 4 per cent., we have cut tax rates for businesses and earners and we have reduced interest rates to 7 per cent., the lowest in the Community and half the level of two years ago.

Perhaps the right hon. and learned Gentleman missed the latest Community survey in the *Financial Times*—*[Interruption.]* I gather that he did. If he had not, perhaps he would be better informed. That showed that British business men are now displaying much more confidence in British prospects than their continental counterparts are showing in their prospects. When will the right hon. and learned Gentleman start talking this country up and stop talking it down?

Mr. King: Against the background of the further attempts by the IRA to mount a bombing campaign in Northern Ireland and on the mainland, did my right hon. Friend note in the recent elections in the Republic of Ireland that Sinn Fein massed the masive total of 1·6 per cent. of support and that of the 42 candidates who stood, 40 lost their deposits? Does my right hon. Friend agree that that demonstrates that any attempt to pretend that there is popular democratic support for the campaign of violence is totally fraudulent?

The Prime Minister: I certainly noted the statistics to which my right hon. Friend refers. They reflect the disgust that is felt not only in this country but in the Republic of Ireland about the way in which the IRA seeks to bomb, kill and damage people's lives indiscriminately.

Q2. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 3 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Mullin: Does the Prime Minister recall that in September 1986 he filled in a questionnaire sent to him by the author Mr. Martin Short agreeing that police officers, magistrates, Members of Parliament, councillors and other public officials who were Freemasons should disclose that fact? If he has forgotten, I have with me a copy of the questionnaire with his signature at the bottom of it. Is that still his position and, if so, may I expect his support for my Secret Societies (Declaration) Bill which comes up for Second Reading on 29 January?

The Prime Minister: I commend the hon. Gentleman for his ingenuity and research. It remains my personal view, as set out at that time. I shall examine his Bill and my timetable and see what answer I come up with.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith: Is my right hon. Friend aware that in the last week alone, 17 convoys of British troops have delivered nearly 1,000 tonnes of food to the stricken citizens of Bosnia? Will he reassure the House that it is not the Government's intention to deploy British troops in a combat role, whatever the merits of enforcing a no-fly zone, in what is essentially a civil war?

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend knows, we already have 2,000 troops in Yugoslavia. They are there to deliver humanitarian aid. They are, as my hon. Friend points out, doing that with great skill, persistence and bravery. We have taken a leading role in many aspects in Yugoslavia, in sanctions monitoring in the Adriatic, and that has now been stepped up. We have, of course, supported the establishment of a no-fly zone. If further action is needed to enforce that no-fly zone, we should wish to consider that with our allies and partners in the United Nations, but we have no immediate plans to go further.

Mr. Ashdown: Does the Prime Minister not yet realise that, despite the best efforts of our troops on the ground, the situation in and around Bosnia is not getting better but worse? Does he not realise that time is running out for saving lives and for stopping the spread of the conflict? Does he further not realise that whether it is in London in August or in Geneva in two weeks' time, peace efforts will continue to fail for so long as agreements on paper are not backed by the will to enforce them on the ground?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman refers to the London conference on Yugoslavia, which this country called and which set a new framework for negotiations. He is right in saying that when those negotiations are there it is necessary for those who reach agreements to keep them, and we will certainly do what we can to ensure that.

The right hon. Member, like everyone else, wants to see an end to the fighting and suffering in the former Yugoslavia. I have to tell him that we are not talking about the invasion of one country by another; we are talking, as my hon. Friend the Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith) said, effectively about a civil war. It is all too easy to be heroic with the lives of other people.

Those who talk glibly about bombing from the air should consider the risk of retaliation to our troops who are, at present, delivering humanitarian aid. Those who go further and talk about putting ground forces in should realise that, were the circumstances necessary and we and others did so, we would be committing those troops to a very long and bloody fight with the absolute certainty of serious casualties. If we have not put in troops, as the right hon. Gentleman clearly thinks we might have done, it is not out of neglect; it is out of our judgment of what is best, what is feasible and what is responsible.

Mr. Watts: Can my right hon. Friend confirm that our European Community partners understand clearly that any attempt to interfere with the rebate of Britain's excessive contributions to the EC budget would have a dramatic effect on his ability to secure a smooth passage for the Maastricht Bill through the House?

The Prime Minister: I am sure that my hon. Friend has just made his own point in an inimitable fashion, and I note it. I am grateful for what he had to say.

The abatement, which is worth about £12 billion to the United Kingdom so far, ensures that we pay only our fair share to the Community budget. I have to say that there is no justification whatever for reducing that rebate, and we shall not agree to reduce it at Edinburgh. On most issues at Edinburgh, there may be room for negotiation. On this issue, there is no room whatever for negotiation.

Q3. **Mr. Burden:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 3 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moment ago.

Mr. Burden: Is the Prime Minister aware that this year more than 2,500 jobs have been lost in manufacturing in my city of Birmingham, and that, every working day that he has been Prime Minister, 750 manufacturing jobs have been lost? Given the virtual vote of no confidence which the Engineering Employers Federation gave to the President of the Board of Trade last week, when will he start listening to what the manufacturing industry is saying?

The Prime Minister: I advise the hon. Gentleman to read the "Autumn Statement". He obviously missed it.

Q4. **Mr. Conway:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 3 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moment ago.

Mr. Conway: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the people of this country never wanted to celebrate the Marxist anniversay of May day? Given the new spirit of European co-operation, will my right hon. Friend consider replacing the May day bank holiday with a bank holiday to mark the anniversary of the battle of Trafalgar, the battle of Agincourt or, better still, the battle of Waterloo?

The Prime Minister: I share my hon. Friend's enthusiasm for removing the May day bank holiday in precisely the same way in which are seeing the removal of

the political system that it supports. Perhaps Trafalgar day would be appropriate; perhaps other days, but certainly not May day.

Mr. Hattersley: Which does the Prime Minister think would most increase the choices available to a poor family—all the charters that he has announced, some of which he relaunched this morning, or £10 a week more on child benefit?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman should realise that many people in this country want to ensure that they get a better quality of public service than they have had in the past. We are determined under the charter programme to ensure that they get that better quality of service. I find it astonishing that the Labour party talks about public service, but does nothing in reality to ensure that people receive it.

Mr. Streeter: Does my right hon. Friend agree that competitive tendering has brought real improvement and value for money where it has been introduced in local authority services? Does he, like me, welcome the fact that compulsory competitive tendering is to be introduced into housing management?

The Prime Minister: I certainly agree that competitive tendering has produced substantial cost savings so far, and will no doubt continue to do so in future. It has done so with the same or improved standards of performance. I welcome the extension of compulsory competitive tendering to housing management—it is a little overdue, but now it is there, I very much welcome it.

Q5. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 3 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Pike: Does the Prime Minister recognise that the main underlying message of the churches lobby on housing this week was that, despite the slight change of direction announced in the autumn statement, that has only touched the surface of the many housing problems created as a result of Government policies during the past 14 years? Will the Government make more resources available to tackle the problems, reduce unemployment, improve the market sector and improve the British economy?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Gentleman will be pleased to know, the plans that the Goverament have announced enable them to meet the manifesto pledge of 153,000 new homes. In addition, as the hon. Gentleman will know, the housing market should benefit significantly from the extra £750 million set aside to reduce the overhang of empty properties. That should provide another 20,000 properties for the public sector. The reduction in interest rates will help both the public and private sectors.

Madam Speaker: Order. Time is up; we now move to the private notice question—Mr. Ron Davies.

Mr. Churchill: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Would it be in order for my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to convey the Government's sympathy to the victims of the bombings in Manchester?

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman may have an opportunity to raise his point of order later. However, as he knows, I cannot take it now, however sympathetic I might feel.

Flooding (Wales)

3.30 pm

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly) *(by private notice)*: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the recent severe flooding in Wales—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Will hon. Members leaving the Chamber please do so quietly so that we may make progress on the private notice question?

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. David Hunt): In Wales we have experienced severe flooding caused by exceptionally heavy rain since Sunday, following above-average rainfall during the previous four months. Between Sunday afternoon, 29 November, and Wednesday afternoon, 2 December, 244 mm—9·61 in—of rain fell at Treherbert in the Rhondda. That is almost 10 in in three days. During the past few days, river levels have been high over a wide area with no fewer than 20 rivers being placed on red alert. I am pleased to be able to inform the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) that the recent flooding has largely abated and we hope that weather conditions will continue to improve. This afternoon, the only river on which a red alert remains in force is the River Wye.

There have been numerous cases of local flooding, although few problems of flooding from major rivers, and the flood defences have performed reasonably well. The problems, in many cases, appear to have been caused by culverts on small side streams becoming blocked. There has also been widespread flooding of flood plains.

One of the worst affected areas has been Pontypridd, where nearly 100 business and private properties have been flooded. Many properties have also been flooded in Treorchy, Tredegar and other parts of Wales. During the early hours of yesterday morning, a slip of material occurred from the face of a coal tip and covered part of a school playground at Tredegar. The cause of the slip is said to have been a blocked culvert, uphill from the tip, which caused water to flow on to and through the tip. Fortunately, there were no injuries or structural damage, but the school was closed and 900 pupils were sent home. The clean-up is continuing and the school will remain closed until next week. The tip is now being carefully monitored. I am sure that the House will wish to join me in expressing sympathy with those who have been in any way affected by those recent events.

Since the last major flood in 1979, some £34 million has been spent on flood defences in south Wales. As a result, many communities have been spared flooding on this occasion.

I am sure that all hon. Members would wish to join me in expressing appreciation for the dedicated work of the National Rivers Authority flood defence staff, the police, local authorities and all the other emergency services and voluntary organisations involved.

Mr. Davies: I thank the Secretary of State for his statement. I wish to associate myself wholeheartedly with the tribute that he has paid to the emergency services, particularly to the local authorities and, of course, the National Rivers Authority. South Wales has been badly hit over recent days and all the emergency services have performed their duties magnificently.

There is no doubt that millions of pounds' worth of damage has been done in Wales. Transport has been disrupted; there have been landslides; hundreds, if not thousands, of homes have been flooded; and livestock and farmland have been lost. I understand that, in the opinion of the emergency services in the three south Wales counties of Gwent, Mid Glamorgan and West Glamorgan, most damage was caused by the inability of the outdated water and sewerage infrastructure to cope with higher than normal rainfall. Will the Secretary of State therefore undertake to review the effectiveness of the flood control measures in affected areas and make the necessary capital available to remedy any shortcomings identified by that survey?

Given the tight financial settlement for local authorities this year, does the Secretary of State intend to fund emergency expenditure? In particular, will he guarantee that any overspending in the current year will not result in penalties?

Many of the flood victims will have been under-insured. Does the Secretary of State have in mind any proposals for a compensation scheme? If the Government can find £60 million for the uninsured Windsor castle, can we have equal treatment for the people of Wales?

Mr. Hunt: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for the words of praise which he gave to the emergency services. As I pointed out in my initial response, a substantial sum has been spent in Wales since the last major flood in 1979, including £10 million by the Welsh Office. Of course, there have been contributions from other sources as well. I will carefully review all the schemes in the light of the experience of this flood; I give the hon. Gentleman that assurance.

The current flood defences performed well, and in many parts of Wales prevented significant flooding.

I should like to say a special word about Pontypridd, where there is a need for flood schemes. The flooding was predominantly from complex drainage systems within the town of Pontypridd. Works are going on in Zion street and Hopkinstown. I hope that proposals will be coming forward which we can look at and take action upon.

As to further help, the hon. Gentleman will know that Ministers have power to activate schemes of special financial assistance to local authorities under the Bellwin scheme where storms or flooding cause serious financial problems. I am not aware of any circumstances that would give rise to the use of those powers in this case, but I shall monitor the position carefully.

As the hon. Gentleman will know, it is the responsibility of individual householders to ensure that they have adequate insurance. I will be visiting many of the affected areas tomorrow and I will bear in mind what the hon. Gentleman has said.

Mr. Roger Evans (Monmouth): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the River Wye, which he told us was still under a state of red alert, is still rising at Hereford, upstream, which normally means that Monmouth town will be affected within 24 hours? Is he aware that the flood alleviation scheme which was carried out in Monmouth town some years ago is widely believed by one school of thought to be ineffective due to the porosity of the ground undermining the effectiveness of the embankments? Will he give us an assurance that the position in Monmouth town will be monitored carefully?

Mr. Hunt: I am very happy to give my hon. Friend that assurance. He has been alerting me to the potential problems in Monmouth, and I have just come from a meeting with my officials at which we were keeping the situation in Monmouth under careful review. We shall continue to do so.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): May I join the right hon. Gentleman in his praise for the statutory services, which did a marvellous job? Does he accept, however, that many private householders in Wales are not only under-insured but uninsured, because they simply cannot afford the premiums currently required, particularly if they are unemployed? Will he give an undertaking that he will be prepared to look outside the Bellwin scheme if there are large numbers of private householders who have modest but, to them, important claims which will need to be met in order to put their homes back into a habitable condition? Or are we to take it that they will simply be told that it is bad luck that they were not insured?

Mr. Hunt: Not at all. I thank the hon. and learned Member for his remarks about the emergency services. I am aware of several hundred properties involved, but not the thousands that might have been suspected originally. I will be visiting several of the most severely affected areas tomorrow and I will bear in mind what he says, but I see no reason at present to go outside the Bellwin formula.

Mr. Colin Shepherd (Hereford): Does my right hon. Friend recall that the River Wye hydrological basin extends across the border from the Principality into Herefordshire and that the county of Herefordshire has been very adversely affected by the flooding to which he has referred? I reinforce the compliments paid to the emergency services, which, in Herefordshire, have performed with great effectiveness. Will my right hon. Friend tell the House what conversations he has had with the National Rivers Authority in respect of a review of the effectiveness of the flood defence arrangements in the lower Wye valley?

Mr. Hunt: I recognise that there are a number of problems in England, particularly in areas adjoining Wales, which have been caused by this enormously severe rainfall; for nearly 10 in to fall in just three days presents a very serious situation. By and large, however, the emergency services have coped magnificently.

I shall seek a meeting with the NRA to have a look at all the lessons that need to be learned from this experience, which I very much hope is now over; we can look back and see what lessons are to be learned. I shall bear in mind what my hon. Friend has said.

Mr. Peter Hain (Neath): Frankly, the Secretary of State has offered us only a flood of crocodile tears. Is he not aware that the people of Neath have suffered a downpour nightmare, that the A465 was under 5 ft of water in some places and yet the Welsh Office has still not offered to reconstruct it, that Pontardawe town centre was flooded, that valley villages were cut off and that many parts of Neath were flooded? Why has he not promised us proper funding under the Bellwin scheme? Why will he not allow the Department of Social Security to restore the entitlement to benefits and payments for household and buildings insurance which were withdrawn, because many people in Neath are on low incomes or on benefits? Why has he not implemented the recommendations of the Welsh Consumer Council after the Towyn tragedy over two and a half years ago? He is being utterly complacent.

Mr. Hunt: Once again the hon. Member for Neath (Mr. Hain) has gone over the top. I do not know what consultations he has undertaken with his local authority, but it is aware, as he is, of the Bellwin formula. I am not aware that I have received any notification at all from Neath borough council or from West Glamorgan county council that they anticipate the need to activate the Bellwin formula in this case. Perhaps if the hon. Gentleman were to keep in close consultation with his own local authority, he might keep me informed.

Mr. Hain: I have been in touch with both Neath and West Glamorgan today.

Mr. Hunt: I do not believe that the hon. Gentleman is communicating to me the fact that they are asking for the Bellwin formula to be activated. They are aware how it operates; they should get in touch with me if they believe that the moment has arrived.

I recognise the serious nature of the problems and I pay tribute, as I did earlier, to the people in the hon. Gentleman's constituency and elsewhere in Wales who have had to put up with difficult conditions. I shall monitor the situation carefully, but, as I said before, I am not aware of any need to do anything other than follow the normal practices which have been laid down for many years.

Of course I am aware of the situation in Towyn. I visited the area and have done so on many occasions. I have done my best to ensure that we implement many of the recommendations that have been made not only by the Welsh Consumer Council but by the many other bodies, including the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs, which looked into the circumstances of that tragedy.

Mr. Jonathan Evans (Brecon and Radnor): My right hon. Friend will be aware of the widespread concern in the Principality about the incident to which he has already referred at the school in Tredegar, my home town. That brought back to some of us those terrible images from our childhood of the Aberfan disaster. In light of the further slip of coal refuse, albeit, happily, on this occasion with no injury to life, will my right hon. Friend ensure that there is an urgent review off all coal tips that are in any sort of proximity to school or other private premises, in order that nothing like that happens again.

Mr. Hunt: My hon. Friend raises an important point, but the House may recall that, following that tragedy, it passed the Mines and Quarries (Tips) Act 1969, under part II of which disused colliery spoil tips are inspected regularly by county councils, which are responsible for their safety. But my hon. Friend is right. Before I came into the Chamber I was assured that all tips are inspected regularly, especially those where there are suspected— *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Interruptions are most disconcerting for the entire House and particularly for the Secretary of State at the Dispatch Box. Let us have a little more order now. *[Interruption.]* Order, Mr. Secretary Hunt.

Mr. Hunt: As I was saying, all tips are inspected regularly, especially those where heavy rain may cause

[Mr. Hunt]

problems. I have asked my officials once again to liaise with the other authorities to ensure that all tips are inspected, particularly in view of what has happened recently. I shall bear heavily the responsibility that my hon. Friend has put on me and which I readily assume.

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): I draw the Secretary of State's attention to the fact that landslides are not only a function of coal tips; some of the slides have been coming from the mountainside itself, reviving genuine fears and concerns in more than one valley community. May we have a task force, established by the Welsh Office and county and district authorities, to investigate the stability of our hillsides, not just the coal tips, many of which have been removed?

Mr. Hunt: In view of the hon. Gentleman's experience in these matters, I respect his advice. I shall put in train the inquiries that he has requested. We are aware of all the circumstances of landslides and I shall ensure that they are all inspected. I shall take advice on how best to meet the hon. Gentleman's other points.

Mr. Gareth Wardell (Gower): One of the lessons of Towyn was the importance attached to the speed with which insurance companies responded to claims. Will the right hon. Gentleman meet the Association of British Insurers as soon as possible to encourage it to respond to claims quickly so that the damage that has been incurred can be put right as soon as possible?

Mr. Hunt: Yes, I will.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): As someone whose own home was affected by the floods, I too pay tribute to the emergency services in the Rhondda area, which is always badly affected by any rains. As the Secretary of State says, we are constantly learning lessons, but when will they be acted upon? The Secretary of State mentioned the 10 in of rain in Treherbert, which led to a disaster all the way down the valley. We have an outdated trunk and rainwater system which badly needs investment. The lessons are there to be learnt from the floods of just a few years ago.

There are disasters waiting to happen in south Wales. A recent survey identified hundreds of potential land slips in the valleys of south Wales. If they do not happen in Blaenrhondda or Blaenrhondda, they will happen elsewhere. Only last week, the survey said that every coal tip in south Wales was safe, but this Monday one flowed. A disaster will occur and there will be a substantial loss of life unless the Secretary of State gets to grips with the problem.

Mr. Hunt: I treat seriously the hon. Gentleman's comments, but in Wales we have the legacy of the old mine workings, which imposes on us a special responsibility. The Welsh Development Agency is pursuing the largest land clearance programme anywhere in Europe, and the Welsh Office must work together with all agencies to ensure that that work is as effective as possible. I recognise that we must be vigilant and ensure that the necessary mechanisms are in place to deal with the kind of situation that the hon. Gentleman mentioned.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): Will the Secretary of State provide additional help for the National Rivers Authority's flood prevention work? It did some good work in Carmarthen after the 1987 floods, but several villages, such as Abergwili and Whitland, quickly fall victim to flooding. Whitland has flooded for the third time in six years.

Mr. Hunt: I have been watching the situation in and around the hon. Gentleman's constituency with concern. The improved flood defences were adequate, and further works will go ahead as soon as the route for the new eastern bypass is agreed. We are watching the situation carefully, and have reserve emergency plans if it worsens. We hope that the worst is now past. I again pay tribute to the police, who have done a great deal to comfort people through the advertised helpline—the number of which, I repeat, is 0656 766066. That helpline is still open, and if people are concerned about anything they should contact the police.

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): Is the Secretary of State aware of the amount of flooding in Pontypridd? Although it is not my constituency, one third of the borough of Taff Ely is in my constituency of Ogmore. My hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells) cannot be present because he is in Pontypridd trying to solve the problems created by the flooding of the whole town and of 30 commercial properties. The right hon. Gentleman referred to the flooding in 1979. Hon. Members well remember the difficulties and problems that our constituents suffered on that occasion—and some of them have still not yet received compensation. Some of us have been experiencing flooding since we were young schoolboys in Treorchy, and no Government—including the present Government—have made any attempt to protect people against it. Since 1979 there has been privatisation, and it is disgusting that the salary of the chairman of the Welsh water authority has trebled and that people are picking up money from investing in Welsh Water when money should be spent on flood prevention in Wales.

Mr. Hunt: I will confine my reply to the situation in Pontypridd, which I hope to visit tomorrow to see the conditions there for myself. The local Member for Parliament has been in touch with me and my office to ensure that we are aware of the seriousness of the problem. There are complex drainage systems in the town of Pontypridd and I want to investigate how much that contributed to the problem. I understand that propoals to protect the town's commercial area are under review by the relevant authorities. I am impatient for that review to be brought to a speedy conclusion, so that action can be taken.

Mr. Elfyn Llwyd (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): The Secretary of State said that he believes that the NRA is doing a good job. Is it not self-evident from what he said today that two blocked culverts gave rise to large-scale flooding of the Tredegar slip and in Pontypridd? Is not it self-evident that the NRA is not doing its job properly, and will the Secretary of State undertake to take that up with the authority immediately to ensure that such a disaster does not happen again?

Mr. Hunt: I do not think that I can promise that culverts will never be blocked; nor do I draw the same conclusion as the hon. Gentleman. I stressed that the National Rivers Authority performed its duties very effectively by issuing flood warnings promptly and

correctly. I shall, of course, examine the points that he has made, because there will be lessons to learn from what has happened.

Mr. Jon Owen Jones (Cardiff, Central): As my hon. Friend the Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell), said, my hon. Friend the Member for Pontrypridd (Dr. Howells) cannot be here, but may I say on his behalf that as a schoolboy I travelled through Pontypridd for more than 10 years? On at least half a dozen occasions, I was unable to make the journey because of flooding. A proper flood prevention scheme is clearly long overdue. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will seek an early meeting with my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd to discuss a flood prevention scheme for the town.

Mr. Hunt: Yes. I hope to have such a meeting after I have seen the situation for myself tomorrow.

Business of the House

3.56 pm

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): Will the Leader of the House please give us the business for the forthcoming week?

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 7 DECEMBER—Committee and remaining stages of the Social Security Bill.

TUESDAY 8 DECEMBER—Opposition Day (7th allotted day). There will be a debate entitled "Unemployment" on an Opposition Motion.

Motion on the Mink Keeping Order.

WEDNESDAY 9 DECEMBER—Debate on the common fisheries policy on a Government motion.

Consideration of any Lords amendments which may be received to the Sea Fish (Conservation) Bill.

THURSDAY 10 DECEMBER—Estimates Day (1st allotted day, 1st part). There will be a debate on Government support for coastal zone protection and planning. Details of the estimate concerned and the relevant Select Committee report will be given in the *Official Report*.

Motion on the Banking Co-ordination (Second Council Directive) Regulations.

Motion on the Package Travel, Package Holidays and Package Tours Regulations.

At Ten o'clock the House will be asked to agree the outstanding civil and defence votes on account and winter supplementary estimates.

FRIDAY 11 DECEMBER—Private Members' Bills.

MONDAY 14 DECEMBER—Motion for the Christmas Adjournment.

Proceedings on the Consolidated Fund Bill.

The House will also wish to know that European Standing Committees will meet on Wednesday 9 December at 10.30 am to consider European Community documents as follows: Standing Committee A: Document No. 8372/92 relating to Common Market Organisation for Bananas—*[Interruption.]* A lot of hon. Members have been waiting for that one. Standing Committee B: Document No.6718/92 relating to development co-operation policy in the run up to the year 2,000.

Mrs. Beckett: I thank the Lord President for that statement. Is he aware of Labour Members' concern that it has been left to us to find time for a debate on an issue of the most pressing concern to the British people—unemployment? We find that particularly extraordinary when the Secretary of State who should be dealing with this is spending her time abolishing May day, which is not the most pressing example of need. May I express the hope, therefore, that it will not be left to us but that the Government will find time to debate the problems that are still arising between small businesses and the banks, which continue to be a major worry?

May we press the Leader of the House for an early statement on the developing situation in Somalia, where there is still anxiety about people working for the aid agencies? Many hon. Members would welcome an account of how the Government see the position.

Finally, I ask the Leader of the House to seek a statement reviewing the guidelines for voter registration, which seem to need not only reviewing but strengthening.

[Mrs. Beckett]

Is the right hon. Gentleman aware of the alarming situation in the Conservative-controlled borough of Brent, in which the number of voters on the register has fallen by 26,000 since last year, and the council has refused to take steps to rectify the situation—steps which have been taken in, for example, the Conservative-controlled borough of Barnet? As the right to vote is the cornerstone of our democracy, will the Leader of the House consider arranging an early statement on the matter?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Lady's remarks on the economy and the proposed debate on unemployment in Opposition time on Tuesday are a fraction ungenerous, as I have responded to her request last week for some Opposition time, and it is less than two or three weeks since the Government provided two full days for a complete debate on the autumn statement. I do not accept her criticism.

I should have thought that some of what the hon. Lady said about small businesses might prove to be in order during that debate—although that will of course be a matter for you, Madam Speaker. The hon. Lady will know that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has asked the Bank of England to look into the banks' charging practices, and that he is also discussing those matters directly with the clearing banks.

I cannot undertake to provide time for a debate on Somalia in the near future, although there will be considerable opportunities in the business that I announced towards the end of my reply—the debates on the Christmas Adjournment and on the Consolidated Fund Bill. The hon. Lady may like to note that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs is due to be here next Monday to answer questions.

On the subject of voter registration, my understanding is that more than 95·5 per cent. of those eligible are believed to be on the register. Nevertheless, I shall draw the hon. Lady's remarks to the attention of my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): May I ask my right hon. Friend to consider an urgent debate next week in the light of information that has come to me which suggests that facilities of the House are being grossly abused by the hon. Member for Neath (Mr. Hain), to whom I have given notice.

Mr. Peter Hain (Neath): No.

Mr. Nicholls: Is my right hon. Friend aware that a letter was sent out on House of Commons stationery, using the pre-paid post—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Of course I want to hear the hon. Gentleman, if his point relates to the business statement and next week's business. If he can do that directly, I want to hear him.

Mr. Nicholls: I ask my right hon. Friend——

Mr. Hain *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. Will the hon. Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) make his position clear about next week's business?

Mr. Nicholls: I have given the hon. Member for Neath notice by writing to him and placing a letter on the board of the House. How often he checks the board is not a matter for me.

The matter that I have raised is important, and should be debated as a matter of urgency. If pre-paid stationery is sent out inviting people for

"a full silver service dinner, which will be followed by the evening's political lecture by the Leader of the Labour party, John Smith MP",

and if such matters are being dealt with using the facilities of the House, that urgently requires a debate next week. If it is legitimate to pick over the contents of Ministers' Access statements, it is legitimate to talk about the grotesque waste of public money by Labour Members.

Mr. Hain: I have had no notice of the matter at all.

Mr. Newton: It may not surprise my hon. Friend the Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls), if I say that I do not believe that it will be possible for me to fit in a debate on that matter next week. No doubt the hon. Member for Neath and others, including you, Madam Speaker, may feel it right to consider the point that my hon. Friend has raised. Certainly it is my understanding that the use of the free post would not be appropriate for letters of that kind.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): As the Queen has now said that she is willing to pay income tax, and the Lord Chief Justice and the Master of the Rolls have said that they believe that we should sign up to the European convention on human rights, and implement it as part of the British legal system, and as there is great concern about future legal aid provisions, and widespread interest in how subsidiarity abroad might become subsidiarity at home, could we have a debate either in the remaining part of this year or early next year on the constitutional agenda that the Government consider to be relevant not just for this year but for the decade to come?

Mr. Newton: There have been considerable opportunities in the past two days to raise constitutional matters in various relationships, and I expect that there will be further opportunities after Christmas. I do not promise a further debate specifically on those matters.

Mr. Michael Stephen (Shoreham): I too wish to ask my right hon. Friend whether he will make time available next week for a debate on the activities of the clearing banks. Many right hon. and hon. Members will have seen the annual report published this week by the banking ombudsman. I readily acknowledge that the banking ombudsman system was set up by the banks themselves and I also acknowledge that the banks are not charitable institutions. However, the report is a depressing litany of negligence, overcharging and failure to pay compensation. We have also recently seen an appalling example of a breach of the duty of confidentiality. Will my right hon. Friend make time available for an early debate on the subject?

Mr. Newton: I note what my hon. Friend has said. In expressing his concern, he speaks for many hon. Members of all parties. I have already made some comment about what my right hon. Friend the Chancellor has said and done in that respect. To the extent that many people allege that the problems have contributed to unemployment, it may be in order to raise them in the debate on Tuesday.

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): Is there to be a ministerial statement on the terrorist attack this morning on the citizens of Manchester, about which the city's representatives are, of course, utterly appalled and deeply concerned? What is the Government's latest information on the outrage, and are Ministers keeping in close touch with its effects on the life of the city?

Mr. Newton: I assure the right hon. Gentleman and all hon. Members who are concerned that my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary is taking a very close interest in the matter. He will, of course, be concerned to do anything that can be done to support the efforts of the police both to track down those who perpetrated the events and to prevent them from recurring.

Mr. Winston Churchill (Davyhulme): Will the Home Secretary or, in his absence, my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House, convey the Government's sympathy to the more than 65 victims of the terrorist bomb blasts in the city of Manchester this morning? Will my right hon. Friend further confirm that the Government will in no way be intimidated by such outrages and that the British people will never give in to terrorism?

Mr. Newton: I wholly endorse the latter part of my hon. Friend's remarks, and I assure him that I shall ensure that my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary, on behalf of all of us in the Government and in the House, conveys to the people who have had their lives damaged in Manchester today the thoughts that my hon. Friend has expressed.

Mr. Eddie McGrady (South Down): Is the Leader of the House aware that the details of forthcoming public expenditure have not yet been announced for Northern Ireland? I understand that the details are to be announced next week by the Secretary of State, not in the House, but in Belfast, I presume, thereby depriving Northern Ireland Members of a debate on the consequences of the public expenditure proposals which, I understand, will be very drastic. Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that it is most frustrating for Northern Ireland Members to know that parties outside the House will be briefed before the announcement is made?

Mr. Newton: I will draw the hon. Gentleman's remarks to the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. I cannot promise an oral statement next week.

Mr. David Sumberg (Bury, South): May I join my colleagues of all parties in echoing the call for a statement in relation to the awful tragedy that occurred in Manchester this morning? Will my right hon. Friend not only send a message of sympathy to those affected, but express our thanks to those who are helping the injured? Will he send a message to those who perpetrated the action that just as the people of Manchester resisted the Lufwaffe 50 years ago, they will equally resist the terrorists of today?

Mr. Newton: Again, I not only note my hon. Friend's remarks, but very much wish to echo them, not least by paying tribute to the work of those who helped to cope with the incidents and to keep the harm done by them to the lowest possible level.

Ms. Angela Eagle (Wallasey): I draw the attention of the Leader of the House to early-day motion 981 which was placed on the Order Paper yesterday following the announcement by Vickers Shipbuilding and Engineering Ltd. that it intended to close Cammel Laird shipyard after 60 years of shipbuilding on Merseyside.

[That this House, mindful that Cammell Lairds was bought from taxpayers for £1, by VSEL, calls upon the owners, who have announced that they see no future for Lairds, to hand back this industrial asset so that others with drive and vision can begin planning a successful future for Lairds and so help safeguard the manufacturing base of Britain.]

That disgraceful decision threatens to put 900 people directly out of work and will withdraw £30 million of expenditure from the local economy and affect 5,000 other jobs. In the light of that economic holocaust which is threatened on Merseyside, will the Leader of the House allow time for us to debate the issue next week?

Mr. Newton: It is very clear that the issue raised by the hon. Lady, which manifestly relates to employment problems, could be included in the debate that is to take place on Tuesday. The Government and I personally very much regret the closure of Cammell Laird which reflects the worldwide reduction in the demand for warships. The Government are participating in activities designed to develop a redevelopment strategy for the site with the aim of creating new employment and give very substantial aid to the Merseyside development corporation.

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): Am I right in thinking that, on the timetable that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House has given us, we are likely to have only one more day's debate on the Maastricht Bill before the Christmas recess? Given the enormous majorities in the House last night, which must have warmed the cockles of my right hon. Friend's heart and those of the Patronage Secretary and of everyone else on the Government Front Bench, why do we not get on with it rather more quickly? We are aware that there are other things to debate in the House, but surely we can get on with the Maastricht Bill, get it out of the way, and then continue.

Mr. Newton: I would not want to mislead my hon. Friend. In the business that I announced until Monday 14 December, I did not announce another day on the European Communities (Amendment) Bill, but there is a substantial amount of important business in the programme that I announced which the House also needs to get through, including the discussions on fisheries matters which are of interest in several quarters of the House. However, I note with approval the enthusiasm of my hon. Friend the Member for Derbshire, South (Mrs. Currie) for making progress on the Bill which will certainly be shared in some, if not all, quarters of the House.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): The House will share the sympathy that I extend from the people of Northern Ireland to the people of Manchester, especially during a week when the people of Belfast have suffered continuously.

May I ask the Lord President whether we can have an urgent statement next week from the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to clarify the situation whereby there seem to be conflicting comments from the Minister of State and the Northern Ireland Office vis-a-vis meetings with councillors from Sinn Fein, the protagonists of the IRA, at a time when councillors in Northern Ireland are asked to

[Rev. Martin Smyth]

sit with them and when Northern Ireland courts are saying that they must be on sub-committees in the city hall when we know that even in this House, minority parties are not necessarily guaranteed places on committees—and they are certainly not guaranteed that in local government throughout the nation? I press for a statement, especially in view of the possibility—the Leader of the House may wish to consult the Attorney-General—that the next court case might oblige Ministers of the Crown to consort with them.

Mr. Newton: In view of the suggestion in the latter part of the hon. Gentleman's remarks, I will certainly have a conversation with my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General and will draw the remarks generally to the attention of the Attorney-General and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. The whole House—and certainly those hon. Members who represent Manchester and the people of Manchester—will be grateful for the sentiments that the hon. Gentleman expressed at the beginning of his remarks.

Mr. James Hill (Southampton, Test): Will my right hon. Friend find time next week for a debate on value added tax? The bloodstock industry and fine arts, antiques and charity shops are staggering under the imposition of VAT. The whole issue must be totally reviewed in the new era of directives on VAT from Brussels.

Mr. Newton: I note what my hon. Friend says and I know that the Treasury Ministers are aware of the concerns being expressed, but I cannot promise that we can have a debate on this next week.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): As part of its inquiry into the unemployment effects of pit closures, the Select Committee on Employment is due tomorrow to go down a pit at Silverdale and the pit at Thentham. As the chairman of British Coal at first refused permission for my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mrs. Golding) to descend the pit in her constituency and, I am informed, has today reinforced and restated his ban on the media entering the colliery premises during that visit, could we have a debate, because it is surely important that Select Committees of this House should receive full co-operation from British Coal and from all other employers causing major unemployment by their decisions?

Mr. Newton: I sense from what the hon. and learned Gentleman says—that the chairman of British Coal at first refused permission—that that implies some change.

Mr. Janner: Yes, the hon. Lady will be coming down the pit with us, but there is no change in the banning of the media entering the colliery premises.

Mr Newton: Now I am slightly confused about what the hon. and learned Gentleman is saying, but the basic thrust of his point is clear and it would be the hope and expectation of the Government that proper co-operation would be given to a Select Committee of this House on a visit. On the other hand it must also be acknowledged—this is a problem that sometimes occurs when visits are made to DSS offices, as I well know—that it is necessarily a matter for management to decide whether there should be access by the media and I do not think that it necessarily follows from co-operation with the Select Committee that the media should be allowed access to the site. That has to be a matter for the management.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): Would my right hon. Friend reconsider the business for next Thursday and would he, instead of that business, arrange a debate on foreign affairs on the Adjournment of the House, so that, before the Edinburgh summit, the House can consider, among other things, the destruction and devastation of an internationally recognised sovereign state and the progressive slaughter of a large number of its people, because many of my hon. Friends were much encouraged by the more positive noises coming from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office yesterday and hope that the Community will be able to adopt a firmer policy towards Serbia, which is undoubtedly the aggressor?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend's concern with these matters is very well known and he will have heard what the Prime Minister said during Question Time an hour or so ago. I cannot promise a debate of the kind he seeks next week, but I will ensure that his concern is drawn to the attention of my right hon. Friends.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): *The Guardian* newspaper has special links with Manchester, having been at one time *The Manchester Guardian*. It is therefore unfortunate that on 23 November it published an article by Ronan Bennett almost eulogising the activities of the IRA which is now seen to be particularly inappropriate to the situation which has developed in Manchester. I am sorry that we are not to have a statement today on Manchester, but perhaps at least the Leader of the House could support those people who intend to hold a vigil against this in Manchester on Saturday. Vigils are now being held persistently in London, Belfast, Manchester and wherever violence takes place, the peace movement is there.

Mr. Newton: I note the hon. Gentleman's comments on a particular newspaper article, which I am sure will be noted by the newspaper as well. On the subject of the vigils, I express my sympathetic support for anything which can contribute to preventing this sort of violence.

Mr. David Lidington (Aylesbury): Will my right hon. Friend please find time in next week's business for either a debate or a statement on the future of the Stoke Mandeville hospital, which is of enormous concern to my constituents in Aylesbury? In particular, will he find an occasion for his colleagues from the Department of Health to assure both the House and my constituents that the £20 million capital programme now in preparation for that hospital will be given urgent and sympathetic consideration when it gets to that Department?

Mr. Newton: Having visited the hospital when I was Minister for Health about four or five years ago, I am conscious of the strong support that it has in the community and of the excellent work done there. Beyond that, I can help my hon. Friend by telling him that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health and her fellow Ministers are due to be here on Tuesday next week to answer questions.

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): Will the Leader of the House consider a debate next week, because, as numerous organisations and traders have accepted the Home

Secretary's decision to allow trading on Sunday and will open on the Sundays before Christmas, shop workers could be compelled to work on Sundays? Can I draw his attention to early-day motion 989, which was put down yesterday and signed by 67 hon. Members, dealing with the sacking of 89 persons who refused to work on Sundays?

[That this House roundly condemns the actions of Middlebrook Mushrooms and its parent company Booker Plc in sacking 89 of its part time staff and replacing them with casual labour at lower rates of pay; congratulates the Transport and General Worker's Union on its attempts to negotiate with both Middlebrook Mushrooms and ACAS; expresses its grave concern that this situation has developed as a direct result of supermarket chains such as ASDA and Sainsbury's decision to open on Sundays; believes that the 89 sacked are amongst the first casualties of Sunday trading; and urges proper protection of pay and conditions not only for retail workers but for those who supply and transport goods in any new legislation on Sunday trading.]

That is an escalation of what is happening throughout the country, when workers refuse to work in shops and other establishments on Sundays. It is a direct result of the Home Secretary's failure to ensure that the Shops Act 1950 is complied with by all the people in this country. I ask for an early debate next week, so that the matter can be resolved.

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman has tabled a private Member's Bill on the subject, which we are due to see and to hear more of in the new year. He is very well informed about the matter and knows that my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary made a full statement on the position and the Government's intentions last week. The Government have outlined how they will proceed, once the uncertainty caused by the present European Court of Justice hearing is resolved.

Mr. Nigel Evans (Ribble Valley): May I press my right hon. Friend on the same matter that my hon. Friend the Member for Shoreham (Mr. Stephen) mentioned—for a debate next week on the banks? It is required not merely because of the shocking report from the banking ombudsman, which showed a 62 per cent. increase in complaints received this year, on top of a 60 per cent. rise last year, but also following the creation of the Banking Action Group—an organisation looking after the interests of small businesses, which have faced high interest charges, over-charging and high commission charges, as well as the short term approach of some banks in their lending policies towards small businesses.

Mr. Newton: I appreciate why my hon. Friend has thought it right to press me further on that matter, but perhaps he will understand that I cannot add to the answers that I have given on two previous occasions. I do not think that it would be beyond his ingenuity to devise a speech in next Tuesday's debate which could relate to some of those matters.

Mr. Hain: First, is it in order, Madam Speaker, to ask for an apology from the hon. Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls), who gave me no notice of his statement?

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Teignbridge said that he had put a letter on the board. I am afraid that the hon. Member for Neath cannot seek an apology through me. He must find some other method. I ask him to respond to the business statement.

Mr. Hain: Could we have a Government statement next week on the massive job cuts announced today in the Post Office? More than 16,000 jobs are due to go in Post Office Counters and the Royal Mail letters divisions. Why has the President of the Board of Trade sanctioned those job cuts, and the wholesale reorganisation of the Post Office involved without first getting Parliament's approval? In July, he announced a review of the Post Office, but he has pre-empted it before reporting back to Parliament, by allowing the cuts together. Surely they are a dress rehearsal for Post Office privatisation.

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman will have noted that my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade is here and will have heard what he said, although he is present to deal with other business. While I understand the hon. Gentleman's concern, the decisions are primarily operational matters for Post Office management and are certainly not directly related to the review of its structure and ownership, nor do they require my right hon. Friend's permission.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): I wonder whether time could be allocated for a debate on the new rules for the Register of Members' Interests. It has been outstanding for many months. Indeed, the report was presented in the last Parliament, not this. If the debate had been undertaken and conclusions reached, it would have helped answer the question raised in early-day motion 988, tabled by my hon. Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon), in which a question is raised as to whether the Chancellor of the Exchequer ought to have registered the £19,000 which had been given to him as a gift, because that would have clarified the rules.

[That this House urges the Chancellor of the Exchequer to register through the Register of Members' Interests the source of the £19,000 paid on his behalf in settlement of the balance of a personal legal bill and to indicate if, under section 153 of the Income and Corporate Taxes Act 1988, he has paid income tax on the total amount involved.]

I realise that the Chancellor is confused about the economy, about his position and about this gift, but he is setting a very bad example of non-registration of business interests by failing to declare a huge gift such as that.

Mr. Newton: My right hon. Friend would not have been in a position to declare the source of this payment because he had no knowledge of the source, as he made clear earlier in the week.

On the principal point of the hon. Gentleman's question—the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) I know has a close interest in these matters—I said last week that we have now achieved the setting up of the new Select Committee on Members' Interests, which I think has now had its first meeting. That should pave the way for publishing the Register for the new Parliament. I hope that the Chairman of the Committee will not mind my saying that I have already had an informal discussion with him with a view to identifying the appropriate way to proceed on the matters which the hon. Gentleman has raised.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): Can the Leader of the House focus on the debate on fishing next

[Mr. Alex Salmond]

Wednesday? I accept that it is probably correct to have the common fisheries policy debate and the Lords amendments to the Sea Fish (Conservation) Bill on the same day, but will he ensure that the timetabling for the CFP debate will be such as to allow the huge numbers of hon. Members with fishing interests to contribute to that debate on what is an absolutely vital change in a fundamental policy affecting many tens of thousands of people?

When it comes to the conservation Bill, will he consider the possibility of a free vote on the Lords amendments, because he will be aware that many of his hon. Friends have had to choose between their constituents and their party on that issue. It would be nice, just for a change, to allow hon. Gentlemen representing fishing communities to vote with their consciences rather than for their careers.

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman will be aware that he will get a very cautious answer to the latter part of that question, since among the things that are certainly not my responsibility is the advice that is offered to my hon. Friends about how they should approach these or any other votes. There may be somebody else in the Chamber who has heard what the hon. Gentleman has said, however. With regard to the timing of the debate, the Common Fisheries Policy debate allocation is a full day. I cannot, of course, promise at this stage that there will not be any statements or anything else that may eat into the time a bit, but it is a full day's debate and there should be ample opportunity for all those who wish to speak, provided that they do so reasonably succinctly.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Would it be possible for the Foreign Secretary to make a statement early next week on what steps are being taken by the Government to draw the attention of other European countries and, in particular, the United States to the death and destruction committed by the Provisional IRA, so that they may understand the terror campaign being waged on the mainland and, as we saw again tragically during the week, the destruction of much of a centre in Belfast, with many severe injuries? Should not people abroad, therefore, understand that we are dealing with murderers—people who, as was demonstrated in the recent Irish general election, have no electoral support whatsoever among the Irish people? That is the message that we should get across internationally, and as soon as possible.

Mr. Newton: It is very clear that many hon. Members on both sides of the House will warmly welcome those remarks by the hon. Gentleman. I will draw them to the attention of my right hon. and hon. Friends concerned, because they make persistent efforts to ensure that the nature of the incidents that happen here is properly understood abroad.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. We must now move on. Before I call the Secretary of State——

Mr. Ken Eastham (Manchester, Blackley): On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order. I have to take points of order, as the hon. Gentleman knows, after——

Mr. Eastham: I am a Manchester Member and I would like to say something about what happened in Manchester.

Madam Speaker: I am sorry. It was most remiss of me. I will give the hon. Gentleman an opportunity. I call Mr. Ken Eastham.

Mr. Eastham: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I am sure that I speak for all the people of Manchester when I say that, following the atrocity that occurred there, we are grateful for the sympathy that has been expressed in the House.

Is the Leader of the House aware that, within the last 10 days, I have passed to the Home Office a petition signed by a good number of Manchester citizens complaining about inadequate police provision? Yesterday I received a letter from Lord Ferris saying that there would be no extra funding this year or next year to allow for the provision of more police. Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that instead of just sympathy, the people should be offered more protection through the police?

Mr. Newton: I appreciate why the hon. Gentleman felt it right to make that point, and I shall ensure that my right hon. and learned Friend is made aware of it. But I think it has been right to put the main emphasis this afternoon on expressing our distaste for what has happened. Indeed, that is a very mild word to use. It is right to express distress and offer our sympathy to the people involved, including the police, and at the same time congratulate the police on their work in that connection.

Consolidated Fund Bill

4.30 pm

Madam Speaker: I have a short statement to make about arrangements for the debate on the Motion for the Adjournment which will follow the passing of the Consolidated Fund Bill on Monday 14 December.

Hon. Members should submit their subjects to my office not later than 10 pm on Wednesday 9 December. A list showing the subjects and times will be published the following day.

Normally, the time allotted will not exceed one and a half hours, but I propose to exercise discretion and allow one or two debates to continue for rather longer, up to a maximum of three hours. Where identical or similar subjects have been entered by different hon. Members whose names are drawn in the ballot, only the first name will be shown on the list.

As some debates may not last the full time allotted to them, it will, of course, be the responsibility of hon. Members to keep in touch with developments if they are not to miss their turn.

One-stop Shops

4.31 pm

The President of the Board of Trade and Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. Michael Heseltine): With permission, I should like to make a statement about a major new strategy to establish one-stop shops for the delivery of business advisory services.

I have been reviewing Government support services for business, in conjunction with a steering group consisting of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment, my noble Friend Baroness Denton, the Small Firms Minister, and representatives of chambers of commerce, training and enterprise councils, the Confederation of British Industry, local authorities, the National Training Task Force and Business in the Community.

We have looked particularly at the needs of established small and medium firms. We all wish to ensure that those firms have access to world class support in the areas of information, advice, counselling, development of business skills, exporting, technology transfer, innovation, design and other services.

There are already numerous schemes to help business provided by Government and other organisations. Those schemes are run by a wide variety of bodies. Some are excellent, others less good, but they all suffer from three main weaknesses: first, the profusion of advice of varying quality makes it difficult for business to know what is available and where; secondly, many schemes are narrowly defined and more supplier than customer driven; and thirdly, many businesses which could benefit from the help available are not even aware of its existence. We need to tackle all those problems.

That is why I have decided to establish a number of pilot one-stop shops for business. I have today published a prospectus seeking competitive bids to establish up to 15 such shops in England. I have arranged for a copy to be sent to all hon. Members. Copies will also be available in the Vote Office.

A key aim of the one-stop shops is to simplify the present confusing array of support services. To win, a bid must demonstrate a real and effective partnership to which all the main local providers of business support services are committed. I am asking the training and enterprise councils to draw together bids, but it is a requirement that other key providers, such as the chambers of commerce, enterprise agencies and the local authorities where they are active in support activities, should be fully involved. I am confident that private sector companies will wish to demonstrate their support.

Each bid for a one-stop shop must show how it will provide a wide range of high quality services, both those available locally and, using modern technology, those provided in other parts of the country or even outside this country.

My Department is committed to playing its full part in the one-stop shops. The shops will be the main local point of access to and promotion of all DTI services. I am ready to consider imaginative ideas about how that might be achieved, including proposals for co-location and, subject to any legal constraints, sub-contracting of services.

I cannot anticipate the nature of the bids I shall receive or the scale of the resources that local organisations will offer to put behind them. I can, however, say that I have

[Mr. Michael Heseltine]

made provision within my own budget for an initial sum of up to £3·5 million to fund the winning bids in the first year. I look to local contributions to augment that figure. I hope to see a move to a position of self-sufficiency as rapidly as possible.

My Department will also be working with the pilot one-stop shops to develop a new diagnostic service, as promised in our manifesto. That will help businesses to analyse in depth their strengths and weaknesses, and the options open to them, and to identify the help that they need. That will be a new and important service to be provided by one-stop shops.

Bids must be submitted by 29 January. Winners will be announced in mid-March, and the pilots will get under way as soon as possible thereafter. If the pilots are as successful as I expect, it is my intention to develop a national network of one-stop shops across England.

The publication of the one-stop shop prospectus marks an important further step in our long-term strategy to improve the support that we provide to business in this country. We must have a single point of access to services which must be of the highest calibre. One-stop shops will achieve that and pave the way for a radical overhaul of business support arrangements in each area of the country. That will improve the competitiveness of our companies and provide a springboard for the development of our local and national economies.

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central): In the past 24 hours, Cammell Laird has made 900 people redundant, the Post Office has announced redundancies for 16,000 people, Royal Ordnance have announced redundancies for more than 1,000 people, and Ford is talking about further job losses. The House will be surprised that the President of the Board of Trade made no statement on that further decline in the British manufacturing industry.

There is a widespread recognition of the need to provide more co-ordinated advice to small businesses which frequently, as the President of the Board of Trade rightly said, do not have the time or resources to deal with the range of departments and schemes available from the Government. However, there will be disappointment among business people about the size of the Government's contribution.

Can the President of the Board of Trade clarify his comments that his nationwide scheme will apply only to England? Is it not the intention at a later stage to cover Wales and Scotland? Why are Wales and Scotland excluded at an early stage? Can the President acknowledge that his statement today will offer little immediate help to those small businesses that are faced with punitive interest rates imposed by the banks or to those businesses that face severe cash flow problems because of late payment? Can the President confirm that his statement will offer no help at all to the tens of thousands of small and medium businesses which have already gone to the wall during the recession caused by the Government, and the 120 small businesses which today alone will go bankrupt?

Above all, does the President of the Board of Trade understand that the economic policies of his Government are the root cause of the problems faced by small businesses in Britain? Does he recognise that, when a shipyard such as Cammell Laird on Merseyside or a plant such as British Aerospace in Hatfield closes, or when the Post Office announces 16,000 redundancies, the effects are felt by not only the workers who lose their jobs but by the local small firms which supply those plants and the corner shops which sell to the local families?

Although we welcome today's statement, Labour Members, together with organisations such as the Engineering Employers Federation and many other people outside the House, including the thousands who have lost their jobs today, will wonder why the Government have not made a statement on industrial policy for the manufacturing future of Great Britain. After seven months as President of the Board of Trade, all that the right hon. Gentleman has announced today is a pilot scheme, not an industrial strategy for Britain's future.

Mr. Heseltine: I am sad that the hon. Gentleman should seek to widen the subject of the statement in order to hide what is an overdue Government proposal that will be widely welcomed—but his attitude is characteristic of the Labour party. Of course the news from Cammell Laird is deeply disappointing after so much has been done to try to help that company. I also recognise the concern that has been expressed about the redundancies in the Post Office. However, it is important to state that 170,000 people work for the Post Office. It has been announced today that, over five years, there will be 15,000 fewer jobs—about 3,000 a year, when about 7,000 a year go through natural wastage. The Post Office has made it clear that it expects the redundancies to be voluntary and to come from a process of natural wastage.

To return to the issues in the statement, I do not think that there will be disappointment about the size of the Government's contribution. I think that the figure of 15 shops announced today is of the order of magnitude expected by those with whom I have discussed the matter. It forms the basis to which others, locally, will add the resources at their command and make imaginative bids within the process that I have outlined.

The hon. Gentleman's question about Scotland and Wales is properly a matter for my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and for Wales, who are interested in and fully informed about today's announcement. However, they have a different—some would argue, a more co-ordinated—set of arrangements, originally based on the proposals of the Scottish and Welsh Development Agencies. Therefore, they have not had to deal with the problem that I faced due to the unco-ordinated approach that had been taken to the issues.

The hon. Gentleman asked about the small industrial sector. He failed to say that Barclays bank estimates that, in the first three quarters of 1992, there were more than 300,000 new starts in that sector.

Sir Michael Grylls (Surrey, North-West): Does my right hon. Friend accept that most people, listening to today's statement in a less jaundiced way than the Opposition, will welcome it as a progressive move that will improve the flow of information that is so vital for the success of small and medium firms, which are expanding rapidly despite the recession? As my right hon. Friend acknowledged, the provision of export information is important. About 70 per cent. of smaller firms do not export, and with the arrival of the internal market, it is vital that more small firms should be able to export. The

provision of proper information near the place of work, perhaps through computer terminals, could be useful and improve the number of exports.

Mr. Heseltine: No one knows more about the problems of small firms than my hon. Friend. He has drawn our attention to important aspects of our proposals. Of course it is important to improve the quality of export advice available, which is certainly at the forefront of our intentions. We hope to do so by improving the quality of staff available and the access to databases nationally and internationally.

I understand my hon. Friend's view that not enough small firms export. A significant number of small firms are not, perhaps, aware of how many of their products find their way into the export market through the clients to whom they provide the products. My hon. Friend will also be aware that I have invited 100 of our largest companies to second to my Department a member of staff with experience in exports in order significantly to enhance our export drive, which is so timely in view of the competitive value of our currency.

Mr. Paul Tyler (North Cornwall): Is the President aware that Liberal Democrats genuinely congratulate him on the initiative, not least because it contains the idea of one-stop advice shops, which featured in our manifesto, but not the Conservative party's? However, we are concerned that the limited number of pilots may not lead on to the necessary network throughout the country. Will the right hon. Gentleman ensure that the pilots are geographically spread to represent regions of high unemployment and high business failures, such as the south-west, particularly Cornwall? In what sort of areas does he anticipate placing the pilots—regions with assisted area status or shire counties? Will they necessarily be the same size as the districts covered by the training and enterprise councils?

The timing is important, as a review of the assisted area status and geography is currently under way, and local government reorganisation is under review. Can we be assured in the House that, as soon as the evidence of the hoped-for success of the pilots is available, it will be fed into the processes of the assisted area and local government reorganisation reviews?

Mr. Heseltine: I am very aware that a proposal along similar lines to the one that I announced today featured in the Liberal Democrat manifesto, a copy of which I have in front of me. I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for welcoming the initiative, and glad that it will make it easier for him to vote for the Conservative party in the next election.

The hon. Gentleman asked interesting questions about how the judgments will be made. The choice of pilot schemes will be made as a result of competitive bids, and the test will be one of quality, not regional policy or high unemployment. It is critical that the 15 are seen as pace setters, even if that results in districts that might have the most immediate need having to wait for a period in order to follow the quality. We do not want to take inadequate standards from districts with pressing needs and so debase the process. I assure the hon. Gentleman that the purpose of the competition is to show the standards that can be achieved and to initiate one-stop shops where people come forward with the most impressive schemes. That is our intention, which we hope to fulfil in the early part of next year.

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): I congratulate my right hon. Friend, and I think that the rather mean welcome from the Opposition does them no credit, and it seems odd, as they say that they want to help small businesses. My right hon. Friend will realise that small businesses in the south-west have probably been more adversely affected than those anywhere else. My right hon. Friend spoke of the siting of the pilots based purely on quality. Will he ensure that his Department sets out ideal specifications so that those tendering bids have an idea of the quality required to enable them to ensure that Plymouth, Exeter and Bristol or wherever are able to obtain the quality necessary? It is important that we do not consider that Bristol is able to cope with the south-west, when it is further away from most of the south-west than it is from London. There is a need for geographical consideration when making judgments.

Mr. Heseltine: I very much respect the voice that my hon. Friend brings to the cause of small businesses generally, and particularly in the south-west. The House will appreciate that, whenever one launches a scheme designed to reflect local needs, there is always a temptation for people to say, "Lay down centrally what you think should happen." We very much want to avoid taking a prescriptive approach, see what local people want, and allow them to set standards and come forward with ideas.

I have tried to avoid taking an over-centralist approach, which means that I am reliant on the quality of local initiative. Therefore, once the process is under way, I must not become too institutionalised about the way in which the results are spread, as that might mean that we make choices not based on quality but to suit a pattern of regional disposition.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Is the Minister aware that I have never heard so much flannel in my life? The Government are capable of trotting out a load of baloney, day in and day out. There are 4 million people on the dole according to the real figures, when the kids on slave labour schemes are added. There is a £14 billion balance of payments deficit. Manufacturing industry is going down the pan. He comes here talking about setting up advice shops. I have some advice for the Government—"Shut up your shop and let somebody else take it over."

Mr. Heseltine: I just have this to say to the hon. Gentleman: if he has never heard so much flannel, it would be simple for him to go to the Library of the House and get recordings of his endless, repetitive and tedious interventions day after day after day.

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): Unlike the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), many hon. Members will thank my right hon. Friend for what he has announced. Nine years ago, in my area of Kingston upon Thames, I was involved in setting up exactly the sort of thing that he is talking about; it was called the Kingston small business advice service. It has prospered and grown and has worked with the local authority and with our TEC, AZTEC, which covers Kingston, Merton and Wandsworth. Recently, it has done excellent work at the British Aerospace works in Richmond road, Kingston, which closed down. May I recommend it to him as one of

[Mr. Richard Tracey]

the pilots? May I suggest that he involves the academic and university world too? We involved the former Kingston polytechnic, now Kingston university, and the regional management centre. We found that they have a great deal to offer.

Mr. Heseltine: I am very much aware of my hon. Friend's long-standing interest in the whole subject. It sounds as though we may have a competitive bid, based on considerable experience, from Kingston. I heard what my hon. Friend said about the involvement of the academic world. It is up to local initiative to determine the extent to which it draws together the academic opportunities and advice that are available. That is very much up to those who are formulating competitive bids.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Had they been in existence, what assistance would one-stop shops have been to the three directors of Matrix Churchill who faced a prison sentence? Would the management of one-stop shops have been knowledgeable enough about the facts that were known to the noble Lord, Lord Trefgarne, in his department, to the right hon. Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave) in the Foreign Office and to the Minister of State who is sitting beside him, the right hon. Member for Hove (Mr. Sainsbury)?

What advice will one-stop shops dealing with some of the firms that export the most sensitive armaments and armament-making machinery give to anybody exporting arms, for example, to Iran? Will they be briefed in such a way that never again can there be a repetition of the disgraceful episode involving many civil servants and ministers who had read the papers and who knew that those three directors of Matrix Churchill were not themselves responsible for that for which they faced trial?

Mr. Heseltine: I have listened carefully to what the hon. Gentleman has had to say. I will make it my personal responsibility to see that Lord Justice Scott is fully apprised of the interest which the hon. Gentleman expressed in linking the initiative of one-stop shops with the Matrix Churchill affair. If the whole concept is as improbable to Lord Justice Scott as it is to me, I will give the hon. Gentleman a further assurance: I will refer the whole matter to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence to see whether he can find some equally improbable link with the sinking of the Belgrano.

Mr. James Hill (Southampton, Test): My right hon. Friend will be aware of the importance of my constituency, Southampton, in the export trade. For a long time, the local chamber of commerce, which is very active, has been co-operating not only with the local council but with the local newspaper and various people in the area who deal with the accountancy work of export. No doubt, a proposition for funding will be put forward from my area. I hope that the golden opportunity to make an application will be taken up because the geographical position of Southampton would no doubt entitle it to be one of the 15 pilots.

Mr. Heseltine: I know that my hon. Friend will use his considerable endeavours to persuade his local industrial and commercial community to respond to the initiative. I hope that he will make the point that it will not be the regional location of Southampton which will play a role in the judgment that we reach but the quality of the bid that is put forward. I look forward to seeing a bid.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): I have looked forward to the statement of the President of the Board of Trade, and I support the proposition that he has put before the House. In a small way it is an important initiative. Cumbria TEC will bid for a one-stop shop. We intend to win and we will make it successful in exactly the same way as we made the enterprise zone successful in the early 1980s. All we have to do is win the competition.

Mr. Heseltine: I thank the hon. Gentleman for a wholly constructive view. I make no secret of the fact that it was precisely because he approached the issue of an enterprise zone in Cumbria in that manner, and with enthusiastic endorsement, in the early 1980s that he helped persuade me that there should be an enterprise zone in that part of the world. I believe that it has been a great success. Without wishing to be partisan, I would only say that if his hon. Friends were to adopt as constructive a view to the policies on offer, they might find that their areas gained a great deal more than they do as a result of the somewhat daunting interventions of his hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner).

Mr. Bernard Jenkin (Colchester, North): I welcome the statement of my right hon. Friend, particularly on behalf of the businesses and people of my constituency. Does he recall that there was recently a successful DTI one-day export initiative, arranged in conjunction with the local chamber of commerce, to which DTI officials had to come from outside the county, thereby demonstrating the need for our own one-stop shop? Will my right hon. Friend enlarge on the criteria which will be used to assess quality so that we may submit a bid for a pilot scheme?

Mr. Heseltine: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend. He raises an important point which is of concern to us in government—that, so often with these initiatives, civil servants from regional offices or from central Government have to go to local areas to promote activities which it would be far more desirable to see initiated, promoted and managed by local people.

As to the precise ideas that are involved, they are obviously substantial. Large numbers of organisations provide many and varied services. It is precisely because I want all hon. Members to understand the nature of the opportunity that I have taken the liberty of sending them directly their own personal copy of the prospectus that I have announced today.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Will the Secretary of State accept that the initiative will not stop the haemorrhage of jobs and that small firms in the main depend on large firms which under the Government are going bust in considerable numbers? Will he accept that the Labour Government, which experienced unemployment of one third the current level of nearly 4 million, established one-stop shops for small businesses—the small firms information centres, which had a common logo and identity throughout the country?

That Government also established small firms counselling schemes, which used experienced business men and women to advise businesses on how to develop. In his scheme, surely there should be some regard to unemployment and to the areas which need most

assistance. Is it true that he could award three or four contracts to the same area, which would be absurd when another area in much greater need failed the competition?

May I ask the Secretary of State about self-sufficiency? Under the Labour Government, the first counselling session was free, and there was free access to the service of the Small Firms Advisory Bureau. Will that be the case under his scheme, or will the charges which produce self-sufficiency mean that small businesses will be unable to afford to use them?

Mr. Heseltine: I am interested to hear the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) say that the things that I have announced this afternoon were already in practice under the last Labour Government. I find that mildly surprising, as the last Labour party manifesto included a commitment to do many of the things that I have announced this afternoon, making it quite apparent to me that they did not exist on the scale and with the degree of coherence that I have announced. They were never one-stop shops on the basis that I have announced this afternoon.

The loss of jobs, the recession that we face and the consequences for large and small companies are not things that have flowed from the policies of this Government; they are a consequence of the most severe and prolonged world recession that we have seen, one which is affecting the capitalist world across the globe. It serves no purpose, in trying to understand how we cope with the problems, to try to pretend that somehow or other the solution of these problems is in the hands of any one government.

I will not be persuaded to try to adopt a process of allocating these schemes as a result of the competition in a way that reflects what is called broadly fairness across the country, because the consequences of doing so is to decide the winners, not on the basis of the quality of the scheme but on other factors. When the hon. Gentleman says, "But shouldn't it be done on the basis of need?", I very much agree with the thinking behind that, but one may well address the need more urgently and realistically by waiting a little and allowing the quality that can be achieved to be demonstrated elsewhere before one addresses the need in the areas where it is greatest. That is why I am preoccupied with ensuring that it is the quality of the scheme that is the determining factor and not other issues of the sort that the hon. Gentleman has drawn to our attention.

Mr. Cryer: What about cost?

Mr. Heseltine: As to cost, we have found that, where charges are made for services, they have not been a deterrent for companies taking them up. Companies are used to buying a service that is of quality, and the test is often not whether it is free, but whether it is good. If it is good, companies will pay for it. As for helping companies, as hon. Members know, we have a consultancy scheme which has been a significant success and to which companies contribute. I am looking at whether we can continue with that scheme and, if so, on what terms. The fact is, however, that payment has not been a deterrent to the success of the scheme but its desirable quality which has made the scheme a success.

Mr. Richard Spring (Bury St. Edmunds): May I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his most welcome announcement today? The Suffolk TEC will be submitting a bid on behalf of the community of Bury St. Edmunds. The local business community is very much behind the scheme and very supportive. Will my right hon. Friend, however, give an assurance that, in the provision of the database, there will be adequate information, particularly on the availability of British goods and services?

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend is reflecting the clear indication which has developed in the course of questions on my statement that we will have a significant number of bids, and I am delighted to hear that the Suffolk TEC is helping to co-ordinate that from Bury St. Edmunds.

An attempt now to demarcate British goods is out of keeping with the fact that as from 1 January 1993 we are moving to a single market. It is very important, as I am sure both my hon. Friend and the whole House will agree, that we persuade British industry very rapidly to adjust its thinking to that of a manufacturer or a provider of service in the whole of the single market and not just in the British sector of it.

Mr. Peter Hain (Neath): I welcome the President's statement, but I ask him to refer to the Secretary of State for Wales consideration of the Neath Development Partnership as a pilot project in Wales.

May I also remind the President that over 19,000 small businesses are small post offices? Why, in addition to making his statement on one-stop shops, did he not have the courage to come to the House and say that he supported the colossal loss of jobs in the Post Office, which will directly limit the ability of local post offices and the small businesses running them to do their jobs properly? Is this not a precursor of privatisation? Why has he flouted the authority of the House by allowing this announcement to be made before he has completed the review that he announced in July?

Mr. Heseltine: I have long admired the work that has been done in Wales in providing a more co-ordinated approach to many of the policies discussed this afternoon. It is because my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and for Wales have, within their overall responsibilities, a much more flexible way of handling many of these policies that they have not felt it necessary to move in the way that I have with my announcement this afternoon. That is not to say that they are not interested in what has happened. They have looked very carefully at the proposals, and I have no doubt that if they see advantage in them they will themselves seek to adapt them to the interests of their territorial responsibilities.

I have, I think, dealt with the issue of the Post Office. The Post Office has not announced that a significant number of people will be made redundant: it has announced its employment profile over the next five years and has clearly indicated that it does not expect to see compulsory redundancies; it simply expects that, of those who naturally leave the Post Office, some 7,000 a year, not all will be replaced. The reason is that the Post Office is seeking to maintain its reputation for excellence and is mechanising its services, as it is now able to do, in order to improve and maintain them. This means that, on average, over the five years 3,000 jobs will not be replaced. That is very different from suggesting that the Post Office has announced 15,000 redundancies——

Mr. Hain: Nineteen thousand.

Mr. Heseltine: Nineteen thousand.

Mr. Gary Streeter (Plymouth, Sutton): I thank my right hon. Friend for his excellent statement, which will be widely welcomed by the business community in Plymouth. I would like to encourage him not to listen too carefully to some of the moaning minnies on the Opposition Benches who rejoice in bad news and cannot stomach good news. Can he confirm that the coming of the single market on 1 January 1993, to which he has already referred, will be a significant boost to our own businesses to enable them to compete with our rivals, both in Europe and elsewhere in the world?

Mr. Heseltine: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend. I know very well the area that he represents today. I believe that what we have announced is designed to improve the quality of service to British companies, companies operating in this country. The services that they now receive are often good, but one of the issues that emerged from the research that I did on taking this job was that only 40 per cent. of companies took advantage of the services provided by the chambers of commerce, the Confederation of British Industry and the Department of Trade and Industry. That means that some 60 per cent., albeit many of them smaller companies, do not take advantage of them, either because they do not know of the services or because they do not believe them to be any good.

There is therefore a considerable responsibility on all of us who are responsible for these services to ensure that the customer—in this case, the customer who is not taking advantage of our services—is listened to and consulted, and we must tailor our services to meet his needs. That we intend to do in a much more proactive way, with a much higher quality and better co-ordination of our services.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): This is a very worthwhile initiative, and it will take someone who is uniquely ignorant of the needs of small businesses to dismiss it as an irrelevance. A number of local authorities, of which Teignbridge district council is one, have a very good track record in promoting particular initiatives to increase employment. Will my right hon. Friend say what role local authorities like that will have? Much of the expertise in knowing what is available to small businesses will lie in Departments of State and, in particular, in my right hon. Friend's own Department of Trade and Industry. How will pilots be able to bring forward proposals which might incorporate civil servants who have that particular expertise?

Mr. Heseltine: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising two very important issues.

I am fully aware that there are local authorities which have been drawing very much closer to the wealth-creating sector. A principal reason for this is that Government policy has given them every incentive to do so; with the use of schemes such as city grant and city challenge, a partnership has been been fused between local wealth-creating and local bureaucratic services, greatly to the benefit of both.

The scheme is based on exactly the same philosophical approach to try to give local authorities and the wealth-creating sector every incentive to come together to prepare the best services possible to meet local needs. It is for them to decide how the services that they provide can be fitted into the concept of a one-stop shop.

My Department provides many services on a regional basis, which may therefore be too remote from the customer's immediate needs. I intend to leave the initiative to explore how the departmental services can best be tailored into the competition to those participating in the competition. As can be seen from the prospectus, I have instructed officials in my Department that they are to be constructive and co-operative and must allow the private sector and local authorities to explore how they can sub-contract, provide locally or collocate the services of the DTI wherever legally possible. We are in an exploratory stage, in which there is a great deal of opportunity and from which we all have much to learn.

Mr. Jim Cousins (Newcastle upon Tyne, Central): The President of the Board of Trade has pledged a universal and comprehensive service, but he has committed the resources and cash for only a single year's experiment. How fast does he expect the scheme to expand? Where will the money come from, apart from charges on small businesses, as he made clear in an answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer)?

Mr. Heseltine: I can give an indication to the House and share my preliminary views—it is important that I do so—but this is an experiment. Within my budget, I have significant resources available for the support of small and medium enterprise. I expect an increasing part of that to be used year by year to extend the range of small one-stop shops if they are successful. The rate at which we do that can be explored in the light of the response.

All hon. Members will have been impressed by a clear theme that has emerged from this afternoon's statement, which is the number of bids that we shall get from all round the country. The training and enterprise councils are now hard at work in mobilising resources locally. I hope—I can but express it as a hope—that, when the first 15 have been chosen and the first tranche of public money is available to support them, a significant number of other bidders will say, "We don't wish to wait for the second or third competition: this is an idea whose time has come," and they will then make progress. It is well within their ability to do so, because revenues are available to the chambers, local authorities have the capacity to support them if necessary, and private companies can contribute additional cash.

All those opportunities exist. We shall see how it goes, but my present intention is to announce 15 pilot schemes by the early part of next year and then extend the opportunity on a second and third-year basis, provided that there is support from within my Department.

ROYAL ASSENT

Madam Speaker: I have to notify the House, in accordance with the Royal Assent Act 1967, that the Queen has signified her Royal Assent to the following Acts:

Sporting Events (Control of Alcohol, Etc.) (Amendment) Act 1922
Car Tax (Abolition) Act 1992
Llanelli Borough Council (River Lliedi) Act 1992
Durham Markets Company Act 1992
City of Bristol (Portishead Docks) Act 1992

Orders of the Day

Judicial Pensions and Retirement Bill

[Lords]

Order for Second Reading read.

5.13 pm

The Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department (Mr. John M. Taylor): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

This important Bill has passed its stages in another place and now comes to this House for our consideration. It makes new arrangements for judicial pensions and amends the law relating to the date on which certain judicial office holders are required to retire.

It may help to inform our discussion if I say a little about the Bill's history and describe some of its main provisions. Let me start with pensions. As my noble and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor said in another place, the occasion for the Bill was the change in the tax position of pension schemes brought about by the Finance Acts of 1987 and 1989.

The Finance Act 1987 established 20 years as the minimum accrual period for a tax-approved pension scheme to provide maximum pension benefits. The Finance Act 1989 requires the salary on which benefits from tax-approved schemes are calculated to be capped at a specific level. That level increases annually in line with price inflation. The level for this tax year is £75,000. All private sector schemes were automatically capped by the 1989 Finance Act for new entrants from the time that Act came into force—for most people that was on or after 1 June 1989. The same result was achieved for members of public sector pension schemes by amending regulations.

By July 1989, the only group of pension scheme members who were excluded from the cap was the judiciary. The judicial pension schemes can be changed only by legislation, because the judicial schemes are statutory in recognition of the need to safeguard judicial independence. We are making the necessary legislative changes in the Bill.

The Bill, however, does much more than simply bring the judicial schemes more into line with the standards that now apply to all other pension schemes in the public and private sectors if they are to benefit from the privileges of a tax-approved scheme. The Government have taken the opportunity provided by the Bill to make some much-needed changes to the current judicial pension arrangements. Those changes were trailed in consultation papers published by my noble and learned Friend, the Lord Chancellor, and my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Scotland, in December 1990. The Government announced in July 1991 how they intended to proceed; this Bill, introduced in another place on 4 June this year, is the result.

I said that changes were needed for the simple reason that the existing judicial schemes are rife with anomalies and inflexibilities. They are extremely complicated and carry a good number of difficulties for those who have to try to make out their rights under them. That is hardly surprising, given that each class of the judiciary has its own scheme. The result is some half a dozen different judicial pension schemes, all with different accrual rates.

For instance, in England and Wales, High Court judges, circuit judges and chairmen of industrial tribunals have 15-year accrual periods; stipendiary magistrates, district judges and members of the Lands Tribunal, on the other hand, have a 20-year accrual period; and for the immigration adjudicators, the accrual period is 40 years. Those disparities are perhaps even more marked when one looks north of the border and across the Irish sea.

Mr. Roger Evans (Monmouth): Is it in the slightest bit surprising that there are different accrual periods when High Court judges are normally appointed in their 50s and immigration appeals adjudicators are normally young boys who have undertaken a qualification period of three years' practice at the Bar? It does not follow as a matter of reason or consistency.

Mr. Taylor: We are making progress in the name of reason and consistency and I shall have more to say later about the age of appointment of High Court judges. Although my hon. Friend has already shown, not only by his text but by his tone, that he has a dispute with the measures currently on offer, I may be able to engage his sympathy in an alternative suggestion.

Mr. Paul Boateng (Brent, South): I would not bet on it.

Mr. Taylor: The book is not open.

There must be something to be said for having much greater homogeneity in the various classes of judges' pension arrangements, not least to assist the most able in gaining promotion. My hon. Friend the Member for Monmouth (Mr. Evans), perhaps with a measure of exaggeration, suggested that some adjudicators started as mere boys. Be that the case or not, I should like to see, and my hon. Friend might too, a more homogeneous overall pension structure that enabled people to be promoted and take greater responsibility without facing hideous actuarial decisions in middle life when they should be going forward without pressure or obstacle and taking greater responsibility.

I was seeking to describe the further range of differences that apply if one looks north of the border or across the Irish sea. For example, Scottish sheriffs have a 20-year accrual span compared with the 15-year span enjoyed by their English and Welsh counterparts, the circuit judges. District judges and supreme court masters in Northern Ireland have a 30-year span compared with the 20-year span of their English counterparts.

Those differences are the result of history and cannot be justified today. Apart from the glaring anomalies that exist between the different judicial offices, the different schemes can make it disadvantageous for a judge to move, on promotion, to a different office. I do not think that this is the right time to go into the technicalities of the aggregation rules, but their general effect is that a judge who wishes to take the pension of the second office loses the benefit of his years of service in his first office. A judge who wishes to aggregate his service in both offices may do so, but only on retirement and only on the basis of the salary and the pension scheme of the lower office. This is not only unfair, it can act as a disincentive—not merely an obstacle—to promotion.

[Mr. Taylor]

There are other anomalies. For instance, certain judicial officers in schemes with a 20-year accrual span have to serve for two years before qualifying for a pension on the ground of ill-health. No minimum period of service is, however, required of office-holders in 15-year schemes.

It seemed to the Government that the obvious way to cure the existing anomalies and inconsistencies was to create a unified pension scheme in which service throughout a judge's career would count towards his or her final pension. The new scheme should cater equally for all members of the judiciary. So far as the public are concerned, a judge is a judge, regardless of the level of judiciary to which he or she belongs. The Bill meets those objectives and it does so on the basis that in general the new arrangements do not prejudice the pension position of those already holding judicial office.

By virtue of clause 1, the new scheme will apply to new entrants to the judiciary, to those in the existing schemes who elect to go into the new scheme and to those serving under the present arrangements who are promoted to an office with a different pension scheme after the new arrangements come into force. Clause 3 provides for a single accrual span of 20 years for all the judicial officers holding on a salaried basis an office listed in schedule 1. As I have already explained, the reason for the 20 years is that it is now the minimum period allowed for a tax-approved pension scheme.

Much time was spent in another place debating whether that period was appropriate for members of the higher judiciary. It was argued that those judges tended to take up appointment relatively late in life and that, with the reduction in the retirement age to 70, many of them would not be able to qualify for a full pension. It was said that that was contrary to the public interest because it would discourage those best qualified to accept judicial office. Furthermore—this was said with a particular reference to the circuit judges who currently have a 15-year scheme and can retire with a full pension at 65 provided that they have served for 15 years—it would encourage some judges to stay on the Bench for longer than perhaps they would otherwise wish, simply to accrue their maximum pension entitlement before their 70th birthday. That too was said not to be in the public interest.

The Government's answer, given many times in another place by my noble and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor, is this: the quality of our judiciary is, and must always be, paramount. The pension arrangements for all members of the judiciary must be as generous as the public purse will allow. However, there can be no reason, so far as the 20-year accrual is concerned, for treating the judiciary any differently from other members of society. What the Government can do—and have done—is to recognise the special position of the judges, who come to this career relatively late in life, by ensuring that they can keep in full the benefits of any pension arrangements that they have made prior to taking up judicial office. In other words, they can keep those, and are entitled also to whatever pension benefits they have accrued under the statutory judicial scheme.

The judiciary are in a unique position here. Revenue rules would normally require those in pension schemes with an accrual period as short as 20 years, to bring into account for pension purposes any retained benefits—that is, previous pension arrangements—in assessing at the end of the day whether their pension was within the Revenue's overall limit of two thirds of final remuneration. The judges do not have to do that—a significant benefit to those judges who have taken advantage of the tax rules to build up personal pension provision during practice. It is the position under the present pension arrangements. It is retained by clause 18.

It was argued in another place that that was all very well, but that that special concession was of no help to those judges who had no retained benefits. The Government's answer to that is this: the Revenue recently agreed that, provided retained benefits are brought into account, the judiciary may, if they wish, buy added years or make additional voluntary contributions to increase the value of their judicial pensions. As the scheme will be recognised as a tax-approved scheme, judges will qualify, in the same way as anyone else, for tax relief on their contributions. Clause 10 provides the means for establishing the voluntary contribution schemes for the new arrangements. Schedule 3 amends the existing legislation so that voluntary contribution schemes may now be established for those covered by the present arrangements.

Let me tell the House briefly what will be the pension position of those covered by the Bill. The full pension after 20 years' service will be half the salary paid to the judge in whatever period of 12 months during the previous three years gives him the best result. For service of less than 20 years, the pension will be one fortieth of the salary paid to the judge—in whatever period of 12 months during the previous three years gives him the best result—multiplied by the whole length of the judge's service, calculated in years and days. In addition, judges will be entitled to a lump sum of two and a quarter times the annual rate of their pension. At present, the lump sum is twice the rate of the pension. There will be provision for a death gratuity of twice pensionable pay. That was raised from one and a half times pensionable pay by a Government amendment in another place. As now, there will be provision for spouse's and children's pensions.

Any judge who has served for five years will be entitled to an immediate pension at the age of 65. Judges between the ages of 60 and 65, who have served for five years, will be able to take early retirement with an immediate pension that is actuarially reduced. Those limits do not apply to ill-health retirement, the payment of a death gratuity, or the payment of spouses' and children's pensions. As a result of amendments by the Government in another place, the Bill now provides for enhancement of service in respect of ill-health pensions and for an increase in the lump sum payable following early death after retirement. Again as a result of Government amendment in another place, the scope of those eligible to receive a children's pension was considerably extended.

The Government believe that the new pension arrangements set out in the Bill are fair and reasonable to not only the judiciary but the public purse from which the pensions are paid. On 10 November, my noble and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor placed in the Libraries of both Houses, tables prepared by the Government Actuary comparing a range of pension benefits for stipendiary magistrates and district, circuit and High Court judges under the existing and new arrangements. I commend these to hon. Members. The tables include the improvements to the derivative benefits that I mentioned

a moment ago. I believe that the information provided in the tables is sufficiently comprehensive to enable those studying them to form a fair view of the pension position under the existing and new arrangements.

The retirement provisions of the Bill are covered in clauses 26 and 27, with the accompanying schedules 5, 6 and 7. As with pensions, part of the aim is to introduce consistency. At present, judges and judicial officers have a variety of retirement dates. Not only are the ages different as between different judicial offices, but in addition some provisions relate to the attainment of a particular age, while others relate to the completion of the year of service following a particular birthday.

For example, the retirement age for circuit judges in England and Wales, sheriffs in Scotland and county court judges in Northern Ireland is at present the end of the year of service in which they reach 72, whereas High Court judges in England and Wales and Northern Ireland, judges of the Court of Session in Scotland and other senior judges retire on their 75th birthday. Furthermore, for some appointments, particularly in tribunals, there is no statutory retirement age, although in general in such circumstances comparable retirement ages have been applied as a matter of administrative arrangement.

In the light of consultations, the Government consider that a general age is desirable and that a retirement age of 70 is more appropriate to modern conditions. Clause 26 accordingly provides for a general retirement date at the age of 70. This will apply in relation to all the offices included in schedule 5.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): My hon. Friend says that retirement at 70 would be more appropriate in modern conditions. Does he share my view that there is a danger in accommodating fashion? We are told that a judge is too old to sit on the Bench but when that argument is used, there is no appreciation of the fact that one is looking for intellectual skill at least as much as physical ability. Does not my hon. Friend feel that in introducing a common retirement age he has been blown off course and made to succumb to the fashion of attacking the judiciary and the establishment, by depriving judges of office on the ground of age?

Mr. Taylor: I am not unsympathetic to my hon. Friend's point, which he made in his usual reasonable and lucid way. Perhaps he will allow me to reflect on it. If I do not refer to it later in these remarks, I shall return to it later.

The retirement age of 70 will apply only to those appointed after the legislation comes into force. Clause 26 and schedule 7 accordingly provide that persons holding judicial office when the new retirement provisions come into force will retain their pre-existing compulsory retirement date. Under the transitional provisions in the Bill, that arrangement will also apply if and when someone subsequently moves from one full-time office to another. For example, if a circuit judge is subsequently appointed to the High Court Bench, he will retain his present retirement date of the end of the year of service in which he reaches 72.

At present, there are powers to extend service in some, but not all, judicial offices beyond the retirement date otherwise applicable. The application of those powers, where they exist, has been helpful in providing flexibility to meet the needs of the courts and in ensuring that the ability and expertise of experienced office holders need not be lost prematurely if that is in the public interest. In making that last point, perhaps I laid the foundations for the answer that I shall give my hon. Friend the Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls).

Mr. Walter Sweeney (Vale of Glamorgan): Does my hon. Friend agree that the discretion thereby reserved for the Lord Chancellor to extend the retirement age of members of the judiciary where they can serve a useful purpose and there is a need for them in our judicial system meets the criticism that might be levelled if the arbitrary age limit of 70 had been imposed? Does my hon. Friend further agree that the retention of the Lord Chancellor's discretion will allay fears of premature retirement?

Mr. Taylor: Yes. My hon. Friend raises a point that was made in another place by Lord Ackner and was comprehensively addressed—I thought, after reading *Hansard*—by my noble and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor. During the course of this evening, I shall endeavour to replicate my noble and learned Friend's reply. The questions being the same, there is no reason, in this day and age, why the answer should not be the same —and my hon. Friend shall have it.

It is considered appropriate to retain that flexibility and, with the introduction of a new retirement age of 70, to provide for the possibility of enabling service to be continued in the public interest. The Bill accordingly provides that service may be continued after the age of 70, but only if the Lord Chancellor or Secretary of State for Scotland, as the case may be, considers that desirable in the public interest, and then only for periods of no more than a year at a time up to, but not beyond, the office-holder's 75th birthday.

It is expected that that power will be used sparingly and applied only where it is clearly in the public interest to do so, taking careful account of all the relevant considerations, including in particular such things as the health of the judicial office holder in question. Because of the particular constitutional factors which are seen to arise in their case, the power of extension will not apply in respect of High Court judges and above in England and Wales and Northern Ireland or to their Scottish equivalents.

Under current provisions, judges who have retired from full-time service may be invited from time to time to serve in retirement on a part-time basis. We believe that it is no longer fair to expect them to be available indefinitely in that way, so the Bill provides for the overriding limit of 75 to apply in those circumstances also.

Clause 26 also provides that certain one-off appointments, to which the concept of retirement as such is not strictly applicable, should not be made beyond the age of 70. Clause 27 provides that a person who has retired or otherwise ceased to hold a judicial office may nevertheless complete unfinished business—for instance, by giving judgment in a case which he had been dealing with.

Any retirement age is of course a matter for judgment. Conflicting considerations must be balanced to achieve that which the person seeking to make the judgment believes to be right, both in the interests of the judges and in the public interest. On the one hand, the increasing burdens of judicial office must be acknowledged, but on the other, although the current retirement ages for the judiciary are higher than those for most other professional people, we must recognise that judges are appointed

[Mr. Taylor]

relatively late in life. They are usually drawn from those who have already established themselves in a successful career in the law and their years of experience are part of the necessary qualifications for the position. Accordingly, they bring with them maturity of judgment, which is essential for judicial office.

We think that three score years and 10 is an appropriate general age for judicial retirement, and that is, accordingly, the age for which the Bill provides.

Mr. Sweeney: I do not disagree with my hon. Friend on that point, but does he accept that it is appropriate for the Government to consider ways of attracting younger people to the Bench, of making appointments at a younger age and of broadening the entry so that judges are more representative of the people with whom they deal in court?

Mr. Taylor: I am glad to be able to respond to that question in exactly the way that my hon. Friend would like. It must be the inescapable conclusion of those who hold the judiciary in high regard and respect that it must be sensible to start considering appointing people rather younger than is the tradition. I was surprised to find—my hon. Friend, too, may be surprised—that the average age of High Court judges is lower than 60, which is not a bad thing. He may be pleased to know that the Lord Chancellor has made it clear many times that, as the reservoir of those competent and qualified for appointment to the Bench increases—this seems inevitable from the statistics—more women and more people from ethnic backgrounds will be appointed. There will be no obstacle to them: their appointment will be encouraged.

Mr. Gary Streeter (Plymouth, Sutton): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Taylor: I had not intended to give way so many times. My next words were to be, "I commend the Bill to the House," but I want to be fair to my hon. Friends.

Mr. Streeter: Does my hon. Friend agree that, if a man or woman in his or her late thirties or early forties is old enough to be a member of the Cabinet, he or she is old enough to be a part of the judicial system and on the Bench?

Mr. Taylor *rose——*

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Before the Minister continues, may I invite him not to turn his back on me quite so much?

Mr. Taylor: I apologise. I am not very experienced in this job, and I find it an unusual experience to be replying to people whom I cannot see. No doubt I shall have to come to terms with that, and I shall address my remarks to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, as is proper.

My hon. Friend's thinking may be part of the future, but the thinking of the present is that it is unconventional to make appointments to the High Court Bench at any age younger than 45.

Mr. Nick Hawkins (Blackpool, South): I do not disagree with a number of the important points that my hon. Friend has made, but what is most important is that nothing should deter the best candidates from accepting appointments. Much concern was expressed by many Members of the other place, including many experienced judges, about the best being deterred from doing so, in particular by concerns about pension provisions, early retirement through ill-health and about the possibility of judges becoming stale if they are required to serve for 20 years to qualify for their full pension. Those are the greatest concerns that I and a number of hon. Friends share, to which I shall return later if I am successful in catching your eye, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker: It would be easier to catch it if interventions were not so long.

Mr. Taylor: I shall try to respond briefly.

I am anxious to tell my hon. Friend that there will be no derogation from the selection of the best candidates. It is not incompatible or inconsistent with that to say, on the one hand, that women candidates and candidates from ethnic minorities will be encouraged and, on the other, that selection will be confined to the best candidates. On the 20-year qualifications, I am sorry to have to invite my hon. Friend to come to terms with the Finance Act 1987 and Finance Act 1989, which created an anomaly in respect of judges. The Bill seeks to rectify that anomaly by putting the tax status of judges' pensions on the same footing as everybody else's. I do not think that he is pressing me to let judges have a tax-privileged pension scheme that is not available to anybody else. I remind him that judges are able to buy added years if they wish and retire earlier.

Mr. Roger Evans: I am following the force of my hon. Friend's reasoning, but why does not the same provision apply to the Lord Chancellor's pension?

Mr. Taylor: My hon. Friend seems to be adopting an aggressive tone. For that and other reasons I shall not oblige him. The Lord Chancellor, as he will know better than me, is in an absolutely unique position under our constitution. He is a contradiction of all the 18th-century nostrums about the separation of power. He is a Minister-judge; there is no other. The job goes back 1,360 years. It is scarcely surprising that he is treated slightly differently.

Sir Ivan Lawrence (Burton): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Taylor: No. You, Madam Deputy Speaker, and the House will agree that I have been generous in taking interventions.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: Before my right hon. Friend finishes his speech.

Mr. Taylor: Very well.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: I am extremely grateful to my hon. Friend: I called him right hon., but I am sure that that is only a matter of time. What did he mean when he said that we should be encouraging women to be judges? Under the Bill, a woman practitioner who has to leave practice to raise a family will not be able to amass sufficient pension before she becomes a judge to make the pension that she gets as a judge worth while. Surely my hon. Friend is being rather optimistic in suggesting that the Bill will do anything to help women to become judges.

Mr. Taylor: There is little evidence that people accept, or are deterred from accepting, judicial appointment because of the pension arrangements. Most people seem to

regard the decision about whether to accept appointment as a judge as being altogether more important than pension arrangements, which are considered collaterally to the main decision. My hon. and learned Friend will have to allow me to stand by my earlier position and say that the Lord Chancellor looks forward—I do not think that he is alone in this—to the time when the reservoir of those available for appointment includes more women and more people of ethnic origins. On the same criterion of choosing only the best, many of them will be appointed, and most of us think that that will be a very good thing.

I commend the Bill to the House.

5.49 pm

Mr. Paul Boateng (Brent, South): The debate has taken on a rather churlish and acrimonious tone—largely, I fear, as a result of the interventions of the Minister's hon. Friends. That makes one look forward with a certain amount of glee to the Committee stage, should it so please the House, when one fancies that the Minister will have an even rougher ride.

Mr. John Morris (Aberavon): They will not be selected.

Mr. Boateng: Quite so. Perhaps Conservative Members who have expressed what I consider to be a welcome interest in the subject have scuppered their chances of ever serving on the Standing Committee. Places on the Committee will no doubt be the subject of much competition, as the attendance in the House this evening signifies.

The Opposition will attempt to return a certain amount of equilibrium and proper dignity to the debate, which is timely. The judiciary are now required to preside over a system of criminal and civil justice increasingly groaning under the strain of under-resourcing and understaffing. They also, especially the higher judiciary, have imposed on them an increasing burden of duties in serving on various bodies of inquiry established from time to time to deal with the troubles that the Government have got themselves into.

It is a good time to examine the judiciary, and I hope that in the course of the debate and, if the House wills it, in Committee, we shall take the opportunity to examine the wider issues that provide the context of the Bill, and which have already been raised by several Conservative Members. No doubt they will also be raised in due course by my hon. Friends.

The public perception of the judiciary at times lapses into caricature. The picture is of a figure such as Mr. Justice Cocklecarrot—elderly, wearing a wig and ermine, and as narrow-minded as he is short-sighted. It is of the sort of judge who inquires, "Who is Cliff Richard?" or "What is Spitting Image?"

Mr. Nicholls: "Who is Paul Boateng?"

Mr. Boateng: Quite so, but I shall not succumb to the temptation of responding to that sedentary and entirely unfounded intervention.

The caricature, the lampoon, contains within it a grain of truth in terms of the public's perception of the judiciary, which has already been referred to in at least one Conservative intervention. It is important that the House should deal with that perception, because there is nothing more important than that the judiciary and the system of justice they serve should command the respect of the whole community, and that they should be seen as what, in the main, they are. They are a highly qualified and erudite body, a group of men and women—I shall deal with the composition of the judiciary in due course—whose intellectual ability and total incorruptibility are unmatched anywhere in the world. That must be said, and it is the background against which the debate takes place.

However, we must not be complacent about the institution of the judiciary, any more than we should be complacent about any other of our great institutions. To some extent, the judiciary stand apart and are unique. They, alone of all our great institutions, have at no time been the subject of any comprehensive reform. The monarchy, the House of Commons and the upper House, and the civil service, have all at some time been the subject of a comprehensive body of reform, after considerable public debate, and, in the case of the monarchy and this House, after civil war. The judiciary have never been subject to such reform.

Over the years, there has been a series of debates on the judiciary in the House, going back to the glorious revolution. They make interesting reading, and they have always tended to take place around the subject of the emoluments of the judiciary. That was for the good reason that it was important to ensure their independence—in those days, their independence from the Crown and from a variety of vested interests—and also because it was important that the ablest and most highly qualified people were drawn into the judiciary. That matter has already been addressed in interventions in the debate.

It is interesting to examine a debate held in the Chamber in 1825 which gives some flavour of the concerns which remain with us to this day. One hon. Member, a Mr. Leycester, saw his opportunity. Others may seek to emulate him tonight—who knows? Mr. Leycester took the opportunity to raise several general issues concerning the administration of justice. The *Hansard* of the time tells us that he thought that the debate presented

"a favourable opportunity for correcting many evils in the mode of administering justice in this country."

Mr. Leycester sought to widen the debate, and was also prompted to observe that he did not think that a time when the price of corn was falling was the time to consider any increase in judges' emoluments, salaries and pensions.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer of the day responded. He was clearly a more generous Chancellor than the one who revealed in his autumn statement this year his attitude to the legal aid fund and the criminal and civil justice systems in this country. The Chancellor in 1825 strongly argued that it was important to do nothing that would in any way remove from the office its "just dignity", or anything that would diminish the

"respectability of the judges,and their weight and character in the eyes of those for whose benefit the laws were administered. —[*Official Report*, 16 May 1825; Vol. 13, c. 612.]

Listening to what the Minister has said today, it seems to me that the reason for the Bill is similar—a concern to ensure that the independence of the judiciary is maintained, that the highest quality of persons with the requisite professional skills are drawn to judicial office at every level, and that there is a degree of uniformity in the way in which they are treated.

Sadly, the Opposition now part company with the Government. The Government have missed a golden opportunity to promote a debate and carry out a broader consultation than that involved with the Bill, in order to

[Mr. Boateng]

determine what we seek from our judges today, how they could best be put in a position to deliver what they are called upon to do, how we may ensure that the judiciary are best suited to preside over an institution that, increasingly, is required to deal with a complex and plural society in a state of considerable change and with a system of justice that is increasingly required to deal with a greater volume and a more complex body of law and of litigants than has ever been the case before.

The Government had an opportunity here, although they have missed it—the Opposition regret that—to bring forward a comprehensive package of reform of the judiciary. The Opposition intend to take the opportunity of this Second Reading debate and, if the House wills it, of the Committee stage to map out a number of areas in which the time has come for comprehensive reform and change. We also intend, here and in Committee, to table a number of amendments that will improve and assist the measure.

The public perception of the judiciary was recently revealed interestingly in an important survey conducted by the Law Society which was published in the *Solicitors' Journal*. It was a comprehensive survey across England and Wales, and some of the results were as follows. Some 65 per cent. of those surveyed agreed with the statement:

"Judges are out of touch with everyday life and everyday people".

More than 79 per cent. of people questioned said that there should be more women judges. Some 86 per cent. thought that judges should retire earlier than the present judicial retirement age of 75, which shows considerable public support for reducing the retirement age. Interestingly, and significantly for our consideration of the Bill, about 47 per cent. thought that judges should retire at 65 and 23 per cent. thought that they should retire at 60. That is an interesting statistic.

The overwhelming conclusion about the composition of the bench was that judges were too old, too male, too white and too out of touch. Some 69 per cent. of people agreed that judges should be appointed to reflect the ethnic mix of England and Wales. That is the background against which our debate takes place.

Mr. Nicholls: To help us to place this useful survey in context and to understand something of the knowledge of the people who answered the questions, can the hon. Gentleman tell the House whether the people surveyed were asked whether they had ever been in court, whether they knew any judges, what the average age of judges was and how many female or black judges there were? If they were not asked those questions, it might suggest that they did not know the answers. That would tend to throw a less favourable gloss on the findings.

Mr. Boateng: That is an interesting point from an hon. Member who is a member of the Law Society and who has experience of the judiciary at every level in a number of different modes. The importance of the survey is that it deals with public perception. Whether the public are right in that perception is an entirely different case. As it traditionally has been, the House must always be concerned about maintaining public confidence in the judiciary. The House must be aware that the public have those concerns and perceptions.

It may be of assistance to the hon. Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) if I describe the public's perception of the make-up of the judiciary. An examination of the figures reveals that the public's perception of the age, gender and race of judges is broadly right. I leave aside the issue of whether judges are out of touch. The reality is that only two High Court judges are women. Only 19 circuit judges, 42 recorders, 31 assistant recorders and three deputy district judges are women. There are no women district judges. Only 18 women are in training for assistant recordership. The figures give no cause for complacency.

I am prompted by the intervention by the hon. Member for Teignbridge to consider the position of women in the judiciary. The view expressed by the hon. Gentleman, by the Minister and by the Lord Chancellor—that in the fulness of time, women would achieve higher positions in the judiciary in greater numbers—is not borne out by the facts. Many women were called to the Bar in the 1970s. The evidence is that they are not selected as readily as their male colleagues are for the beginnings of high judicial office, but are found in the office of recordership. Men are appointed as recorders from 12 years' call. No woman has been made a recorder at less than 16 years' call. The figure for the past five years for the south-east is 18 years' call.

Those figures come from another report conducted by the Law Society which was published last year. It should give all hon. Members and all those who want the judiciary broadly to reflect the gender mix of our society cause for concern. There is no room for complacency on that score.

The same could be said—I do not intend to labour the point—about the ethnic breakdown of the judiciary and about the number of persons drawn to judicial office from the ethnic minority Bar. We cannot afford to be complacent in that area, any more than we can afford to be complacent about the mix of those recruited to be holders of the higher judicial offices in terms of whether they come from the solicitors' profession or from the Bar. There remains a gross under-representation of solicitors as holders of judicial office.

Those important issues, which need to be addressed, are not addressed in the Bill. That is a missed opportunity and that is why we believe that the time has come for the creation of a judicial appointments commission which would, first and importantly, involve a lay element in the process. In a welcome recognition of the extent of the problem in relation to the public's perception, the Lord Chief Justice made it clear in the Dimbleby lecture that he now accepted the argument for lay observers in the system of judicial appointments.

The Opposition would argue, and would hope to find allies on the Conservative Benches, that that does not go far enough. There should be an institutionalised lay element within the judicial appointments commission. That would give a clear message to the public that the judiciary provide a public service of the utmost importance, that they should be recruited in circumstances that are open and subject to public advertisement and that the circumstances of recruitment should be transparent in terms of the manner of recruitment and the qualifications required to fill those judicial offices; and, importantly, the lay element should be involved.

The Opposition are disappointed that, in the consultations on the Bill, the Lord Chancellor did not feel it necessary to consult anyone outside the body of the judiciary. Judicial pensions and judicial appointments are

not matters solely for the judiciary. They should be matters for the general public and for consumer and professional organisations. The process should be more open and more transparent than it is at the moment.

The Bill misses another opportunity which has been alluded to in the debate, albeit by a side wind. That missed opportunity relates to judicial careers. There is absolutely no reason why we should not accept that it is perfectly proper and appropriate for the profession—solicitors and barristers—to consider judicial office in career terms.

There is no reason why we should fail to grasp the opportunity of so structuring our pension arrangements as to encourage the principle that it is proper to appoint people to judicial office at a much earlier age. That should begin with and include the office of stipendiary magistrate and recorder; move through to the circuit court, whether district court or Crown court, to, where appropriate, the High Court and the higher echelons of the judiciary. There is no reason why that path should not be embarked upon at an earlier age—perhaps in one's mid-30s. The pension arrangements that we are considering should reflect that and have a degree of portability.

Mr. John M. Taylor: As the hon. Gentleman is addressing rather constructively the possibilities of advancement within a hierarchy that permitted promotions, does he not concede that the pension arrangements that we have introduced today are homogeneous, without internal boundaries, and conducive to what he has suggested?

Mr. Boateng: That is why we do not oppose the principle today and why we look forward to the debate on the issue in Committee. However, we would go further.

There should be a time when those who hold judicial office should have a contributory pension. I noticed that at least one Conservative Member gasped when I said that. However, I do not see why a Conservative mouth should gasp at that concept. After all, is not the Conservative party in the forefront of encouraging contributory pensions? What is sauce for the goose should be sauce for the gander. Why should this calf be so fatted and we be incapable of appreciating another means of achieving that end and providing a means by which people might be able to contribute to their own pensions?

Mr. Sweeney: After the hon. Gentleman's farmyard metaphors, does he accept that we are not comparing like with like? I believe that the salary of a High Court judge is about £87,000 a year. While that may sound a vast salary to the great mass of the public, in comparison to the salaries of the most senior and effective members of the Bar, it is relatively low. The fact that the pension arrangements for the judiciary are non-contributory is, in part, a reflection of that. Anyone earning a huge salary is in a far better position to fund his own pension arrangements than a member of the British judiciary.

Mr. Boateng: Quite so. I do not for a moment call that into question. However, I dare to suggest that there is no reason why the arrangements and their generosity should be immutable and fixed. It is perfectly proper for there to be a broader consideration, within the context of an overall career structure for the judiciary, of a contributory pension and a corresponding increase in salary.

I raise that matter as an issue for discussion and debate. I understand how the current arrangements have evolved and I do not complain about them. However, it is important that there should be a comprehensive review of the appointment of the judiciary, their career structure and place within the overall scheme of the public service. That is a proper exercise which should be engaged upon with alacrity.

That brings me to the retirement age. It is not automatically obvious to the general public or to many hon. Members why there should be a distinction between a senior judge in the service of the administration of justice and various other servants of the Crown in the civil service. Why should it be thought that it is automatically presumed and required that senior civil servants should retire at 60 and judges at 70?

Mr. Roger Evans: There is no such rule in respect of hon. Members of this House. Why should we be treated differently?

Mr. Boateng: There are one or two good reasons. Our emoluments are in no way comparable, in case the hon. Gentleman has not noticed. Our role is in no way comparable. If the hon. Gentleman, as a new Member and no doubt welcome on his own side, thinks that he is as important as a High Court judge, he has another think coming, because I can tell him, with more experience here than he has, that he is not. He will discover otherwise.

Mr. Roger Evans: As I have more experience than the hon. Gentleman at the Bar, can he tell me why, in private practice as a lawyer, there is no requirement to retire at a particular age and why Crown servants should be shackled in this arbitrary fashion?

Mr. Boateng: I have clearly stung the hon. Member and become the subject of the wrath that he was reserving for the Parliamentary Secretary. I should have refrained from drawing him in that way.

The point I make is this: it is not automatically clear why this distinction should be made. I take the view of one Conservative Member that the mere fact that one is old does not mean that one is out of touch or in some way impaired in one's intellectual capacity. That simply is not true.

It seems to us to be entirely desirable that judges should retire at 65 and that that is a reasonable proposition and one which is in keeping with the requirement of ensuring that there is maturity and a degree of wisdom that are reflected in age on the Bench and also, importantly, is in keeping with the need to ensure that levels of judicial staffing are maintained. But having said that, 65 as a retirement age is reasonable and it ensures that public perception of the Bench is not one that conforms with caricature and lampoon. It is also important, given the number of years required to acquire a full pension under the provisions of this Bill, that it is an added incentive to earlier appointment. I stress that it is desirable that appointment to high judicial office should take place earlier than at present.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Boateng: Before giving way to Conservative Members, I would say one thing that goes to the whole issue, sadly untouched in this Bill, of a career structure for judicial office. On reflection, is there any reason why consideration is not given to the appointment of High Court judges on a fixed-term basis? It would be useful to

[Mr. Boateng]

know whether the Lord Chancellor's Department has given any thought, in the context of the present shortage of judicial manpower—and manpower it is, with the gender make-up of the judiciary—to the proposal first aired by a Conservative Lord Chancellor as long ago as 1900.

If eminent lawyers are not prepared to make the real sacrifice of earning capacity or life style that a permanent commitment to the Bench inevitably brings, why should not consideration be given to the appointment of High Court judges for a fixed term of five or eight years so that it is possible for a High Court judge to be drawn from the solicitors' profession, the Bar or academia for that period to serve in judicial office and then to go back to their previous occupation in the law? Why is that not at least considered by the Lord Chancellor? It was considered in 1900; why not now?

Mr. Streeter: The hon. Gentleman asks why it has not been considered since 1900, but one could ask the same thing about many Labour Governments since then. However, I rise not to question him on that point but on his earlier interesting points about an enforced retirement age of 65. Can he say a little more about the cost of his proposals in increased pensions and additional salaries for replacement judges, or is this yet another Labour proposal that has not been costed?

Mr. Boateng: I wish that I had not given way to that intervention. That is not worthy of the contributions the hon. Member made earlier in this debate. Is it to be suggested—I can see it now—in three or four years' time, or probably sooner, given the conduct of some Conservative Members, when we have a general election, that our proposal for a judge's retirement age should be costed and thrown against us at the hustings as an indication of Labour irresponsibility? Not even Conservative Members can sink that low when we are seeking a rational discussion about the shape and role of the judiciary.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. If the hon. Member who has the Floor does not give way, other hon. Members must resume their seats.

Mr. Boateng: The fact is that in terms of the administration of justice, Conservative Members have been all too ready to be influenced by the Treasury as opposed to the demands of the administration of justice and that is precisely why they have, time and again, ignored the pleas and criticism of successive Lords Chief Justice and other Lords of Appeal and members of the Court of Appeal for an end to the scandal of the repeated use of deputies and part-time judges in the High Court. That is entirely as a result of the sort of quite improper consideration of costing by the Chancellor of the Exchequer that is imposed on the Lord Chancellor. It is self-defeating.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The hon. Gentleman has followed the pastoral phase of his speech with some more aggressive comments. I shall respond to his remarks on the availability of part-time judges. It is my opinion that they increase flexibility to cope with peaks and troughs in work load, and to cover the absence of full-time appointees due to illness, or caused by the time lag which often occurs between a post becoming available and the appointment of the new post holder. Part-time sitting also builds up an experienced pool of practitioners, from which future appointments to higher judicial office are often made. Those are respectable arguments in favour of part-time officers on the Bench.

Mr. Boateng: The respectability of that argument can be judged against the views of successive Lord Chief Justices, of the overwhelming majority of both wings of the profession, and of the City of London, the consumer organisations, the Bar Council, the Law Society and the overwhelming weight of informed opinion. They find that the continued use of part-time High Court judges and deputy High Court judges is offensive in terms of the independence of the judiciary—an important constitutional argument—and also self-defeating for the role of London and the Royal Courts of Justice as a centre of international commercial litigation, which earns this country in excess of £500 million a year in invisible earnings. I am afraid that that argument is not respectable, and that view is not shared outside the House by those most intimately concerned with the subject.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Boateng: I have given way more than enough during this speech. I do not want to be drawn any further down that path, save to say that those issues are worthy of consideration and that they will be considered in Committee, during which we will inevitably seek to amend the Bill constructively so that it is in a state which will merit and warrant the support of the whole House at Third Reading.

This is a welcome opportunity to debate the role and structure of the judiciary—an opportunity which we shall take—but it is a missed opportunity for the Government. It is an opportunity for the House to contribute to shaping a future for the judiciary, and their role within the civil and criminal justice system, that will strengthen and reinforce public support for that institution, will cause it to represent the skills and excellences which the Bar, the solicitors' profession and academia can bring to the law, and will ensure that it is broadly representative, in race and gender, of a cross-section of our society, so that it can go into the next century strengthened and ready for the challenges that lie ahead. Opposition Members will do all that we can to ensure that that happens.

6.33 pm

Mr. Roger Evans (Monmouth): In what I shall describe as the pastoral phase of this speech, I shall begin by congratulating my hon. Friend the Minister on avoiding almost completely the dreadful invitation that we have just heard for a comprehensive review of the judiciary.

The judiciary have been the distinguishing great feature of our country since 1688, when Mr. Justice Powell was not overawed by King James at the trial of seven bishops. There have been successive serious reforms of the judiciary since then and, until the unhappy events of latter years, they have alway been thought to be of the highest quality, with the highest degree of independence and integrity. I am sorry that anything else should have been said.

Unhappy recent events, which have undoubtedly, and very sadly, clouded the reputation of justice—faulty police

evidence, false police evidence, wrong verdicts by juries, or the quaint and eccentric statutory shackles upon the criminal appeals process—are not properly matters of complaint to be laid before the judiciary.

I would understand the need for a comprehensive reform of the judiciary if it had been directed to a specific cause or to something more serious, and less frivolous, than an opinion poll in the *Solicitors' Journal*. Frankly, that was just another example of a crude tabloid public opinion poll, of the sort that has disgraced our public life. If one asked people, "Are you satisfied with, or do you think that members of the Labour Front bench are out of touch with the country?", the odds are that a great majority would say yes. The Law Society is to be deplored for the low standards of journalism employed in conducting that poll, and in publishing it.

Let us consider the substantive arguments of the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng). A judicial appointments commission has been seen in certain professional quarters as an attractive and plausible possibility. The difficulty with it is simply this: who does the choosing and who chooses who will make the choices? At the moment, a Minister of the Crown makes appointments and, however strange they may sometimes be thought to be, he is responsible to Parliament, and not to a quango containing self-perpetuating oligarchs from the professions.

An example of a similar amount of plausible pressure, which led to a calamitous state of affairs in another institution of state, is the removal of parliamentary responsibility for the appointment of bishops in the Church of England by the Crown Appointments Commission, which has turned the episcopal Bench into a self-perpetuating oligarchy, which is not accountable to anyone. A judicial apppointments commission is a deplorable idea, which should be rejected on the most elementary principles of parliamentary accountability.

The second great innovation suggested by the hon. Member for Brent, South was that a judicial career should begin at a much earlier age. My hon. Friend the Minister thought that that was the basis for some friendly across-the-party-divide co-operation, and that the hon. Member for Brent, South was assisting his argument. If he considers the matter more carefully, he will appreciate that there was more danger in what was being proposed than he perhaps understood at first blush.

Again, it sounds plausible that one should start as a baby judge and work one's way up to a Lord of Appeal in Ordinary, but that would undermine the independence of the judiciary, because the promotion depends on the Lord Chancellor and not on anyone else. The importance of the existing system is that traditionally in this country we have believed that one gets the best judges by having the best practitioners, who have learnt how to prepare and present cases, and have experience of assessing them. One takes leading practitioners from among the most able and makes them into judges. That is what has singularly distinguished our judiciary and that in certain parts of the Commonwealth, in contrast to the system in continental countries.

Mr. Sweeney: Does my hon. Friend not accept that his view that we need experienced and able judges should not preclude young practitioners, who happen to be experienced and able? We need more of them on the Bench.

Mr. Evans: People should be appointed to the Bench because they are distinguished by their ability and character. I regard age discrimination as immoral. One should judge people purely on their talents and abilities and not on whether they happen to be born in one year rather than another, in so far as that can properly be avoided.

Whereas in the House one can work one's way up from the lowest form of life to the Cabinet, with a judicial career it has never been the case that the lowest judicial appointee can proceed all the way up the ladder. I think that the immigration appeals adjudicator is the lowest judicial appointment—my hon. Friend will correct me if I am wrong, but he dared to mention it—for which the minimum qualification is three years' practical experience at the Bar or as a solicitor. I do not think that an immigration appeals adjudicator has ever proceeded up the judicial ladder, let alone to the circuit Bench, let alone to the High Court Bench, let alone to a Lord of Appealship in Ordinary. The way in which the system has always operated is that certain practitioners at certain levels go into the judiciary at certain levels simply because they have experience of doing that sort of case properly. That has been the tradition and it should be defended.

Mr. John M. Taylor: I may not, from instant resource, be able to satisfy my hon. Friend in the matter of an adjudicator achieving such instant elevation. However, we have an existing case of a district judge, whom practitioners as old as I used to call a registrar, who has become an Appeal Court judge—and she a lady, too.

Mr. Evans: I am well aware that there have been from time to time, and I welcome them, promotions from both the district Bench and what I, too, would call district registrars, to the circuit Bench and upwards, but that is a very different thing. I expressed to my hon. Friend earlier —admittedly slightly aggressively—the sheer outrageousness of his suggestion that immigration appeals adjudicators are part of this process; that is simply nonsense.

The third suggestion made by the hon. Member for Brent, South regarding his comprehensive reform of the judiciary was to dredge up an idea put forward by Lord Halsbury, who might be described as belonging to a rather opposite school of legal patronage thinking. The objection, again, to fixed-term High Court judge or other judicial appointments, is that they undermine the independence of the office, because in the last year either one is wondering what will have happened to one's practice when one goes back to it or one is hoping for further preferment from the state. The whole point about judges since our glorious revolution is that they are appointed for so long as they conduct themselves properly, and seldom have they had to be removed. That is the basis of our rule of law and our constitutional liberty.

It may well be that the civil servants, in particular, who sit not so far from my hon. Friend, find it very difficult to comphrehend the traditions of the British legal profession and of the British Bench. Those traditions have been based upon sturdy independence and a total rejection of any idea that people should be beholden to the powers that be who appoint them. Judges are appointees, not creatures of any politician or any Lord Chancellor. That is the basis of our constitutional liberty that we must defend.

[Mr. Evans]

I turn now to my hon. Friend and, first, to part I of the Bill. He has, I respectfully submit, a very much better case in certain regards than the one that he put to us. Yes, I entirely endorse the view that arrangements whereby circuit judges get promoted to the High Court Bench and run into difficulties over their pension scheme are anomalous. There is a need to sort this out and the Bill is welcome in so far as it tries to sort it out. What my hon. Friend is really doing, however, is following the dictates —which I, as a Conservative, welcome—of the Treasury that the Bill is intended to be fiscally neutral. It is not intended to increase public expenditure and, as a good Conservative, I find that a very attractive proposition. But this means that he has to balance the books; he has to balance the benefits and the disbenefits. If that had been stated rather more clearly, it would have been, I respectfully say to him, a more attractive argument.

The argument that was put was, first, that somehow a 15-year accrual period for a judicial pension could no longer be tolerated because the Finance Act 1987 had given certain taxation privileges to pensions of more than 20 years' accrual period. It is all very well to say that the Lord Chancellor is a noble ornament of our constitution and should still be exempt from this new arrangement, but it rather weakens his case when one reflects that the Prime Minister, former Speakers of the House and field marshals, for example, are equally privileged in this regard in respect of pensions, and the 20-year accrual period does not apply to them. It is extraordinary members of the higher judiciary should suddenly find that they are to be treated on any different basis and why that should be used as the reason to do so. By all means balance fiscally the benefits and the debenefits in this Bill, but the argument which my hon. Friend uttered was, in my submission, wholly mistaken.

The second point that my hon. Friend made concerned the benefits of unifying all the various judicial pension arrangements. I can see the force of that in terms of practicality and justice, provided that there is no attempt to oversell it on the basis that there is a judicial career and a pattern of judicial promotion. Judicial promotion remains, and ought to remain, very much the exception. I think that it is the general professional view that individuals who are promoted are singular examples of the failure of patronage in the first place. In other words, they are singularly distinguished and able persons, who amply and quickly demonstrate that they ought to have been preferred to a higher level in the judicial hierarchy in the first place. They are examples not of the success of the present system but of the failure of the decision-making process in the first place.

There are a number of odd points in part I which are important in principle. I note, for example, that it appears that in 1990 widowers' pensions were first introduced for judges. I ask my hon. Friend if that is indeed the case under the present Bill as it is drafted.

The second point on which I ask for elucidation is the situation in respect of children in further education. On the Queen's Printers' copy of the Bill, in clause 7(1)(a), an "or" has been missed out which is certainly there in section 21 of the Judicial Pensions Act 1981. The effect of this would be to stop any pension to a judicial child if he or she underwent further education beyond the age of 16. I cannot believe that that is what the Government intended; I am sure that it is a slip-up, and I should be grateful for clarification by my hon. Friend.

The totality of part I is welcome. It is not generous compared with arrangements in Australia or Canada, for example, and I can understand why this portion of the Bill was attacked with such vigour and enthusiasm in another place. But the fact remains that we must balance the books and make sure that the fiscal effect of this is neutral.

However, I must say this to my hon. Friend. I did not drop my jaw with such surprise as the hon. Member for Brent, South thought. What I find extraordinarily anomalous is that in 1992 we should be discussing judicial pensions, or indeed civil service pensions, at all. I believe that the whole thing should be privatised and that individual practitioners, individual judges, should be paid enough to enable them to make individual arrangements which suit their individual circumstances.

We have got ourselves involved and enmeshed in the genius of the British civil service at thinking up complex rules which are wholly inconsistent and produce obvious anomalies. They then have to be thought through again and reworked, and the same process goes on and on. The time has surely come for an end to it. If my hon. Friend had come to the House and said that he was proposing to increase official pay by some modest amount to allow for the fact that there would be no further judicial pensions, I for one would have welcomed that.

It is on part II, in particular, that I must part company with my hon. Friend. I do not know what modern world he lives in when he quotes the Old Testament figure of three score years and ten and says that it is in accordance with the modern climate that one should retire at 70. The hon. Member for Brent, South was at least a little bolder and said 65.

This has two consequences. First, unnecessarily and unhappily, my hon. Friend has talked about the discretion given to his noble Friend the Lord Chancellor and the Secretary of State for Scotland to allow people, after this upper ceiling is reached, to sit from time to time—a power which, he has assured us, is to be used only sparingly. Unhappily, it is the practice, which has been commented upon adversely by several distinguished judges, that the existing powers to use deputies have been grossly over-indulged in. I would respect that argument if it were put more brutally in terms of Treasury needs to contain public expenditure, but there is something here which has given rise, unnecessarily in my submission, to public concern and criticism.

What sticks in my gullet about this proposed piece of legislation is the idea that at age 65 or 70 a person should be stopped from working and using his talents, in an arbitrary, discriminatory and unfair fashion. It is immoral. The moral basis on which we have founded legislation against race and sex discrimination is simply that one cannot be blamed and should not be penalised for what one is born. In like fashion, one should not be discriminated against simply by the year of one's birth. That is anomalous and unfair and wrong in principle.

That such an idea would casually emerge, no doubt without any malice, from the British civil service is eminently probable and plausible, because the civil service is the classic example of a statist system in which everything works according to age and cut-off by particular date. That is deplorable, and the Government's policies for reducing the civil service, creating next steps

agencies and private arrangements and so on must be the future course against obsolete and increasingly odious privileges which the civil service enjoys.

Mr. Nicholls: Perhaps my hon. Friend will also shed a tear for the civil service, given that it too suffers from the maladies he is pointing out. There is no logic in forcing a talented permanent secretary to leave his office on his 60th birthday. The idea that he was capable of doing the job the night before and that, at the witching hour of midnight, he is not, is complete nonsense. So we lose not only the talent of judges in certain cases, but of civil servants as well.

Mr. Evans: I agree with my hon. Friend. It is wicked, irresponsible and wasteful. Why should we carry that model, which undoubtedly does no good for the civil service, into the sphere of the judiciary?

It is easy to say that one should be compelled to cease exercising one's talents at a particular age. For my constituents who are, say, small business men or farmers, there is no simple or easy retirement age. They make their own provision and choice, depending on their ability, health and resources.

What is being proposed is deeply deplorable, and it goes back to the tabloid opinion polls. The hon. Member for Brent, South was extremely careful—I admire and respect him for it—not actually to accuse but to say that what he was alleging was a matter of public perception. If the public are to make assessments of that degree of crudeness, then that degree of crude response is wrong, and we should say so.

I suspect—I trust that the Minister will give a categorical assurance on this—that the whole arrangement of a fixed retirement age of 70 is some scheme to balance the judiciary's gender or racial composition so as to make it more politically acceptable and more in touch with what is supposed to be popular opinion. We are talking about judges who are 69 or 68. It is hardly surprising that they do not reflect the gender or race composition of the population a generation younger than them.

Mr. John M. Taylor: I can provide the reassurance for which my hon. Friend just asked.

Mr. Evans: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. Although the hon. Member for Brent, South did not actually say so, he seemed to derive some apocalyptic joy at the prospect of making judges younger, both by appointment and by their upper retirement age. Ageism as a form of immoral discrimination remains wicked, but it is worse than that. Law is not like politics. Nor is it like medicine, in the sense that where there is a scientific discipline, science moves on and one must become up to date, or, for a politician, one must become in tune with what one's electors say.

Being a judge, particularly at the higher parts of the judiciary, is a hard matter of intellectual expertise and accumulated knowledge. That expertise and knowledge have made the judiciary in particular so much an ornament of our constitution. It would undermine standards to force able judges to retire at an earlier age.

When I was a law student in the 1960s, Lord Denning, then the Master of the Rolls, had been appointed to the High Court Bench in the year I was born—*[Interruption.]* I think I heard the hon. Member for Brent, South say from a sedentary position that he was too old. That was such an ignorant, prejudiced and erroneous comment as to be most uncharitable and unfair. Every law student in the 1960s read Lord Denning's judgments for the joy of their prose and the fact that they could be understood, unlike the judgments of certain other distinguished members of the judiciary. They could be understood very easily and appreciated for their sense and prudence. As we get older and become more conservative, I have no doubt that we sometimes think that intellectually Lord Denning cheated a little, but that is a different issue.

The Minister should have come before us with detailed proposals to give a college of judges the power to compel members of the judiciary over a certain age to submit to a medical examination, if their condition was physically deteriorating or if their mental faculties were publicly obviously failing. In such an event, some judgment should be available to require them to retire. But to suggest that, say, a permanent secretary or a member of the high judiciary should be cut off from exercising the talents that God has given him, at an arbitrary date selected purely on grounds of political prejudice, is obviously wrong.

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): As my hon. Friend is speaking of God-given gifts, may I ask him to agree that God, in his wisdom, has given certain gifts to members of the solicitors' branch of the profession? Does he agree that, whatever their gender, age or race, they should be part of the new judiciary?

Mr. Evans: Yes, I do not disagree with a word of that, though what I am saying is more fundamental. It is that from whatever part of the legal profession one may come, provided one is in good health and able to discharge one's duties to the best of one's ability, one should not arbitrarily be cut off and prevented from doing that. It cannot be right or moral to do otherwise, and I urge that the whole matter be reconsidered.

6.56 pm

Mr. Stephen Byers (Wallsend): Many members of the public watching the debate will wonder what priority the House gives to important issues of the day. We heard during the autumn statement that low-paid public sector workers would receive no more than a 1·5 per cent. increase in their pay next year. Today we are talking about the pensions—which are really just deferred pay—of judges earning in some cases more than £87,000 a year.

The House has not yet had the opportunity of discussing the public sector pay policy that is being imposed by the Government. Nor has it had the opportunity of looking at the effects of the reduction in the availability of legal aid, which will deny justice to many citizens. Even so, tonight we are considering the pensions and retirement age of judges.

Despite that, this is an important time to consider those issues because retirement and pensions are the framework within which the judicial structure will operate. They are the fixed points that will determine much of what goes below it, and the House must recognise—not in terms of the complacent language used by Conservative Members—that there is a crisis of confidence in our legal system today. There is prolonged delay, escalating costs and, as we know, a series of miscarriages of justices, and the judiciary has a heavy responsibility to bear in that respect.

It is not good enough to blame the police or juries. The judges have a responsibility, and public perception generally cannot be ignored. It is arrogance in the extreme to say that the public perception of how the judges operate

[Mr. Stephen Byers]

can be ignored. The House has a responsibility to recognise the deep feelings that members of the public have about the way in which judges conduct themselves and their business. Judges must bear a heavy responsibility.

Reference has already been made this evening to the occasional quirkiness of some members of the Bench. Odd comments often make for a good after-dinner speech. We have heard about the judge who does not know about Cliff Richard or a launderette. Such comments are faintly amusing, but they show how judges are often out of touch with modern living. That degree of being out of touch does not concern me as much as the way in which that being out of touch has an effect on the sentencing policy, which often occurs.

There is a responsibility on judges to acknowledge the depth of public feeling on certain issues when they come to pass sentence. The House lays down a maximum sentence which can be imposed in many cases. There are many cases in which judges, because they are out of touch, fail to reflect the way in which the public feels about some serious crimes. Let me give a few illustrations. We all know of the many cases of men being violent towards women. We know that lenient sentences are often imposed on people who are convicted of such crimes. If the roles are reversed and the woman, who has often been subjected to many years of violent beating from a husband or partner, commits a crime, often in a moment of passion, a heavy and harsh sentence is imposed on her. Such decisions lead to a lack of confidence in the judiciary.

The age of the judiciary is an important factor. There must be a cut-off point at which judges need to retire. They cannot sit on the Bench for ever, as the hon. Member for Monmouth (Mr. Evans) said, subject to an occasional medical check-up. There must be more to it. The Bill takes a small step towards reducing the retirement age of members of the Bench from 75 to 70 years. That small step is welcome, but I feel that it goes nowhere near far enough. I agree with the Bar Council suggestion that there should be a fixed retirement age of 65 for the Bench. That would be wholly appropriate.

The Bill not only reduces the age of retirement from 75 to 70; it gives the Lord Chancellor a discretion to extend annually the services of members of the judiciary who are aged from 70 to 75. I do not feel that that is appropriate. There must be a clear cut-off point. We must not put ourselves in the position in which the Lord Chancellor has the power to renew annually a judge's term of office on the Bench. We have been told that that degree of power is essential to fill the gaps in the judiciary that may be caused by sickness or by a call to lead an important national inquiry.

Retired judges will be brought back annually to fill the gaps. That is an absurd way of proceeding with an important part of public life. If Manchester United has a long injury list, the call does not go out to Bobby Charlton, Denis Law or Nobby Stiles to get their kit and turn up at Old Trafford. The same should apply to members of the judiciary. When the Prime Minister is unable to attend Question Time because of his trips around Europe, the call does not go out to Baroness Thatcher.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Can I take it from the hon. Member's remarks about recruiting from the cadre of the promising young players rather than yesterday's men—I followed his word picture, which was good and vivid—that he supports my earlier arguments in favour of the rationality and the sense that often lie behind part-time appointees sitting on the Bench in the higher courts? My argument is that one is training a cadre of younger people, who will be ready for promotion later, and addressing peaks and troughs in the availability of judicial officers. Does the hon. Gentleman favour that argument?

Mr. Byers: The Minister's problem is that he does not go far enough. Many Labour Members will argue that there must be a radical reform of the way in which we treat the judiciary in the United Kingdom. Half measures simply will not be enough.

Mr. Nicholls: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Byers: I will give way when I have finished advancing my argument. Under the present system there is a reluctance to recruit younger members to the Bench.

Mr. Barry Porter: One hears some funny things in this place over the years. To use the images of the hon. Member for Wallsend (Mr. Byers), he might remember that, as I recall, Stanley Matthews played for Stoke City at the age of 50 and that a man called Peter Shilton both manages and keeps goal for some remote southern team at present.

It is absolute nonsense to say that, because a man or a lady reaches a certain age, they are no longer any use. Good Lord! If that were the case, it would help the House to get rid of one or two hon. Members who I think should go. However, those hon. Members and many other people think that they can add something. The matter of age is sheer nonsense.

The Lord Chancellor of the day can examine the age of judges who are 70, 65 or whatever and decide whether to extend their service. That appears to be correct. All this stuff about gender, age and so on is nonsense.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): That was a very long intervention.

Mr. Porter: It was meant to be.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman might like to rephrase that.

Mr. Porter: I apologise. I was trying to make my point.

Mr. Byers: I had the misfortune to see Stanley Matthews play for Stoke City against Norwich when he was 50 years old. It was a sad occasion. I remember Stanley Matthews when he was much younger. He was a much better player than he was when he was 50. It was a sad sight to see. I would not want to see the same thing happen to members of the Bench.

The scale of the use of retired judges cannot be underestimated. Let me give some illustrations. In 1990, 500 judge days in the High Court and the Court of Appeal were dealt with by retired judges aged 75 years or older. More detailed figures show that in 1991, in the Court of Appeal alone, 100 judge days were covered by judges aged 80 years or older. I do not believe that such statistics will instil confidence in the judicial system.

Mr. Nicholls: The hon. Gentleman gives a homely metaphor about Stanley Matthews playing at the age of 50. The point is that arthritis may stop people playing football, but it does not stop them judging cases. In a civil

case of great complexity, it is possible that an 80-year-old judge will retain the expertise to understand the intellectual aspects of the case. The mere fact that he might have arthritic knees may stop him from playing football at the weekend, but it will not stop him doing a decent job. It is all about aptitude, not age.

Mr. Byers: The Minister will certainly have an interesting time with some of his hon. Friends in Committee.

I believe—I think that I am supported by my hon. Friends—that there must be a sensible cut-off point. Our view is that the cut-off point should be 65. The debate about where the cut-off should be will continue, although I hope that we will agree that there must be a cut-off point.

We should not endorse the principle in the Bill that the Lord Chancellor should have the power to renew annually the services of judges aged between 70 and 75. I know that it will be argued that we need that power and should maintain the retirement age beyond 65 as there are insufficient numbers of recruits of adequate ability to come to the Bench. That says more about the current method of appointment, and a careful scrutiny of the ability of those available might be helpful.

The chairman of the Bar Council, Lord Williams of Mostyn, has described the present system of appointing members to the Bench as "bizarre and farcical". The files may have been removed from the Kremlin, but they are still held in the Lord Chancellor's Department. Files are kept on individual barristers to determine whether they are suitable for service in the Bench. That cannot be acceptable in the 1990s, and has more to do with George Orwell's thought police of "1984". Behind the scenes consultations take place to decide whether an individual is appropriate to serve on the Bench.

It is little wonder that such a system creates a self-perpetuating elite and potential membership of the Bench. Human nature means that people appoint those in their own image—at the Bar they are male, middle-aged and middle class. The Bill does nothing to promote women in the judiciary. In many respects, the pension arrangements will make it more difficult for women who have had a break in their career at the Bar to bring up a family to obtain the pension entitlements normally due to them.

It is particularly disappointing that, when giving the Dimbleby lecture, the new Lord Chief Justice, Lord Taylor of Gosforth, took a complacent attitude towards the issue of appointments to the Bench. He refused to consider significant changes in the method of appointment. As my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) said, the new Lord Chief Justice suggested that there would be an opportunity for lay involvement in the consultation process. However, that does not go nearly far enough. Such cosmetic changes—like the removal of the wig—do not address the fundamental issue that the House should be considering this evening. Such cosmetic changes are more like moving the chairs on the deck of the Titanic and do nothing to address the real problem—the lack of confidence in the judiciary and our public legal system.

We must have a judicial appointments commission where posts are openly advertised and applicants can apply. We can learn lessons from the way in which the recent vacancy for the Director of Public Prosecutions was filled. It was advertised nationally and proper interviews were held. Applicants were invited to apply. If that process was good enough for the Director of Public Prosecutions, why was it not good enough for appointments to the Bench?

Mr. Hawkins: If the hon. Gentleman's proposals were carried to their logical conclusion, those considering such appointments, even were they to be advertised, would face a dilemma. He is suggesting that there could never be any confidential consultations. When making public judicial appointments, it is essential for those who know the candidates best to have some confidential consultations. For the hon. Gentleman to suggest that we should have a system of positive discrimination—which is what he is doing—will create such a dilemma.

Mr. Byers: Many hon. Members will be aware of the way in which most appointments take place. I see nothing wrong in the normal procedure whereby confidential references are provided for applicants. There is no reason why that process, which applies to many other parts of public life, should not apply to the Bench. People involved in the world of personnel management say that the present system of appointments to the Bench is, effectively, indefensible.

I was hoping that the comments that I have just made would be seen as constructive, not controversial. I shall now turn to the contentious part of my speech. I hope that the House will consider whether we should continue with the traditional Anglo-Saxon method of appointing judges from the pool of existing practitioners, advocates or legal advisors. We are always told that we should move closer to Europe, so perhaps we should look at the continental system, where graduates go straight into judicial training. Advocates' confrontational skills—often demonstrated in the Chamber—are not best suited to members of the Bench, who should be able to defuse emotions and listen to what is said. Often, such skills are not to be found in members of the Bar.

Mr. Sweeney: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the best way to learn how courts work and develop the skills required to serve effectively as a member of the judiciary is through the practical experience of being an advocate, acting either for the plaintiff or the defendant—prosecuting or defending? There is no way in which simply by studying books or anything else one can develop the level of training required to preside over the British legal system.

Mr. Byers: I understand the hon. Gentleman's argument, which is used in favour of the present method of appointing members to the Bench. However, I am not talking about a graduate studying the appropriate books and immediately taking up a place on the Bench. As I understand it, the position throughout the continent is that trainees sit with existing judges for a long period, and it is only when they have been trained effectively and properly that they sit as judges.

Mr. Boateng: Does my hon. Friend agree that we would not necessarily have to adopt fully the continental approach in order to attract people to the judiciary from academic life? A number of recent appointments to the silk from academic life have shown only too clearly that that sector of legal life and the body of expert lawyers in this country could be a fruitful source of members of the judiciary at various levels. With appropriate judicial

[Mr. Boateng]

training, the objections of the hon. Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Mr. Sweeney)—which I understand—could readily be overcome.

Mr. Byers: I agree with my hon. Friend, and such a system could form part of the process of trying to broaden the way in which judges are appointed. I think that all hon. Members are genuinely concerned that judges are recruited from a narrow academic and social background, which is not helpful in promoting public confidence in the legal system—a desire shared by all hon. Members.

The judiciary are the one remaining sector of public service that has not been reformed, at least in this century; every other sector seems to have undergone reforms of one description or another. The judicial system is based on secret appointments, and there is no monitoring of performance and no appraisal scheme for individual judges. We should welcome initiatives to correct those faults.

The judiciary are given enormous powers. They are the guardians of our liberty; they should protect us against abuse by the state and defend the weak against the strong. In recent years a number of well-known cases have demonstrated that the judiciary have for one reason or another failed to achieve those objectives. The Bill provides an opportunity for radical reform of the judiciary. That refom is badly needed. If the House fails to seize the opportunity provided by the Bill, it will rightly stand condemned.

7.19 pm

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): I heard what the hon. Member for Wallsend (Mr. Byers) said. What came across clear and strong was that he spoke with great sincerity but, as someone who has practised in both the criminal and civil courts, I do not recognise the picture he paints. It is easy to say, as he did a moment ago, that the history of recent times is about the judiciary having made wrong decisons, not standing up for the rights of the weak and not protecting people against an over-mighty state, but no matter how many times one says it, it is not true.

Any criminal practitioner can tell us what has being going on in recent years. The balance of advantage has moved so much in favour of the defendant from society, in whose name essentially we prosecute, that policemen bend the law. They should not do that. When they are caught doing it, they are rightly prosecuted and condemned, but the House has got the balance wrong.

One of the most demeaning and unpleasant experiences is having to go down to a cell to represent an incorrigible criminal who knows his trade and knows that all he has to do is keep his mouth shut for 24 hours and he will be away scot free. When we have a system like that, the police will break the rules and there will be miscarriages of justice.

It is a tribute to the judiciary that, very much against their basic inclinations, they have been able to see the way in which the law has been abused in certain cases, and have been prepared to step in and deal with it. One could expand on that at greater length on other occasions. The hon. Member for Wallsend believes that the present state of affairs has been caused by the fact that the judiciary are drawn from the middle classes. Of course they are. They have professional qualifications. That makes them middle class. It does not make them Conservative. They may be barking Marxists, but they are certainly middle class. To say that there are problems because the judiciary are drawn from the middle class is not a contribution of thought but an exercise in sloganisation.

My hon. Friend the Minister must be getting troubled because of the interjections from myself and from my hon. Friend the Member for Monmouth (Mr. Evans). I suspect he may be feeling that there is a vote around the corner, or he must be saying to himself, in the light of the contribution from my hon. Friend and the contribution that I intend to make: "How on earth can they with a clear conscience vote for the Bill?" It is inevitable in the nature of these things that one concentrates on the more controversial aspects. In many ways, this is a splendid Bill, which I will have no difficulty in supporting. Having said that, I should perhaps concentrate for a moment on some of the things which, had they been in a Bill in isolation, might have caused one to say to the Lord Commissioner, "I would like the evening off."

I want to quote what my noble and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor said when introducing the measure, which has interesting implications:

> "It is in the interests of all of us in a free society that our judges should be men and women of the highest calibre, able and willing to carry out the heavy public duties which we expect of them. It is right, therefore, that the pension Parliament provides to our judges should be sufficiently substantial to attract, or at least not deter, those candidates best fitted to serve."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 16 June 1992; Vol. 538, c. 119.]

He went on to set that in the context of salaries as well as pensions.

That is an excellent principle for remunerating officers of the state in the person of judges. The Minister might feel sad because the same principle is not applied to ministerial salaries. We have got to the stage when ministerial salaries are not fixed with any relationship to what might be necessary to bring people in. We have achieved a state of affairs in which if someone is prepared to serve as a Minister, it may be because, like my hon. Friend, he is a man of vast but discreet wealth. Because the salary is so niggardly, we are fast approaching the alternative possibility that some people may get a pay rise when elevated to the position of Minister.

That is a troubling aspect. It is a pity that my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench have not been as successful as the judiciary. Much has been said in the debate about the age at which judges should retire. There seems to have been an assumption that, at a certain point in time, one can look at a person, be he a footballer, a Minister, a permanent under-secretary or a judge, and say that on one day he is capable of performing satisfactorily and the next he is not. I do not understand that.

Nor do I understand the references made in another place apparently in justification of an automatic cut-off date for the appointment for a judge. My noble and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor referred to three score years and ten. Like the devil, I can quote the Bible for my own purposes. I recognised the reference, but in biblical times three score years and ten was a good innings—it was over the top as an innings. These days, people of three score years and ten are capable of running the London marathon. It makes me feel ill even to contemplate them doing it. In biblical times, three score years and ten might have been a great age, but it is no great age today.

Lord Wigoder also made an interesting contribution in another place when he said that, essentially, we should be

going along with a common retirement age for judges, because it would be in accordance with the current trend. I am fed up, sick and tired of fashion and current trends. The idea that one can justify a course of action because it is fashionable is ludicrous.

On a more serious note, one problem with fashion and current trends is that it has obliged Her Majesty the Queen to offer something in terms of taxation which, had she been properly defended in public, would never have happened. It is dangerous to base legislation and social attitudes on what is known in our former colonies as a politically correct attitude.

I accept that it may be politically correct to support a cut-off age for judges, but my hon. Friend the Minister, in a masterful and elegant contribution, glided around the point beautifully. To his credit, one never heard the justification for judges having to retire at a certain age.

It may be worth while dealing for a moment with why judges have to be older before they can be recruited to the bench. One could give a competent law graduate or newly qualified solicitor or barrister a pile of papers and say, "That was the evidence. How does the law apply?" That is an ordinary, intellectual exercise that any young law student should be able to do.

That is not where the skill is involved on the bench. A member of the judiciary needs the ability to weigh up evidence. That means knowing something about human nature. It means having spent years listening to people telling the story in the cells, hearing them give the same evidence in examination-in-chief and cross-examining them. It is all about the evaluation of evidence. Applying the law is the easy bit: that is straightforward.

What we look for in the judiciary, be it at stipendary magistrate level or in the House of Lords, is the ability to sift, understand and weigh up. The bit at the end where the law is applied is the easiest. It is in the very nature of things that we cannot get that experience unless we have people with years behind them.

What is the justification for saying that, even if we allow for that, there must be an age cut-off? That is an ism. It is ageism. I have been present at debates in the House when there have been howls of indignation from the Opposition about sexism and ageism. I remember the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) once accusing me of being a sizeist because some of us were urging him to stand up, and it turned out that he was standing. Isms are fashionable, but apparently ageism used to be a crime. It used not to be politically correct, but in some way it is politically correct now for judges.

It is ridiculous to draw an analogy with sporting occasions. I have already made the point, and I will not labour it, but a person could give judgment in a complicated civil case even if he had an arthritic hip, yet he would not be much good playing for Wolves, Accrington Stanley or the local football club. It is all about aptitude.

One of the saddest things I ever heard was when I was a Minister in the Department of Employment. I spent a lot of time going round the country, preaching to people that ageism was wrong, that it destroyed a valuable national resource—that it was inhuman and unjust. One chap came to me at a training scheme that I had launched and told me about an application that he had filled in for a job as a van driver. The age limit for the job was 35, and he had lied because his age was 37.

At the interview, he admitted what he had done and they refused to interview him for the job. He asked why they had an age limit and was told that he needed to be fit, and that someone as near 40 as he was could not be fit. He asked them if they knew how he had passed his time recently. He was, he told them, an internationally acclaimed fell runner. Here was a man who had the aptitude for a job and who was sufficiently fit to do it; the fact that his age told against him was completely irrelevant, and it ought to be the same with the judiciary.

If it is felt that nevertheless one should be able to retire a judge on the ground of extreme age, then in a sense the mechanism is already in the Bill—although, on this part of the Bill, it weakens the justification for it, because it is possible for the Lord Chancellor to extend the period of service in certain circumstances if he feels that there is a particular need for a judge to perform a certain function. It would be straightforward enough—perhaps this point will emerge in Committee—to say that there should be a cut-off at the age of 70 but that the Lord Chancellor may extend that in general terms. But the presumption that, once one reaches that age, one is incapable of doing the job is not borne out by the evidence.

We know what the problem is and where it comes from. It is very fashionable to attack judges because they are not female or black or disabled or because they are seen to come from a middle-class background. It is very easy to do that, but we should not be giving in to that sort of pressure. I must tell the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) that I am completely underwhelmed by the fact that the Law Society has carried out a survey into people's perceptions. There is a degree to which hon. Members are supposed to lead and not merely follow. I never thought that I would hear from someone who presumably, however unrealistically, aspires to office with the great cry, "I am their leader. I must follow them."

Yes, the public perception of members of the judiciary is that they are all ancient, creaking creatures from the upper middle class and wearing wigs, but that is because of the sustained assault made on the judiciary for a number of years in popular society, and very often it is from the Opposition Benches that we hear these comments on the judiciary. The hon. Member for Brent, South and I would have been law students at more or less the same time, in the 1960s and early 1970s. I remember the contributions of the then Member for Ebbw Vale, Michael Foot, making slashing attacks on the judiciary; he turned the whole of his considerable oratory on them. If one keeps on telling the public that, every now and again, when there is a miscarriage of justice, it must be the judge's fault because he does not come from a "right on" background, in the end they will accept it.

How would the hon. Member for Brent, South feel if he were told at some constituency function that a tabloid newspaper had just done a study on the public's perception of the work of hon. Members? I have no doubt that such a study would ask whether people thought that Members of Parliament did not work hard and were overpaid. The people would no doubt reply in the affirmative, adding that hon. Members did not understand what it was like to live in the real world. Such a survey would be completely wrong about the way in which hon. Members on both sides of the House carry out their functions.

Are we supposed just to accept that this is what the public think? Surely we should try to do something about informing the debate. I would have liked to hear the hon. Member, when he produced that survey, make a point of saying that such a perception of the judiciary was not

[Mr. Patrick Nicholls]

correct, that there was a great deal more to it, and that people's image of the judiciary is simply not true, but there was no element of that at all.

Mr. Boateng: Having failed to find any party political rancour in any of the contributions from the Opposition side of the House, the hon. Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) decides, quite arbitrarily, to inject some himself, and I resent that. His tone is totally uncalled for.

Will he respond to this? His noble and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor, who, after all, stands at the pinnacle of our common profession, has made clear time after time, and sought in a number of his appointments creditably to reflect the importance he attaches to underpinning public confidence in the judiciary, by making sure that it contains suitably qualified women and suitably qualified people drawn from ethnic minorities. He responds positively to what he rightly sees as a public perception, one that threatens to undermine the very institution that we should all be seeking to build up and support. There is absolutely nothing wrong in being concerned about how the public perceive those institutions which we should be in the business not only of protecting but of developing.

Mr. Nicholls: The hon. Member actually makes my point for me. Obviously, people who are suitably qualified should not be barred from being elevated to the Bench because they come from an ethnic minority or because they are female. Yet the hon. Gentleman says that they should be barried barred from going to the Bench if they happen to have been born an inappropriate number of years before the cut-off date he wants. That is the point that I am making to the hon. Gentleman.

I will say something else to him as well, and if he wants to put it down to party political rancour it is very much a question of wearing the cap if it fits: the sustained attack on the nature and composition of the judiciary has given the public a perception of the way in which our legal system works which is completely untrue. He and I, as members of the legal profession and as hon. Members, have a duty not merely to accept what the public feel but to try to inform them as well.

I do not for one moment understand the reasoning or logic in saying that, simply because someone is born before a particular date, he is incapable of carrying out his functions.

When one talks about the public confidence, one must bear in mind that the public are a very complex body of people—young, old, members of different classes, people of particular intelligence and of none. In this country, the population are increasingly elderly, over the state retirement age. It is profoundly unhealthy to be saying to people over the age of 65, as the hon. Gentleman would have us say, that, while they are quite capable of going to court as a defendant or as a litigant, when it comes to people in their age bracket being competent in a judicial capacity, out they must go.

It is entirely wrong that magistrates are moved on to the reserve list at the age of 65. What we should be looking for is the best person for the job—there, I am with the hon. Member for Brent, South entirely. I do not want to see any member of society who is properly qualified to perform a judicial office being barred from doing it. Speaking personally, however, I find it disturbing that we shall now see age as the only criterion. I hear and see no evidence for it. All I hear is this constant, carping cry from the public that they must be too old. It is time we did our job—which is to lead, not simply to follow.

7.37 pm

Mr. Mike O'Brien (Warwickshire, North): Hearing the hon. Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls), I wondered whether I had listened to a different debate earlier. What my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) said could in no way be regarded as a sustained attack on the judiciary. It was an attempt to address constructively public concern about the judiciary. If the hon. Member for Teignbridge will not recognise that there are those public concerns in today's society, he will not address them and he will not change things. Asserting that everything is wonderful in the judiciary is not true. It simply is the case that there are wide grounds for reform within the judiciary today.

Let me turn to the comments of the hon. Member for Monmouth (Mr. Evans). He said that pensions for judges were not generous. Let him tell that to my constituents, especially the pensioners who have worked hard, many of them having served their country in wartime, many of them professionally qualified, for example, nurses or teachers, who are having to survive on pensions which are much lower than those being given to judges.

Mr. Roger Evans: I did not say that the provision for judges was not generous but that it was not generous compared to the provision made for US Supreme Court judges, or for judges in Canada and Australia.

Mr. O'Brien: I am obliged to the hon. Gentleman, but he must accept that the money offered to judges on retirement is generous when compared to the money offered to people who receive state pensions or pensions in almost any other profession.

On retirement, each High Court judge is likely to receive from the taxpayer a full financial package that is not far off £1 million. That is not my figure but has been calculated by the international lawyers' organisation, Justice, which recently published a report on judges' payments and pensions. Part of the package is a large sum, in excess of £80,000, on retirement, and the pension received yearly after that is in excess of £40,000.

Inquiries by Justice show that the purchase of an annuity from an insurance company to give a similar yearly pension would cost £839,000, so the value of a judge's salary plus the cost of purchasing his annuity gives him a salary package, in addition to the pension package, of more than £140,000. Given the economic hardships now facing this country, to give judges such large pension and salary packages is a very generous gift and is difficult to justify.

The Lord Chancellor seeks to justify that high salary and pension package on the basis that those appointed are at the peak of their career and could earn larger incomes outside of the judiciary. That is arguable when it comes to High Court judges, whose average net income in 1992 was some £220,000 per annum for the three years preceding the appointment. However, according to Justice, circuit judges' average net earnings in private practice are often as little as £75,000. The package available is worth less than £1 million but not massively so. Clearly, that is a lucrative incentive for them to seek appointment. That is especially

so given the fact that advocates' earnings beyond their peak of about 55 or 60 years of age will not necessarily continue to rise.

I note the provisions in clause 18 and the Minister's comments, but it is now time to move beyond the pension schemes being made available. As my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, South said, it is time to look at a fully contributory pension scheme possibly arranged by the judge himself and possibly privately—a privatised pension scheme, if you will.

Those appointed as judges should be able to continue with pension schemes started, like any other professional person, in their 20s or 30s. Their appointment to the Bench should enable them to receive a salary, with an employer's contribution that is openly stated to the public, commensurate with continued payment into a pension scheme of their own. The idea that a barrister can fail to make any contributions to a scheme, then become a judge and serve 15 or 20 years, and come out of it with a package of almost £1 million is difficult to justify to any hard-working constituent who ends up with a small pension.

Nobody at any level should be encouraged to be a judge simply to get a pension. I do not accept the Minister's argument that the pension scheme contains no incentive to become a judge. At that level, there is an incentive.

Mr. John M. Taylor: I have been following the hon. Gentleman's remarks, which, as usual, are well thought out, although that does not mean that I agree with them all. May I clarify my earlier comments? Anyone who makes a decision about a major promotion step within his or her career will look at the pension implications. However, I sincerely believe that few decisions are made for or against a promotion on the grounds of inhibition or encouragement by the pension. The main decision on whether to accept a promotion will be made in its own right and the pension will be considered in the margin as a serious and important element, but it will not be decisive.

Mr. O'Brien: Good judges will not come to their post by reason of seeking a pension, but I know from personal experience in practice that some lawyers believe that being a judge will provide them with a good pension. I doubt whether they will make good judges, but I have heard counsel aspire to that position and comment that the pension was very good if they reached it.

Furthermore, a judge should not be forced to stay in post beyond his sell-by date to clock up 15 or 20 years simply to get his full pension. When the Bill was being drafted, a much more fundamental look should have been taken at how judges' pensions are dealt with. As Justice says in its report:

"the pensions arrangements for the Judiciary predate today's sophisticated pension arrangements".

Barristers who seek to become judges now have far more options on how to proceed.

As Lord Wigoder said in another place, before going to the Bench many people have been in a position to make some contribution towards their own and their families' future. That should be allowed to continue on a contributory basis, not on the basis now being suggested.

I question the claim that the Lord Chancellor made in another place that we need those pensions to attract judges. We need judges who are dedicated to the judicial process and the concept of justice, not motivated by a fat and wealthy retirement. Good judges become good judges for better reasons than a pension, but bad judges may well become bad judges for shorter hours, status and possibly a pension.

The Bill should put in place arrangements that allow flexibility and encourage appropriate persons to accept part-time and possibly term appointments, as my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, South suggested. Sadly, the Bill does not even attempt to do that.

Mr. Hawkins: May I suggest that the concern is not so much as the hon. Gentleman described, but rather that some of the most able potential judges might be deterred if the pensions arrangements are not good enough? Many Conservative Members are worried not about people accepting judgeships and judicial appointments because of the pensions, but about the risk of losing the best potential judges.

Mr. O'Brien: A full contributory pension scheme would avoid all those problems and ensure that, when a person decides whether to be a judge, the question of pensions simply does not arise because he has the option, with a salary that would allow him that option, to decide what sort of pension scheme he wants. It is not a question whether the pension scheme on offer from the state is adequate. An entirely contributory pension scheme would avoid the question of the 20-year rule and it would end any encouragement in the Bill for judges to remain until they are 70 years old. It is broadly accepted in Britain that 65 is an age beyond which retirement is appropriate. A citizen should not be judged by a person who is beyond the age commonly regarded, rightly or wrongly, as an age when the ability to work can become impaired.

To say that a judge has special skills and knowledge in justification is to demean our constituents—engineers, teachers, civil servants and others—who do intellectual work, all of whom accept the logic of a retirement age of 65. It is arguable that at 70 a judge is more likely than a man of 60 of 65 to be out of touch with a society whose members he has to judge.

It is also arguable that a later retiring age increases the difficulty of determining which judges are up to the exacting standards of health and mental capacity required of judges who determine serious cases involving civil liberty. At a time when we are looking at equalising retiring ages for men and women, perhaps at an age lower than 65, it cannot be right to distinguish judges as having qualities of endurance not possessed by any other group in society.

The clause allowing the recall of judges over the age of 70 is offensive. No man should be judged by a person beyond the age at which he should have retired. Litigants are entitled to be judged by a person in whom society has confidence. Many people beyond 70 are fit and mentally agile, but not all are in that happy condition. A judge is too important a figure to allow any question of capacity to be raised.

We need the attitudes and abilities of a younger, more in-touch judiciary. New blood prevents the judiciary from becoming stale and out of touch. If, instead of trying to encourage new blood, every time we need someone to judge a case we bring back someone who ought not to be sitting any longer, the judiciary will be much more out of touch than they are seen to be, even today.

Attitudes of members of the public to the judiciary have been revealed in a survey. There are few other surveys of

[Mr. O'Brien]

that kind of which I am aware. It reflects what most hon. Members will find when talking to their constituents and to other members of the public—that there is in Britain today a concern about the judiciary who are perceived as being out of touch.

Whether judges are out of touch is not the point. That it the perception and it has to be addressed. Simply asserting that the public have it wrong does not address the central question of that perception and the difficulties that have arisen. That perception has been caused by a number of past injustices that have been mentioned. The public clearly think that too many judges are too old, male, white and out of touch.

Dr. Liam Fox (Woodspring): As a matter of consistency, would the hon. Gentleman advocate that the maximum age of jurors should also be reduced to 65?

Mr. O'Brien: I see no reason why someone over 65 should sit on a jury.

The Lord Chancellor has announced his intention to appoint more judges soon, including six new judges for the Court of Appeal, criminal division, and a number of High Court judges, because, as he said this week, we are short of judges. Yet the cost of judges is a huge drain on public funds. How can we be expected to sanction and tolerate such a large expenditure when those in receipt of public money are appointed by a system shrouded in secrecy with minimal input from the taxpayers' elected representatives? If new judges are to be appointed, the system of appointment must be changed.

As has already been said, a judicial appointments commission has been proposed by the Law Society, the Bar and Justice in its recent report on the judiciary. They show how that can be implemented in practice. It must include lay members, people who can look beyond the legal profession and its middle-class, middle-age and middle-minded attitudes, bringing a new influence and a wider perspective from other areas of life to the appointment of people who will have such a decisive effect on many people's liberty and lives.

That commission should set clear criteria for appointments, which should be openly advertised. It should use modern selective methods and tests and open the judiciary not only to solicitors and employed lawyers, but, as has already been said, to academic lawyers, many of whom have a valuable contribution to make. Most importantly, we need to open the judiciary to more women, members of ethnic minorities and younger people.

The Lord Chancellor's glib observations earlier this week about the lack of women judges is challenged by the Justice report which says that women are available now for appointment, but they are not being appointed. The present system of appointment relies much too heavily on the views of serving judges. The criteria for selection are woolly and imprecise. If the private sector used such criteria to appoint managers, it would be ridiculed.

What on earth does "having a sound temperament" mean? What does "having standing" mean in practice? It sounds good, but does it not mean to the selectors who meet in secret conclave that the candidate is of a similar style to them—a white, male advocate?

When Lord Lane was under criticism last year, a judge was asked what made a good judge. His reply was, "He is a jolly good chap. We were at Shrewsbury together." That sums up many of the attitudes that the public find worrying. Conservative Members may suggest that such attitudes are wrongly held by the public, but all too often judges substantiate and reinforce those attitudes by such comments.

My experience of judges, shared by many people of my background, is that they are out of touch with the people with whom they deal. I am not suggesting that today's judges are bad judges. The quality of judges has improved under this Lord Chancellor. Better candidates have come forward and have become judges. But there is much to be done and much that is not being addressed.

My hon. Friend the Member for Brent, South has already asked why one has to be an advocate in order to be a judge. Being a good advocate does not mean that a person has suitable judicial standards and independence.

Mr. Streeter: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that the real skill of being an advocate is not necessarily being able to string together a fine sentence, but having clarity of thought in discerning the real issues from the peripheral issues, separating the wood from the trees—exactly the same skill that is required to be an effective judge?

Mr. O'Brien: Exactly the same skill that is required to be an effective university law professor—to be able to put forward a clear argument and be able to say what the law and the facts of the case should lead to. Therefore, a university law professor, with proper training—no one disputes that that is necessary—could be an entirely appropriate person to become a judge. The same applies to an employed lawyer, many of whom are excluded from the judiciary.

Many secret files contain comments by judges who are now dead and can no longer be questioned about what they said about a barrister who appeared before them many years ago. Such records should not influence decisions about persons who are to be appointed to the judiciary. That smacks of the masonic conclaves of centuries past, rather than of the functioning of a modern, democratic European state. That system also fails to produce judges in whom the public have confidence. A commission has the potential for bringing judicial appointments up to date and for making the system open and understandable. It would ensure a wider range of judges and create a more acceptable judiciary enjoying wider public support.

There is no point in improving the judiciary's pension arrangements if access to justice is to be damaged by destroying the legal aid system. The autumn statement reduced access to justice for 10 million people. As a solicitor, I know that those affected will include women seeking injunctions in cases of domestic violence and defendants, who, as a consequence of the lack of legal aid, will be unable to prepare an effective defence.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The hon. Gentleman claims that legal aid will be denied to a rather large number of people. Last year, only 250,000 people litigated with the assistance of legal aid. I do not know how the hon. Gentleman produces a 10 million fall-out from a quarter of a million participants. Furthermore, by the admission of Labour's spokesman in another place, Lord Williams of Mostyn, chairman of the Bar Council,

"we ought to bear in mind that the provision of legal aid and assistance at public expense is almost unique to this"—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 12 November 1992, Vol. 540, c. 604.]—

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. This debate has nothing to do with legal aid.

Mr. Taylor: If I may say so in the vernacular, Mr. Deputy Speaker—he started it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Perhaps the hon. Member for Warwickshire, North (Mr. O'Brien) will also note my remarks.

Mr. O'Brien: I will, Mr. Deputy Speaker. However, the Minister did not accurately report my remark. I did not make the claim that he ascribed to me but spoke of access to justice being reduced for 10 million people. I reiterate that assertion, and could defend it at great length—but in deference to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will not do so.

This debate could be effectively continued by the Opposition on another day, but I conclude by observing that the Bill provided an opportunity comprehensively to reform not only pensions but the judiciary. It offered a chance to create the basis of judicial stewardship into the next century, but that chance has been flunked.

The Bill contains the whiff of a Government in trouble and unwilling to take on the real need for judicial reform —unwilling to take on the judges when they should be taken on, to bring about reform and to establish a proper judiciary for the centuries to follow. My contention and that of my right hon. and hon. Friends is that the Bill is a missed opportunity to provide the House and this country with the opportunity to create a judiciary in which the public could have confidence.

The Bill does not go far enough in considering areas that it ought to have examined, and its provisions fail to measure up to an adequate presentation of either the pension needs of judges or of the ways of improving their overall quality.

8.4 pm

Sir Ivan Lawrence (Burton): In deference to the plea for ecumenicalism made by the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) I will forebear from attacking the hon. Member for Warwickshire, North (Mr. O'Brien)—preferring to attack instead my hon. Friend the Minister. I begin by declaring my interest—although no other hon. Member has done so—as a practising barrister, a recorder, a Bencher, the chairman of the all-party barristers group, the Chairman of the Home Affairs Select Committee, which has responsibility for monitoring the Lord Chancellor's Department, and the chairman of the Conservative Back Bench home and legal committees. I apologise. Perhaps I should declare also that I have not the slightest interest in becoming a High Court judge, circuit judge, stipendiary, or anything else. If I had such a desire, probably I would not dare to speak in this debate —and certainly I would not dare to attack my hon. Friend the Minister.

Lawyers and their complicated pension arrangements are of course of enormous interest to the House, which explains why so many hon. Members are present—although the concentration of quality rather than quantity has allowed us to have a sensible and informed debate, which I am sure will continue. So much so, the Whips actually asked me not to be as hurried with my remarks as I am wont to be, but I will confine them to the purport of the Bill and not wander more widely over the attractive fields of legal aid.

I agree with the hon. Member for Brent, South that this is an opportune moment to debate the judges whose judgments, speeches, eating habits and dress are daily paraded before us by the media. There has been much ill-informed criticism of judges tonight, but I understand why the public find it confusing when they see a man dressed in a wig and a crimson dress trimmed with lace and fur, and wearing silk stockings sentencing a transvestite to community service. I myself would prefer to see fewer transvestites and rather more of the judges dressed like that.

My hon. Friend the Minister made a valiant, eloquent and loyal attempt to present the Bill as a thoroughly splendid measure that will in some way strengthen the judiciary and respect for the integrity of British justice. There was no hint in his speech of it being manifestly another socially structured measure that has the dead and deadly hand of the Treasury all over it.

There was no hint from my hon. Friend either that nearly all judges, leading barristers, the Lord Chief Justice of England and my noble and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor's predecessor deplore the Bill's pension arrangements.

The Bill is not all bad. It is time that pension arrangements were put on a unified basis so that the same rules apply to all judges—that is sensible. It is time that, as judges climb the ladder to higher office, their pensions have more relevance to their end income at the peak of their judicial career, than to the lower office that they have held —which is not the position with some pensions today.

It is probably time also that judges were younger. However, we must be careful not to denude the practising Bar of all its best and most experienced middle-aged practitioners. Without them, some of the long and complicated cases that are conducted in our courts might be even greater nightmares. There is something to be said for the skill and experience of the highly practised members of the Bar who conduct cases with such professionalism.

There is also much that is wrong with the Bill. We need more High Court judges, but how on earth does my hon. Friend the Minister expect to attract the best men and women if they are to lose not only substantial amounts of their earnings as they descend from the higher earnings of the Bar to the lower earnings of the judiciary, but the substantial amount of the money that they would have been able to leave to their families when the pressures of the job finally take their toll, had they not accepted the pensions that will be paid to them as judges when the Bill becomes law? If the retirement age is reduced from 75 to 70, which is probably a good idea, we should not extend the time served before pensions fall due from 15 to 20 years.

Mr. John M. Taylor: I must tell my hon. and learned Friend, who is making his remarks with his usual felicity and force, that lengthening the tax privileged accrual from 15 to 20 years is an inevitable consequence of the Finance Acts of 1987 and 1989. The Lord Chancellor's Department has no option. We should need primary legislation to make judges subject to a separate tax regime from that of

[Mr. John M. Taylor]

the citizens over whom they exercise their wisdom. We are merely bringing judges' tax provisions into line with general law.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: The Treasury is responsible for the financial legislation that makes the Bill necessary, yet it refuses to allow an exemption whereby judges can have a better pension than is promised in the Bill. No fair comparison can be made between those who accrue an occupational pension over 40 years, which brings them within the purview of the Income Tax Acts, and judges who have only 15 or 20 years' service in which to accrue their pensions. Neither my hon. Friend the Minister nor our noble Friend the Lord Chancellor seems fully to have grasped that distinction.

Mr. Taylor: In his successful years in practice prior to appointment, a judge can build up substantial pension rights in private schemes, which are not derogated from when he embarks on the 20 years pensionable accrual. That remains a privilege of judges, who can add their private pension to their public pension and can buy added years when in public service. They are in a better position, even with a 20-year accrual, than their fellow citizens.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: My hon. Friend is misleading himself. The reality of life at the Bar is different from what he supposes. I shall address that when I come to it in my orderly remarks.

Five things will happen if this approach to the pensions of judges is allowed. First, barristers and solicitors who want to become judges in their fifties will not want to do so because they will not be able to have enough years to secure the full half-pay-on-retirement pension to which they would otherwise be entitled. Secondly, there will be more judges in their forties who may not have the experience, wisdom or gravitas necessary to command respect, which the judiciary still ought to have in our courts. Thirdly, judges may be pretty tired after 15 years sitting on the Bench, but now they will have to say to themselves, "I had better soldier on for another five years, or I will not get my full pension." From my own experience of judges who have soldiered on past the 20 years, I am not sure that that is likely to add significantly to the quality of justice.

Fourthly, I was very interested in the confident assertion of my hon. Friend the Minister—as confident as his last assertion—that the Bill will attract more women of quality. Will it? As I understand the Government's defence to the attack on the pensions provisions of the Bill, which the Minister has just advanced again, it is that members of the Bar and the solicitors' profession will be able to augment their modest judicial pension with the pension contributions that they have been able to accrue as practitioners in the good years.

But how many good years will there have been before the practitioner is appointed to the Bench in his or her forties? We get low earnings at the Bar in our twenties, higher earnings in our thirties, but we have to pay for our children's education at school and university, take out mortgages and look after our elderly parents. Then, just as we enter our forties and are able to save for our futures and our families' futures, my hon. Friend decides that we should be obliged, if we are so inclined, to take judicial appointment.

In practice, it does not happen. These days, there is not the wealth available in the pockets of 30-year-old solicitors and barristers that allows them to increase their pension contributions. The Bill ensures that, if they want to get a 20-year pension accrual and retire at 70, they must be a judge by the time they are 50.

What chance has the professional woman of building up a respectable top-up capability when she has to take more time off than a man to bear, nurture and bring up children? How many more women would want to become judges if it would deliver low financial prospects for the family? My hon. Friend has it the wrong way round. The Bill will deter and therefore reduce the number of women who might otherwise go to the Bench, not increase it.

Fifthly, at the other end of the judicial scale, there will be fewer permanent judges, and so more need to bring back in a temporary capacity those who are over 70 but not yet 75. They will be paid less, of course, which will please the Treasury. Those five reasons show why the pension provisions of the Bill will go entirely in the wrong direction.

In his Second Reading speech in another place, my noble friend the Lord Chancellor said:

"the pension Parliament provides to our judges should be sufficiently substantial to attract, or at least not deter, those candidates best fitted to serve."

That was a very wise and sensible pronouncement. Let us consider what some of the leading judges and lawyers in the land had to say about the Bill.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): In England.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: I am not sure whether there are any Scotsmen, I say with deference to my hon. and learned Friend, in the list to which I am about to refer.

Lord Hailsham, the Lord Chancellor's very eminent and distinguished predecessor, said:

"if one is to recruit adequate judges on a sufficient scale to meet the vastly increasing demands of the courts and tribunals and is limited to a pool that was created 20 years ago, one has to be a little careful before one starts messing about with the retirement age, the employment of retired judges, and the accrual of pension."

The former Master of the Rolls said:

"The major vice of this Bill is the combination of a reduction in the retiring age to 70 and the increase in the full term of office to 20 years. The message must be that if you accept judicial office, you are expected to serve for 20 years. That is far too long if the judge is not promoted or given different work."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 16 June 1992; Vol. 538, cc. 119, 146-47, 149.]

Lord Ackner, one of the great Lords of Appeal, who knows what he is talking about——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sure that the hon. and learned Gentleman is aware that he is not supposed to quote from debates in another place unless he is quoting the Minister.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: I am referring to what was said. I am not directly quoting; I am paraphrasing, or attempting to do so—perhaps not very well. Lord Ackner told us that there was

"an element of wholly unacceptable hypocrisy"—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 16 June 1992; Vol. 538, c. 157.]

those were his words—in proposing what appeared at first to be radical and sensible legislation and then, by a species of back-door mechanism, undermining its very purpose.

Finally, the Lord Chief Justice of England said that he was concerned that, if the 15-year period were extended to 20 years, not only would the policy of having a younger

judiciary, at which parts of the Bill are aimed and which he applauded, be undermined; there would be serious problems of recruitment, judicial staleness and injustice. He then invited the Government to reconsider that provision.

Those are the great men who know what they are talking about. They are great men upon whom the dead hand of the Treasury does not fall, and they take issue with my hon. Friend the Minister.

The pensions issue may be marginal, but added to the fact that judges receive lower pay than practitioners, that issue becomes crucially marginal. For many people the deciding point is the pension—that is what their Lordships are all saying, and I invite my hon. Friend to take it seriously.

If one steps back and takes a good long look at the Bill, one realises that the combined effect of the retirement and pension proposals will achieve the opposite of what is claimed for them. Fewer of the best and most skilful practitioners will want to serve as judges. Fewer women will want to become judges. Judges will tend to be either younger when they come into the judiciary, or too old when they are called back to serve in a temporary capacity.

If there is trouble in recruiting judges, delays in the legal system will increase. Dissatisfaction and discontent will grow among judges, and thereby public respect for the judiciary will decline. I fear that, as with so many social reforms which are Treasury led, such as the so-called reforms of legal aid and of the legal profession, and the so-called reform of the brewing industry, it will all end in tears.

8.20 pm

Mr. Nick Hawkins (Blackpool, South): I endorse what has just been said by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence). I wish to follow up the matter that he raised at the beginning of his speech, by declaring not so much an interest as a background, as a member of the Bar Council and of the all-party barristers group chaired by my hon. and learned Friend, and as the vice-chairman for the coming year of the employed barristers organisation, the Bar Association for Commerce, Finance and Industry.

Towards the end of his speech the hon. Member for Warwickshire, North (Mr. O'Brien) mentioned the position inter alia of the employed Bar as regards any possible appointments that might be made to the Bench in coming years, and I agree that it is important to consider the whole of the legal profession. Several hon. Members on both sides of the House have done so, and I endorse what has been said by many of them—that the most important aspect of our consideration of the Bill will be to ensure that the best candidates are available for selection for judicial appointment.

I reject the suggestion by some Labour Members that there should be positive discrimination to ensure that a wider range of backgrounds is represented on the Bench. I argue strongly that it is essential to concentrate on one aspect alone when choosing between potential judges, and that is their ability. As someone who has shared chambers with colleagues from ethnic minorities, and with several distinguished lady members of the Bar, I am the first to recognise that there are many good judges and, I hope, potential judges among people from ethnic minority backgrounds, lady members of the Bar and solicitors, but it is entirely wrong to suggest that such people should be appointed simply because they come from such backgrounds, rather than according to the single test of ability. I stick to that belief.

I hope that what the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) said in praise of the quality of the judiciary will be taken to heart by many of his hon. Friends who have not had the advantage of listening to the debate. I propose to keep a copy of the *Official Report* of those remarks about Her Majesty's judges. I welcomed those remarks and I shall keep them by me in order to refer to them when some of his hon. Friends indulge in what I can describe only as a knee-jerk reaction, or the reaction of Pavlovian dogs, on occasions when it suits them to criticise judges. I shall point out to them that their hon. Friend the Member for Brent, South does not agree with them.

It is important to recognise, as the hon. Member for Brent, South does, that one of the main reasons why the British judiciary is so highly respected, and why the parties to many important commercial disputes choose this country for their cases to be tried is the record of integrity and independence so obviously shown by Her Majesty's judges. In considering the Bill, we must realise that it is crucial that nothing should be done to detract from that record.

Many of us who have been interested in the passage of the Bill through the other place have welcomed the fact that the Government have made some concessions and brought forward several amendments there. In particular, they have made more generous provision for judges who retire early through ill health. I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to consider that question again and improve the position still further. If a judge, who may have been one of the most distinguished members of the Bar, takes a judicial appointment but, sadly, suffers ill health early in his judicial life and has to retire, he should get the full pension rather than, as has now been conceded by the Government, the lump sum and the pension being calculated on the basis of the length of actual service plus half the time remaining before he reaches the age of 65.

Like me, my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton and others of my hon. Friends will be able to think of particular examples from the recent past. Sadly, the health of several people who gave distinguished service both as members of the Bar and, having taken judicial appointments, after serving in connection with especially important public inquiries, suffered as a result of the great public services that they had rendered in those positions. Early in their subsequent judicial appointments they found themselves unable, through no fault of their own, to carry on. I welcome the concessions made in another place, but I urge the Minister to consider that aspect again and to go further than the Government have so far gone.

I also welcome the provision for tax-free additional voluntary contributions to be made to pensions. However, I endorse what my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton said—that it is not good enough to say, "Of course, members of the Bar will always have made provision during their early years at the Bar." As my hon. and learned Friend pointed out, many members of the junior Bar cannot do so, because of their low earnings, especially those who concentrate on legal aid work, to which many hon. Members have referred. At a time when their family obligations are heaviest, they are not in a

[Mr. Nick Hawkins]

position to concentrate on making pension contributions, especially not with thought to a future judicial appointment.

It is of special concern that members of the junior Bar who are concerned to do their best for their clients are frequently so busy every weekday evening preparing the next day's case, the cross-examinations and the examinations in chief that they have no time to think about their pension provision. They certainly have no time to think about the pension which may be available should they ever be lucky enough to benefit from a judicial appointment.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: My hon. Friend's point is especially true because lawyers have to wait a long time before they are paid by the legal aid fund.

Mr. Hawkins: I am grateful to my hon. and learned Friend for making that valuable point, which I entirely endorse.

I agree with several of my hon. Friends that it would be wrong for a decision to be made by the Government, either on this or any other Bill, simply as a result of surveys of the public's perception of judges. I strongly believe that it is the responsibility of the Government and of all hon. Members to try to lead and to influence public opinion. Surveys of public perception are almost invariably wrong. They record prejudices, so it would be inappropriate for the Government to tailor their position as a result of surveys of public opinion, which are bound to be partial. It is crucial that the right decision, rather than the public's perception of the right decision, is made.

I stress that the great difference between Conservative and Opposition Members is that we seek to present a judgment of what is in the country's interests. Too many Opposition Members take the view that whatever is the fashionable nostrum of the moment must influence public policy. That is wrong. I am sorry that so few Opposition Members are able to listen to the valuable points made by my hon. Friends along the same lines.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: The jury opposite consists of only two hon. Members. Even in England a jury has 12 members. The remarks made by the Lord Chief Justice of England, which were broadcast to the nation, were hardly helpful to the cause he was advancing. Thank God they did not apply to Scotland.

Mr. Hawkins: I return to the subject of the concessions made by my hon. Friend the Minister, which were welcomed in another place. I urge him to go further. The Government conceded that the benefits payable to close relatives in the event of the untimely death shortly after retirement of someone who had held a judicial appointment should be improved from one and a half times pensionable pay to five times the annual rate of pension at the time of death. I urge my hon. Friend to look again at the provisions made for judicial spouses, whether widows or widowers, and to recognise that telling points were made by many distinguished judges in another place who will not benefit from any changes that may be introduced.

I especially urge my hon. Friend to pay heed to Lord Ackner's contribution to the debate and to the comments of Lord Donaldson in another place. I urge my hon. Friend to consider carefully the entirely objective views, based on considerable experience, of those who no longer have a vested interest in benefiting from the changes that they advocate.

I endorse what was said by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton about the dangers of requiring, as the Bill does, that people should have to serve a full 20 years to qualify for a full pension. Hon. Members of all parties who have practised in the criminal courts will be aware of the tendency referred to as "judgeitis". There are those who, as my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton said, soldier on when they might be wiser not to do so and who become case-hardened and out of touch.

I strongly urge the Minister to bear in mind the fact that it would be entirely right to recognise that there is a great deal of common sense in the provision that 15 years should be the right period of accrual for a full pension. He should recognise especially that 15 years period has been the period for accrual since as long ago as 1799. There are many occasions in the House when we should recognise that our forefathers knew what they were doing and that a system that has been tried and tested for almost 200 years should not be abandoned without careful thought. It should certainly not be abandoned at the behest of the Treasury.

The Minister argues a difficult case to sustain. He says that the judges' position was unique, but he also says that the provision for pension must be brought into line with the general pension law which applies to people who have a complete working life in another kind of job. I urge my hon. Friend to take note of the fact that the judges' position is absolutely unique because of the late stage in life at which they take judicial appointment. It is precisely because of those special considerations that my hon. Friend and his ministerial colleague the Lord Chancellor should bear in mind that unique position.

The fact that the exception has continued ever since the pension law for other occupations was changed is a reason for continuing it and for recognising the special and unique position of the judges. Nothing that my hon. Friend does in the Bill should detract from the special and unique qualities of judicial appointment.

I very much recognise the strength of my hon. Friend's case when he talks about the importance of preserving the discretion to recall judges past the new retirement age of 70. Opposition Members were entirely wrong to suggest that there must be a specific cut-off date. Different judges retain their mental faculties to different ages. Reference was made to especially distinguished judges who have made an enormous contribution to the development of English law well beyond their 70th birthdays. English law would have been the poorer without that contribution.

Opposition Members should recognise that many of the decisions that they have applauded—the hon. Member for Brent, South would have regretted those decisions not being part of English law—and especially the contributions towards social legislation made by distinguished judges of the past such as Lord Reid would not have been made if the noble Lords in question had had to retire at the date that many Opposition Members suggest or at the age of 70.

I invite the Minister to reflect on Opposition Members' comments about footballers, including Sir Stanley Matthews, the distinguished former player for Blackpool in my constituency. The suggestion that he should not have played at the age of 50 should not be a reflection on

his great contribution and the contribution of many other distinguished footballers to coaching players. It was their experience as players which enabled them to be such good coaches in various parts of the world. They especially helped young players.

The true parallel is the opposite of the parallel drawn by Opposition Members. The important point is not that those footballers were unable to play beyond the age of 50, but that they retained their footballing experience which they were able to pass on. There is an exact parallel with members of the Bar who benefit from their experience at the Bar when they become judges. We should concentrate on that parallel and not suggest that that experience should go to waste at any particular cut-off date. A judge may be a good judge at 71 or 72, so I welcome the provision for the recall of judges.

I recognise that the Bill has many strengths and I welcome it in many ways. I urge the Minister to consider especially some of the respects that I have mentioned in which the Bill could be further improved. The greatest flaw of the Bill is that it suggests that the accrual period should be extended from 15 to 20 years. If that provision is enacted, it will be seen to have been a grave mistake. I urge my hon. Friend to think again about that aspect.

8.38 pm

Mr. Gary Streeter (Plymouth, Sutton): At the risk of being clubbed to death by my colleagues who are barristers, I welcome the Bill and, in particular, the reduction in retirement age to 70, together with the discretion for judges to remain on the Bench until a cut-off point of 75. I also welcome the long overdue reforms of the pension measures applicable to the judiciary to bring them into line with other sectors in society and to eradicate some of the anomalies between different members of the Bench. That is a much-needed rationalisation, and it is welcome.

It is interesting that people outside the House have also welcomed the Bill. In a recent newspaper article, Gareth Williams QC, the chairman of the Bar Council, said:

> "This is a welcome step by the Lord Chancellor, and one for which the Bar has campaigned very strongly this year. I am very glad the Lord Chancellor has accepted our argument."

I am not alone in welcoming the measure.

I want to make three points in my contribution to this very interesting and wide-ranging debate. First, I wholeheartedly support the need for members of the Bench to have an attractive financial package, including pension rights. Secondly, as I have already said, I welcome the retirement age of 70. Thirdly, I want to express concern that the reduction in the retirement age should not be allowed to aggravate the existing iculties of access to justice through the shortage of judges. I urge the Government and my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary to consider further urgent measures to speed up the judicial process by making more time available for members of the Bench, so that members of the legal profession can have access to them and members of the public are not prejudiced.

I am disappointed that no member of the Liberal Democrat party has been present during this debate. I have no doubt that that will not prevent the Liberal Democrats from rushing off a press release tomorrow morning stating that they were largely responsible for the measure being introduced. It is worth pointing out to the public that the measure of their concern and commitment to justice in the national is reflected in their absence from the Chamber tonight.

It is absolutely critical that members of the Bench have an attractive remuneration package. It has already been said that, in a free society, it is in all our interests that we attract on to the Bench men and women of the highest calibre and with the finest legal minds to try the issues that come before them.

We often take for granted in this country some of the things that are good about our society. We often take for granted the excellence of our judiciary and the fact that, while from time to time there is the occasional controversy about something that a member of the Bench may say, we rarely hear about corruption or impropriety from any member of the Bench. That is to be broadly welcomed. We would certainly miss that if it were otherwise.

It is therefore important that a substantial financial package is available for judges. That would help to ensure that corruption and temptation do not arise and that the judges remain as fiercely independent and impartial as they are today. We can be proud of our justice system, which is envied elsewhere in the world. We should not attack it too fiercely, as some hon. Members have done this evening.

If we are to attract the men and women of high quality on to the Bench, we must be able to compete with other sectors, notably with those who remain at the Bar—those who, like myself, indulge in the perhaps more demanding side of the legal profession and practise as solicitors, and those who are engaged in industry. It is important to attract members from those sectors to the Bench.

The pension scheme that the Government propose in the Bill is attractive. It has been criticised and analysed in this debate. After an accrual period of 20 years, which is common to many other sectors in society, a pension of 50 per cent. of final salary is available. That is not an ungenerous provision, but we can go further than that. In addition to the 50 per cent., there is an additional lump sum of two and a quarter times the annual rate of pension. That lump sum is not obtained by commuting part of the annual pension payment—it is in addition, and that is attractive.

The pension is also index-linked, and is paid for the rest of the retiring judge's life. It is also non-contributory. That adds up to a very handsome package, and rightly so. As I have said, it is very important to attract the right sort of people on to the Bench. I therefore welcome the Government's proposals.

I also welcome the fact that the 20-year accrual ruling removes an anomaly that has existed for many years between various members of the judiciary—between High Court judges and district judges, and between circuit judges and stipendiary magistrates. There was no justification for a difference in the accrual period, and I welcome the fact that the Bill addresses that issue.

I also welcome the reduction of retirement age to 70. I want to quote from Aristotle who, as far as I know, was never a Member of Parliament, but a fine fellow none the less:

> "That judges of important causes should hold office for life is not a good thing, for the mind grows old as well as the body."

I agree with those sentiments. We should understand that being a judge is a very demanding and onerous task. In saying that, I speak as someone who, while not a court lawyer, has been in court on several occasions sitting

[Mr. Gary Streeter]

behind various eminent barristers watching them do their stuff. I was extremely impressed with the way in which judges conduct themselves and carry out their business.

Being a judge requires concentrating for hours on end. A judge must take copious notes on what is said in court. A judge must see through the arguments from various sides to get to the heart of the matter. The judge must weigh the issues, as has already been said, to make a judgment. Being a judge involves scrutinising witnesses and discerning whether what is said in court is true. It involves deciding the honesty of witnesses and seeing the wider implications of judgments. It is a demanding job, which requires great mental agility; we should not lose sight of that.

Mr. Oliver Heald (Hertfordshire, North): I am concerned about the provision for extending to 20 years, because at the moment, given the demanding nature of the job, many judges reach 65 and feel that that is the proper retirement age. Under the proposal, any judge who is appointed at 50 will have to soldier on until he is 70, perhaps against that judge's better judgment, but for purely financial reasons. Is not that a fault in the provision?

Mr. Streeter: My hon. Friend has made a very interesting and helpful point. However, I believe that it is important that we are beginning to recruit younger judges. The perception point that was raised this evening has some validity. It is not just a matter of the perception of society, it is also my perception that some of our judges stay on too long. However, we must also recruit judges at a younger age.

I must point out that the pension is non-contributory. Although we must take account of the salaries of other members who carry on at the Bar or the salaries that are available in industry, if a judge is concerned about the final pension, that judge can make additional voluntary contributions. There are not many professions in the country in which a pension of 50 per cent. of one's end year salary is available on a non-contributory basis.

Taking one thing with another, it is an attractive package and should not deter anyone from becoming a member of the Bench. It has been said that 70 is an arbitrary age, but any line drawn at any age is of necessity arbitrary, and there are always anomalies. There are always people who could go on for an extra year or two but are hit by a rule.

Of course the Bill gives discretion to the Lord Chancellor up to the age of 75. It is right to reduce the age to 70, and that will be broadly welcome, but it is also right to allow the discretion to the Lord Chancellor to allow some judges to continue until they are 75. We have heard of the example of Lord Denning who went on late into his eighties and made many excellent judgments and made a great impact on the legal affairs of this country over many years.

I had the experience of a long-running High Court case in which a judge was brought back from retirement to sit; he was there for a number of weeks. In my opinion, he did an excellent job, not just because he found for our side wholeheartedly and awarded us costs, but because he was on top of the arguments throughout the proceedings. That gives strength to the discretion of the Lord Chancellor to bring people back, provided that they are not over 75, to take part in the judicial process when the pressure requires it.

I have already said that it is important to deal with public perception—an issue which we avoid at our peril. The perception of judges going on too long, being out of touch and remote, is sometimes justified. It is not just an issue of age: increasingly, as the pace of modern society changes, it is necessary for most people who go through the judicial process to feel that the wise person on the judicial bench has some idea of what life is about.

This modest step to bring down the age of retirement will be widely welcomed. It is important to recall the expression that justice must not only be done but also be seen to be done. That is about perception. There is difficulty in how some judges are perceived, and the Bill seeks to address that in an acceptable manner.

We have to recognise that the new rules apply only to new members of the judiciary. I look to the Minister for confirmation of that. It does not include judges who are at present on the Bench.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Anyone who is promoted after this Bill comes into place will be bound by the new rules. Anybody first appointed after the Bill will be bound by the new rules. The only persons who will have the option to stick by their historic rights are those who are promoted within the envelope of the same pension scheme, such as from the High Court to the Court of Appeal, at present covered by the same scheme. That would be seen as promotion which did not cross the boundary, and the option would not have to be taken.

Mr. Streeter: I am glad that that point was taken, and I now come to my final and most important point.

I hope that the Government will not believe that they have done enough to address the difficulties facing the judicial system. There is a need to review access to justice. I welcome the courts charter introduced last week setting time limits and standards for access to justice. This is timely and right, and it is urgent that the Government should respond to that difficulty. One way do so is to recruit at an earlier age and from a wider background, and it is certainly important to recruit more women judges.

A recent newspaper article said:

"Legal history was made yesterday when Lord Mackay announced the appointment of Ann Marian Ebsworth as a high court judge. Judge Ebsworth, aged 54 will be the first high court woman judge not to be assigned to family law cases. She will sit in the Queen's bench division dealing with accident cases, libel and claims for money owing. Her appointment brings the number of woman on the high court bench to three out of 84."

I believe that that is intolerable in 1992. Why should a woman judge be automatically assigned to the family law division? It is a condescending attitude that we have to shake ourselves out of.

I would therefore like to see a far broader spectrum of people becoming judges, and at an earlier age. If people are fit to run the country at 47 in the excellent way our Prime Minister does, surely one is fit to be a High Court judge. If one is ready to be a member of Her Majesty's Cabinet at the age of 40, surely one is ready to be a High Court judge. It is time we revised some of our traditional attitudes and caught up with modern thinking.

We need to recruit from a wider background and to recruit more judges, because there is often a waiting list for people to come to trial and the only stumbling block or

sticking point—the only reason for a waiting list—is the absence of a judge to try the issue. Many lawyers often find when they get to court that there are innumerable delays and witnesses and lawyers can be standing idle, including expert witnesses called at great expense, all waiting for judges to become available. That is something that we have to address urgently.

I welcome the Bill and I am grateful to the Minister for the way he introduced it. The sooner it becomes law the better.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. There are three hon. Gentlemen wishing to catch my eye. I understand that the winding-up speeches will start at about half past 9 so if they bear that in mind, it will be possible for me to call all three.

8.56 pm

Dr. Liam Fox (Woodspring): I shall indeed try to be brief, Mr. Deputy Speaker—a task made simpler by the great common sense shown by my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Sutton (Mr. Streeter) with whose words I agree in great measure.

I do not have a professional interest in the debate, nor do I have a great knowledge of Stanley Matthews, which some hon. Members may be grateful to hear. As a medical man and a politician talking about the legal profession, I can at least claim to unite three of the four oldest professions. Any hon. Members who can unite all four are welcome to send me a postcard or leave it in the Members' Lobby.

My hon. Friend the Member for Sutton was right to point out that hon. Members have not emphasised—nor do the population in general appreciate—the excellent standard of our judges, and I take that matter seriously. We take their excellent qualities too much for granted. However, it is important to recognise that there is a great deal of public disquiet about our judiciary. The public perception, which is important and which the Government would be complacent to ignore, is that there is too great a gap between natural justice and the application of law. We must take into account public disquiet about the ages of our judges.

My hon. Friend the Member for Monmouth (Mr. Evans) mentioned crude tabloid journalism, which undoubtedly strikes a chord with the general public and echoes some public disquiet. The public are worried about inconsistencies in sentencing. Why should someone in Bath get a different sentence for the same crime, under many of the same circumstances, as someone in Bristol?

The public worry about the failure to utilise sentences that have been made available by Parliament, and they worry about elderly judges. I have never been a lawyer, but I have been in court—as a medical witness, I hasten to add, before anyone rushes to the *News of the World*. I know that it can be difficult to communicate in a modern vocabulary with a judge who is a touch out of date, and that cannot be good for the public's perception of justice.

There are too few young judges. As my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton said, if one can be a Cabinet Minister in one's thirties and a hospital consultant at 40, why can there not be more younger judges? Surely that would benefit our entire legal system and not least lawyers?

Mr. Harold Elletson (Blackpool, North): Is my hon. Friend aware that 60 is the average age of High Court judges? The oldest High Court judge is 75, and the youngest is 47, which is the same age as the Prime Minister.

Dr. Fox: Yes, but the Prime Minister was younger than that when he became leader of the party and Prime Minister. Even if the average age has decreased, it would be desirable for it to fall further. I notice that the hon. Gentleman has no objection to the fact that the average age of Members of Parliament has fallen far below what it was in the previous Parliament.

There will always be difficulties with fixed retirement ages. It is interesting to note that the age of retirement was first fixed, 33 years ago, at 75 for the senior judiciary and 72 for the circuit benches. Given average life expectancy then, that would equal a retirement age of more than 80 for the senior judciary now. There has been a change in the way society views justice.

I congratulate the Government on the fact that the Bill provides a balance between judges' experience and what one might charitably call their potential cerebral vitality. My hon. Friend the Member for Monmouth said that the provision was arbitrary and ageist, but he was unable to tell us how to define judges who are—to paraphrase him—of sound mind. He said that the law, unlike science or medicine, was only a matter of accumulated knowledge. If medicine and science are not matters of accumulated knowledge, then I do not know what they are. It worries me that my hon. Friend does not think that it is necessary for judges to have that quality.

There must be some flexibility. I welcome the provisions in the Bill, but I caution against too much flexibility in allowing judges to return to work under exceptional circumstances. My hon. Friend the Member for Sutton also mentioned that, and I wonder whether the Minister could give us some guidelines later on how many members of the judiciary might be invited to return and what percentage he would expect to do so. If too many return, it makes the provision pointless.

I take issue with some of the arguments of the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng). He quite rightly mentioned the demands of the administration of justice, and the use of part-time and deputy judges. He also mentioned establishing a fixed retirement age of 65. I am sorry that we got on to the subject of costing that proposal, but—more importantly—he did not tell us how that would reduce the number of available judges, as we already have long waiting lists. Will the Opposition tell us how many judges would be affected if the age were fixed at 65, and who would fill those places if not the very part-time judges that he does not wish to see in courts?

By the same token, I ask the Minister what effect the proposals in the Bill will have—although I regard them as reasonable—on the work load of the courts, and what shortfall the Government envisage during the next two or three years as a result of the present problems.

I shall make only a couple of comments on pensions. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton that the package is not ungenerous, and may be looked on by other professions as rather generous. It seems strange that those who administer the law should find themselves in such confusion over their pension schemes.

I regard some aspects of the present system with scepticism, such as the inequality in treatment on pensions.

[Dr. Fox]

A registrar can take 20 years to reach maximum pension, as can a Scottish sheriff, but a circuit judge—his English equivalent—takes only 15 years. I am very sorry not only that there are almost no Opposition Members here, but that the very vocal Scottish lobby that we often see championing the Scottish legal system seems notable again by its absence tonight.

There is also the question of the rigidity of the current treatment. If a judge retires on his birthday, he stands to lose a full year's pension, as it depends on fully completed years. That is too rigid a system, and it needs to be addressed.

Then there is the problem of elevation. The Bill is to be commended for simplifying the current rules, which may be a disincentive to promotion. At present, acceptance of higher office can mean that a judicial officer may not be able to retire with immediate pension at the same age as in a lower scheme.

All these are areas of legitimate concern. I believe that in this measure the Government are addressing the public concern and the need to reassure the public about justice. They are taking on board the fact that there are changes in society and that we do not need more women judges or more black judges, necessarily; we need more good judges. That, ultimately, is the guarantee of quality in our legal system.

9.5 pm

Mr. Nirj Joseph Deva (Brentford and Isleworth): I am extremely sorry not to have been here at the beginning of this debate to hear what I suspect were some very erudite and learned comments from both sides of the House. I was otherwise occupied on a Standing Committee.

To be one of Her Majesty's judges is to hold one of the highest offices of this land. It is an office that carries with it the highest esteem, integrity and probity. Indeed, high judicial office is a coveted appointment even among learned counsel, who frequently take a substantial reduction in earnings to be appointed to such high office. In an increasingly money-conscious world, such financial sacrifices are indeed a salutary pointer to the high esteem in which judicial office is still held in this country.

It is therefore a bounden duty, an imperative of the public interest, that those holding high judicial office should be treated fairly and equitably and have the same opportunity as those who are employed or occupied elsewhere.

This Bill is intended to rectify a number of anomalies in the current arrangement on judicial pensions, but it is my contention that it does not go far enough. I know that a number of my hon. Friends have mentioned this, so I will not go into it in great detail.

Our judges come from the finest ranks of the legal profession. If we are to attract the best, their pension arrangements must also be of the best that we as a nation can afford. It is an incontestable fact that those now appointed to judicial office from the ranks of counsel or learned counsel are expected to earn as judges far less than they would otherwise have earned as counsel or learned counsel. Having made one financial sacrifice by being appointed to judicial office, they are then expected to make a second in their pension arrangements under existing provisions.

This has come about because judges are appointed in mid-life, in their 40s or early 50s; thus, their pensionable period is no more than 20 years at best. While others in different professions can look forward to pensionable careers of 40 to 45 years, in the case of the judiciary the pensionable career is reduced by one half in most cases. Since pensions are calculated on the number of years in service, judges incur a double penalty, first in the reduction of their income on appointment——

Mr. John M. Taylor: I am very grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way because I know that he is keeping to the tightness of the time schedule, but I want him to know that, alongside the 20 years of the judicial pension, it is entirely possible for successful practitioners at the Bar to have accumulated private pension rights beforehand in that phase of their careers, which are in no sense subsumed into the judicial pension. So they end up with two pensions.

Mr. Deva: I am very grateful to my hon. Friend for that intervention.

The second penalty is in the pension that they receive at the end of their careers. I welcome the steps taken in the Bill to correct a number of anomalies which have been with us for a number of years. In particular, I welcome the intention of the Bill to create a single pension scheme for all members of the judiciary throughout the United Kingdom. That will end the proliferation of schemes for different judges, some based on 15 years' accrual of service and other on 20 or more years' service. Instead, all pensions will be calculated on a 20-year accrual rate.

I listened with interest to the remarks of my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence). I have also noted with some concern the Bar Council's objection to the 20-year accrual period, based on the contention that such a period would reduce the prospect of gradually reducing judicial retiring ages into the 63 to 68 band, which is what the Bar Council wants. If we say that all judicial officers must serve 20 years before being entitled to a full pension, we shall be building in problems for the future. The Bar Council would prefer a 15-year accrual period, and I have some sympathy with that point of view.

The general thrust of the Bill is to be welcomed. Its key points are that it brings the current haphazard system into line through the introduction of a single pension scheme; by ensuring that judicial pensions comply with financial legislation, it enables pensions to attract tax relief, in common with other pension schemes; and it will enable the standardisation of retirement age, currently 75 years for most judges, to 70 years. We have heard much in the debate about whether that will be a good move.

I welcome amendments made in another place designed to make more generous provision for judges who retire early through ill health, with provision for tax-free additional voluntary contributions. They also provide for benefits to be payable to close relatives in the event of death shortly after retirement. Those benefits will be improved from 1·5 times pensionable pay to five times the annual rate of pension at the time of death.

The Bill will help to attract some of the best legal minds to the judiciary from the ranks of the legal profession. It will make the judiciary more in tune with contemporary life by attracting younger people. It will also go a long way to redressing the balance in the nation in favour of the judiciary.

9.11 pm

Mr. Walter Sweeney (Vale of Glamorgan): I must at the outset declare an interest as yet another lawyer, albeit only a humble solicitor with no aspirations or expectations towards judicial appointment.

My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence) made a strong case for more generous pension arrangements for the judiciary, with a full pension available after 15 instead of 20 years. I appreciate the Treasury difficulty in achieving that, given the existing tax relief rules.

My hon. Friend the Member for Monmouth (Mr. Evans) went to the other extreme and argued that judges should provide their own pensions through private pension schemes. I believe that that has much to commend it. The difficulty is that most judges are expected to accept a substantial reduction in income on their appointment to the Bench, and it would be a grave deterrent to potential appointees on realising that they would not only suffer a large decrease in salary but also be deprived of a non-contributory pension.

I welcome the amendment in another place which ensures that, if a judge is forced to retire early through ill health, the lump sum and pension to which he would be entitled will be calculated on the basis of the length of time actually served, plus half the time remaining before the recipient reaches the age of 65.

Hon. Members have spoken of the age limit—upper and, effectively, lower. In respect of the upper limit, I recall during my law student days the tremendous admiration I had for Lord Denning. I am reluctant to support any rigid age limit, although I accept that, if there is no limit, there is a danger that judges may fall below their original level of mental prowess. They may not be so fuddy-duddy as to fail a medical examination, but their continued presence on the Bench might become an embarrassment and a disadvantage to the judicial system.

Therefore, I reluctantly accept that it is necessary to have an age limit, notwithstanding the fact that that may sometimes work harshly and deprive us—as it certainly would have done in the case of Lord Denning—of an outstanding judge. The reduction in the age limit to 70 is appropriate, especially given the discretion provided in the Bill for the Lord Chancellor to extend that age limit to 75 in appropriate cases to fulfil the needs of the judiciary.

The hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) said that he wanted to see more young people, women, ethnic minorities and solicitors appointed to the Bench. I echo that view, but I do not agree that it is appropriate to widen the scope of the Bill to achieve those objectives. I prefer to rely on the Lord Chancellor's Office to bear in mind the comments that have been made this evening. I am sure that the Parliamentary Secretary will relay our comments to the Lord Chancellor. It is important to have younger people, more women and people from ethnic minorities on the Bench to reflect more accurately the community at large.

My hon. Friend the Member for Monmouth rightly, in his typically rich, robust and even rampant manner, exploded the idea of the hon. Member for Brent, South that appointments should be made to the Bench for six or eight years. To make such short-term appointments would wreck the career development of a successful member of the Bar. Anybody who moved from the Bar to the Bench for a period of six or eight years would fully realise that his earning capacity on his ultimate return to the Bar would be severely impaired, certainly temporarily, until he proved his worth in his previous milieu.

I support the Bill, which has a great deal to commend it.

9.17 pm

Mr. Boateng: With the leave of the House, it falls to me to wind up what has been an interesting debate for Labour Members.

In the latter stages, the debate was marked by dissension among Conservative Members which surpassed anything seen since yesterday. We are becoming increasingly accustomed to such dissension. Conservative Members could not seem to make up their minds whether they thought that the Bill was good. Powerful vested interests, which were extremely hostile to the Bill, were represented in no less a person than the Chairman of the Select Committee on Home Affairs, the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence).

Others who wholeheartedly embrace the Bill took strong exception to the bileful speech of the hon. Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls). I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman is not in his place for the wind-up speeches. He made it sound as though it was vaguely improper to listen to what the general public—the electorate—have to say in a crucial public debate on what the role of the judiciary should be in the 1990s.

In a useful contribution, the hon. Member for Plymouth, Sutton (Mr. Streeter) took strong exception to what the hon. Member for Teignbridge said. He was not alone among Conservative Members in feeling that it was important for deliberations in the House to be guided by the public perception of the judiciary.

It has been an interesting and worthwhile debate. The House will expect me to respond to a number of issues raised, and I want to do so. Important speeches were made by a number of my hon. Friends. My hon. Friend the Member for Warwickshire, North (Mr. O'Brien) stressed the importance of our being prepared to take a look at the root and branch reform of the pension scheme for the judiciary. He suggested that it was important that there should be provision, albeit at a future date, for a fully contributory scheme. That must be right, and he made a strong case for it.

Interestingly, that proposal was touched on by the hon. Member for Monmouth (Mr. Evans), who called for the wholesale privatisation of the judicial pension scheme. It is important that we should consider that proposal, not simply dismiss it out of hand. No less a person than a former Lord Justice of Appeal, Sir Frederick Lawton, said in *The Times* in July 1992:

"Money is not the lure of the bench."

He was right to say that.

It is important to recognise that it is public service that calls people to the judiciary, particularly its higher reaches. To their credit, people make considerable sacrifices in their earnings in order to serve on the Bench. That is the answer to the argument of the hon. Member for the Vale of Glamorgan (Mr. Sweeney), who denounced the Conservative proposal—albeit of 92 years ago—to introduce fixed-term appointments for the High Court. He rightly said that I floated that; it is entirely proper and healthy to have a public debate on the issues.

The strength of the proposal is that there may well be senior barristers or solicitors, whether men or women, who

[Mr. Boateng]

are satisfied with their careers and unwilling to opt out of them completely, but who have a sufficient sense of public duty to say that they will, for a limited period, forswear the additional earnings that they would otherwise receive in order to make a public service contribution.

In the various branches of the profession—solicitors, barristers and, I hope, if we win the day and extend access to higher judicial office to those in academic life and in commercial employment in industry—there is a tradition of public service. When we bear in mind the current crisis in the staffing of the higher judiciary, we should consider once again the option of fixed-term appointments.

Sir Frederick Lawton, or Lord Justice Lawton, as he was, makes the point that not only is money not the lure of the Bench but, importantly, he says:

"The Government cannot afford, however, to assume that barristers, and in the future solicitors, too, will continue to find the supreme court bench an attraction. The prospect of a pension on retirement is no longer as attractive as it was. Ever since the Finance Act 1956 allowed insurance premiums on pension policies to be set off against income tax, any barrister who has taken full advantage of that Act can now retire with a better pension than a judge receives. It will not, however, be index-linked as a judge's is."

That is precisely the point. Bearing in mind what Sir Frederick has said, there is no reason why we should not consider actively the introduction at a later date of a wholly contributory pension scheme, provided that, at the same time, the remuneration of the judiciary is made sufficient to fund the contributions. By failing to provide the context in which that could be introduced later, the Bill may be seriously flawed. In Committee we will seek by amendment to make that a possibility.

The judicial retirement age was touched on by my hon. Friend the Member for Wallsend (Mr. Byers) and other hon. Members. Again, the hon. Members for Monmouth and for Teignbridge were reactionary to the last. The hon. Member for Monmouth gives flesh to the concept of reaction; he is reaction incarnate, and it is not a pretty sight. I am sorry that he is not present to hear me say that, but he may read it tomorrow, if he has a mind to.

Of course, the hon. Member for Monmouth dismissed any notion that we should take into account the age of judges or anyone else. He extended it even to the civil service. Someone ought to point out to him that civil servants at permanent secretary level are only too happy to retire at the age of 60. Within months, they proceed to much more lucrative fields. That may not be the case in the Lord Chancellor's Department where they have a much harder lot but certainly elsewhere I doubt whether there will be any sympathy for the views of the hon. Member for Monmouth.

Some civil servants are only too happy to retire at 60 for the lucrative chewing fields of the city of London. In a way, the Lord Chancellor spared some thought for them and dismissed out of hand any notion——

Mr. Heald: Is not one reason why civil servants are so happy to retire at 60 the fact that they have a full pension which is index-linked? If judges were in the same position, they might be just as happy to go at 60, too.

Mr. Boateng: That is an interesting point and no doubt it will be heard in the Treasury, although I doubt very much whether it will act on it.

The hon. Member for Teignbridge accused us of ageism for suggesting that judges ought to retire at 65. To be accused of any "ism" by the hon. Member is a bit rich. I can think of a number of "isms" that he has embraced in his time, not all of them particularly attractive. In any event, ageism is what he flung at us. I am happy to say that there were many other, saner voices, even on the Government side, who recognised that it was perfectly reasonable for the Lord Chancellor to propose a retirement age of 70 and who went even further in agreeing with us and with the chairman of the Bar Council, who was quoted with approval by a number of Conservative Members in relation to another matter, that the retirement age should be reduced to 65.

Dr. Liam Fox: What perplexes me a little, when we are in a time of increased life expectancy and rather better expectations for robust physical and mental health, is why Opposition Members insist on reducing the retiring age to as low as 65.

Mr. Boateng: I will tell the hon. Member why by reference to the words of an eminent and distinguished American jurist whom he and, no doubt, other hon. Members will know, Oliver Wendell Holmes. He was the beneficiary of a constitution which protected his right to sit in the United States Supreme Court for as long as he wanted, and he sat there until he was 90, so he had some insight into the problems of an elderly jurist. He said:

"elderly judges are more likely to hate at sight any analysis to which they are not accustomed, and which disturbs repose of mind, than to fall in love with novelties."

That is a wonderful expression of what I believe to be a profound truth; it is a recognition by a great jurist of the desirability of having a retirement age which would avoid having a judiciary composed predominantly of senior citizens who, by definition, cannot so easily understand contemporary concerns or apply contemporary values.

That, as the hon. Member for Woodspring ought to recognise, is the overwhelming case for a lower retirement age. It is the case to which we accede, the case which we put and the case which we intend to pursue. Judges should retire at the age of 65.

There has also been an interesting sharing of views—and, again, there was a certain amount of cross-party support for this notion, although there was also some disagreement—about whether there should be such a thing as a judicial career, whether it should be possible to enter the judicial arena at a lower rung of the ladder and work one's way up. It is rather unfortunate that somebody who does that under the provisions of the Bill will, as the Minister says, lose the privileged position that he or she would otherwise have in being exempt from its provision as someone already sitting in the judiciary, because, again, that militates against promotion rather than encouraging it, and recognising it as being not exceptional, as one hon. Member suggested, but an ordinary part of the process of ensuring that we get the right people for the job.

We support the notion of some form of judicial career. Although we believe that it is perfectly right and reasonable, we do not embrace the continental model. My hon. Friend the Member for Wallsend, who is a former distinguished law lecturer, made well the point that, with appropriate judicial training, not least on the issue of sentences, it is perfectly proper and eminently desirable that people should move up the ladder. The pension arrangements must assist and facilitate that process.

Mr. Nigel Evans (Ribble Valley): Although I agree with the hon. Gentleman that people with ability should be able to rise up, irrespective of their age, why is he so keen to deny people between the ages of 60 and 70, who may have something to offer this country, the chance of doing so?

Mr. Boateng: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman is here for this part of the debate, although he could not join us earlier, but I do not consider it necessary to repeat the overwhelming case—so ably put by my hon. Friends the Members for Warwickshire, North and for Wallsend, as well as several Conservative Members—for the retirement of judges at the age of 65. It is precisely to maintain that flexibility of mind and sense of being in touch with contemporary life, which tends to become less apparent as one grows older.

The important point that my hon. Friends have made time and again in this debate, and which has again been echoed by several Conservative Members, is that it is vital that we draw on a pool of expertise and talent that runs wide and deep.

No one is talking about diluting standards when we say that it is important that women and ethnic minorities should be facilitated in joining the ranks of the judiciary, particularly the higher judiciary. It is a matter of concern to those of us who know and love the law and practise in the courts that only three women are High Court judges. We remain totally unconvinced that there are only three women of sufficient ability to occupy that role. Although the steps that the current Lord Chancellor has taken to deal with that issue are welcome—he has done a great deal in that area—they do not give us the luxury of being able to afford any complacency in relation to the nature and breadth from which the higher judiciary are called.

That is why, throughout this debate, we have made the plea for, and will continue to push for, a judicial appointments commission that would have the brief to ensure that quality, breadth and variety of legal experience and background are represented in the judiciary. I accept that it would sweep away some of the mystique, secrecy and lack of transparency that currently surround judicial appointments made by the Lord Chancellor, but that is one of the things that endear the proposal to us. We shall push it and the other matters that my hon. Friends have addressed this evening to the fullest extent as we give the measure a fair wind in Committee.

9.39 pm

Mr. John M. Taylor *rose*——

Madam Speaker: I take it that the Minister has the leave of the House to speak again.

Mr. Taylor: I thank the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) for his contributions and, through him, his hon. Friends for theirs. I also particularly thank my hon. Friends for keeping me entertained and on my toes.

The debate has been wide-ranging, so wide-ranging that many matters might, on a strict and mean interpretation, have been thought to be rather outwith the ambit of the Bill, but I make no complaints about that. I am grateful for the thoughtful comments that have been made by many hon. Members.

I welcome the endorsement of the principle of judicial independence as an essential constitutional safeguard by the hon. Member for Brent, South and his endorsement of the quality and integrity of our judiciary which I believe to be shared by all hon. Members.

The Lord Chancellor's policy is to appoint to judicial office those best qualified regardless of sex, ethnic origin, political affiliation or religion. Without prejudice to that general principle, the Lord Chancellor has repeatedly stressed that he welcomes application from suitably qualified women and members of the ethnic minorities.

A major factor has been a relative lack of such candidates in the relevant age groups. For example, some well qualified women have said that they do not wish to be considered for judicial appointment. The composition of the Bench at any one time must reflect the composition of the legal profession within the group of the relevant age and seniority.

That position will change appreciably as the composition of the professions in those groups changes to reflect the larger number of women and ethnic minority practitioners now represented in the younger age groups at the Bar and among solicitors.

I hope that the hon. Member for Brent, South will accept in good faith that I do not wish to split hairs with him. I have a marginal correction and no more. The hon. Gentleman's figures for women in the judiciary are a week or two out of date. Four women high court judges are currently in office, not three as the hon. Gentleman said. Two of those, Mrs. Justice Smith and Mrs. Justice Ebsworth, to whom reference was made by my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Sutton (Mr. Streeter), are assigned to the Queen's Bench Division.

Our figures show that there is no difference between men and women in the length of time between call or admission and appointment as assistant recorders.

The hon. Member for Wallsend (Mr. Byers) claimed that judges were out of touch. In making appointments, the Lord Chancellor must appoint those with the necessary ability and experience. It is not the function of the professional judiciary to be somehow representative of the community they serve, and it is inevitable that appointments will reflect the profession from which they are drawn.

The Lord Chancellor has taken steps to broaden the field of selection through the changes in the formal qualifications for appointment made by the Courts and Legal Services Act 1990 and by other means such as encouraging solicitors to apply. A solicitor judge is now eligible for appointment to the High Court and there are many solicitors on the circuit Bench and serving as recorders and assistant recorders.

In making or recommending appointments to the judiciary, the Lord Chancellor looks for evidence that a candidate has, apart from anything else, the necessary human qualities of understanding and tolerance. The proposal for a judicial appointments commission is nothing new, and my noble and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor has gone on record as opposing one. Judicial appointments are very much the Lord Chancellor's own responsibility, and he makes all appointments personally. If they are to continue to be made on merit alone, it is difficult to imagine how a commission could reach different decisions—but such a body could undermine the Lord Chancellor's personal and direct accountability to Parliament, increase bureaucracy and delay, and risk introducing external pressures for lobbying into the appointments process.

[Mr. Taylor]

It is the striking that, despite the claims of those who want to change the system, the appointments made under the present arrangements are generally recognised as being of very high quality. I was interested to hear the hon. Member for Brent, South argue for a career judiciary. It is a fundamental tenet of the Lord Chancellor's policy for judicial appointments that candidates should serve first part-time, as assistant recorders and recorders or in other categories, before being appointed to full-time posts. There is also the opportunity for the advancement of circuit judges to the High Court Bench, and a number of such appointments have been made recently.

The new pension scheme will facilitate those avenues of promotion by doing away with the severe pension penalties that such judges currently experience. There are of course statutory requirements for appointees, and that necessarily has a bearing on the age at which judges can be appointed for the first time.

As to the Bill's choice of 70 as the retiring age for all members of the judiciary, in the course of this debate the full range of possible retirement dates has been suggested. The hon. Member for Brent, South chose 65, and some of my hon. Friends thought that any restriction would be likely to rob the Bench of vital talent. As I said in my opening remarks, that question is one of balancing conflicting considerations. As the hon. Gentleman acknowledged, there is no one age at which every single judge suddenly loses touch overnight.

It is reasonable, however, to take account of the fact that, in general, we all diminish in our effectiveness as we grow older and the burdens of office appear heavier. It is ultimately a question of judgment, and my noble and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor and I believe that 70 is a reasonable age at which judges should retire. In the Dimbleby lecture to which the hon. Member for Brent, South referred, the Lord Chief Justice strongly endorsed that proposal.

As to the power of extension, the Bill provides that service may continue after the age of 70 for periods of no more than one year at a time up to, but not beyond, the age of 75. That power may be exercised only in the public interest and is applicable only to judicial officers below the rank of High Court judge and the equivalent in Scotland —and it is expected to be used sparingly.

Provision for the extension of service beyond the maximum retirement age otherwise applicable in relation to circuit judges, district judges and others has been enshrined in statute for many years, and has not attracted criticism as being in any way untoward or inappropriate.

My hon. Friend the Member for Woodspring (Dr. Fox) asked about the likely use of that power of extension. As I said in my opening speech, it is expected that it will be used sparingly and applied only where it is clearly in the public interest, taking accout of all relevant considerations. It is not feasible to make a more precise estimate of the number of future occasions on which that power may be applied.

On the question whether there are too many sittings by part-time judges, it is important to draw a distinction between deputy High Court judges who are part-timers and circuit judges who sit as judges of the High Court by virtue of section 9(1) of the Supreme Court Act 1981. The latter are not part-timers. Indeed, the Beeching commission recognised the benefits of the flexible use of circuit judges to assist in the disposal of High Court business.

My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence) commented on the pensions provisions of the Bill, to which I now turn. He said that they disadvantaged women and that a longer accrual span will mean that they will be unable to earn maximum pension benefits due to family commitments. I direct his attention to clause 10, which provides for the purchase of added years and the making of additional voluntary contributions. This will benefit not only women in the circumstances that he described but any officer who would otherwise be unable to complete the full 20 years service required to obtain maximum benefits.

I cannot let the question of my hon. Friend the Member for Monmouth (Mr. Evans) about the Lord Chancellor's pension go unanswered. In response to his intervention, I pointed out that the office of Lord Chancellor is unique. With the Speaker of the House of Commons and the Prime Minister, he has statutory arrangements governing his pension peculiar to himself. His pension is governed by the Lord Chancellor's Pension Act 1832. A day's service in the Lord Chancellor's office entitles him to a full pension under that Act. If he were to seek to make use of his service in other capacities as a judge to enhance that pension, he would be subject to the same rules that apply to the judiciary in general.

My hon. Friend the Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) asked why the word "or" is missing from clause 7(1)(a) when it was included in the Judicial Pensions Act 1981. The answer is that the word "or" in clause 7(1)(b) covers paragraph (a). It is merely a matter of drafting style. The fact that the draftsmen included it in section 21(1) of the 1981 act but chose not to do so in the Bill has no bearing on the substance of the clause.

My hon. Friend the Member for Teignbridge asked whether widowers' pensions, introduced by the Courts and Legal Services Act 1990, were covered by the Bill. The answer is yes. We have, however, recognised in the Bill that female judges are entitled to be granted a pension in respect of their husbands. The Bill adopts the neutral term, "surviving spouse". I refer my hon. Friend to clause 5.

My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton, who is in his place, suggested that the tax privilege of retained benefits for judges, which the Lord Chancellor has succeeded in preserving in the Bill, is of little value because few manage to make pension provision for themselves and their families in the years before their appointment. That may be true in some cases. However, many of those appointed to the most senior judicial offices have made considerable private pension provision. Those at the more junior levels are also often able to make such arrangements.

For example, the district judges, who no one would claim to be drawn from the highest earning levels of private practice, said in their response to the consultation paper:

"we accept that continuing to leave retained benefits out of account confers an advantage on those joining a judicial pension scheme which may be of significant value to those who have actually made personal pension contributions before appointment to judicial office. We consider that any alteration in the current treatment of retained benefits could have a seriously adverse effect upon recruitment. We therefore welcome the proposal not to alter the existing position."

Mr. Lawrence: District judges, almost by definition, do not come from the high-earning Bar. High-earning barristers become High Court or senior judges. We need to appoint more High Court judges rather than district judges.

Mr. Taylor: I thought that my hon. and learned Friend was making a point about pensions. I am saying that a lower earning category have expressed themselves grateful for the protected position of the pensions that they build up privately before accepting public appointment.

I have already mentioned the facility of added years and additional voluntary contributions, which will help those who, for whatever reason, have been unable to make private provision.

It has been suggested by various hon. Members that the Bill is solely motivated by the Treasury's desire to save money. That is not correct. The Bill seeks to bring the judicial pension arrangements into line with modern tax law, which already applies to the rest of us. It is not expected that the introduction of the new pension scheme will greatly affect public expenditure on judicial pensions.

I shall say a last word on the extension on the accrual span from 15 to 20 years. The matter has been raised several times, but I spoke about it at some length in my opening speech and, with respect to the House, I need not go through the same arguments again. I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton, who rightly pointed to the significant benefits that judges will derive from the new pension scheme. I agree wholeheartedly with his suggestion that the package will attract candidates for judicial office rather than discourage them.

My hon. Friend the Member for Monmouth asked about the age of immigration appeal adjudicators. He will not have failed to note my written answer to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) of 12 November which at column *862* of *Hansard*, gives precise details of the age of serving officers, among other things. My hon. Friend will find that that answer reveals that his assertions are misplaced, although I am sure that they were made in good faith.

Mr. Roger Evans: What is the minimum period of professional qualification for a barrister or a solicitor to be appointed an immigration appeals adjudicator?

Mr. Taylor: My hon. Friend will have to accept from me in good faith that I am not seized of that information in the middle of my closing speech, but I will find it out and convey it to him within 24 hours.

Mr. Evans: I suggested to my hon. Friend that the period was three years.

Mr. Taylor: I have said that I do not know the answer, and I am not ready simply to swallow a suggestion, either. Before I put my hon. Friend wise I shall find out for myself.

It is often forgotten that the various tribunal and other judicial appointments are equally part of our judiciary. The Bill aims to cover the range of appointments of a judicial nature. It therefore extends both pension and retirement arrangements to officers such as the masters of the Queen's Bench and Chancery Divisions of the High Court, taxing masters and registrars in bankruptcy. Those judicial officers, along with others, make a vital contribution to the work of the High Court by relieving pressure on judge time. Likewise, the work of district judges in the county courts is essential to the disposal of cases in those courts. Stipendiary magistrates ensure that the volume of work in the magistrates courts is processed speedily.

There are far too many tribunals for me to mention them all individually and to give them the credit which they deserve. Much of the adjudications process for social security benefits generally falls not to judges but to tribunals. Social security tribunal appeals chairmen fulfil the important role of presiding over the appeals of those who are dissatisfied with the decisions on their claims for social security benefits. Similar tribunals operate in relation to medical and disability appeals. There is a further appeal in limited circumstances to a social security commissioner who is also appointed by the Lord Chancellor. Those tribunals, which come under the umbrella of the independent tribunals service, are shortly to receive the addition to their number of the new child support appeal tribunals.

I have ranged as widely as I reasonably can over the matters mentioned this evening. I am sorry that I have not been able to mention by name and individually all the excellent contributors—not only Conservative Members, but Opposition Members. Rather surprisingly, the debate has turned, in an interesting and unpredictable week, into a rather valuable Thursday debate. I add my personal thanks for the quality of the contributions. We can look forward to a very interesting, if not long, Committee.

I quote the leading article in *The Independent*. It says:

"There is little doubt that in Lord Mackay and Lord Taylor, the legal system has its best leadership for at least a generation."

So be it, Madam Speaker.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly red a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee, pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

JUDICIAL PENSIONS AND RETIREMENT BILL

[Lords] [Money]

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Judicial Pensions and Retirement Bill *[Lords]*, it is expedient to authorise—

(a) the charging on, and payment out of, the Consolidated Fund of such pensions and other benefits (including additional benefits attributable to the payment of voluntary contributions under or by virtue of the Act) as may be specified in that behalf under or by virtue of the Act;

(b) the payment of sums out of the Consolidated Fund for the purposes of any transfer under or by virtue of the Act of a person's rights in respect of pensions or other benefits charged on, and payable out of, that Fund, whether under or by virtue of the Act or any other enactment;

(c) the charging on, or payment out of, the Consolidated Fund of any increase attributable to the provisions of the Act in the sums charged on, or payable out of, that Fund under or by virtue of any other enactment;

(d) the payment out of money provided by Parliament of—

(i) such pensions and other benefits provided under or by virtue of the Act (including additional benefits attributable to the payment of voluntary contributions under or by virtue of the Act) as are not charged on the Consolidated Fund:

(ii) any sums required for the purposes of any transfer under or by virtue of the Act of a

person's rights in respect of pensions or other benefits payable under or by virtue of the Act or any other enactment, to the extent that those sums do not fall to be paid out of the Consolidated Fund;

(iii) any sums required in connection with the operation or administration of any scheme for the provision of such additional benefits as are mentioned in paragraph (a) or sub-paragraph (i) above;

(iv) any administrative expenses incurred under the Act by a Minister of the Crown or government department; and

(v) any increase attributable to the Act in the sums payable out of money so provided under any other enactment; and

(e) the payment of sums into the Consolidated Fund.

—[Mr. Wood.]

PETITION

Fleet Maintenance and Repair Organisation

9.59 pm

Mr. David Martin (Portsmouth, South): I present a petition on behalf of Portsmouth city council concerning the fleet maintenance and repair organisation in Portsmouth dockyard. It is a significant local employer, which is vital to the economic well-being of many of my constituents. The petition reads:

Wherefore your humble Petitioners pray that your Honourable House will urge Her Majesty's Government to sustain the Fleet Maintenance and Repair Organisation at an operationally cost-effective level and review the need for job losses, phase any unavoidable job losses, support the bid for the area to become an Assisted Area and recognise the need for a programme of economic adjustment to support the changeover from defence to other industries in a planned way, co-ordinate counselling and redeployment measures and assist in the rapid release of unused Ministry of Defence land to make this available for redevelopment.

And your petitioners as in duty bound will ever pray &c.

To lie upon the Table.

Rolls-Royce, Leavesden

10 pm

Mr. Richard Page (Hertfordshire, South-West): I present a petition on behalf of the workers of Rolls-Royce at Leavesden. In essence, it asks the House whether it considers that those workers, who are responsible and technically skilled, and who have provided support for the Ministry of Defence in servicing helicopter engines year after year, should be allowed to quote for that business. It asks the House not to allow the work to be handed to a French company on a plate without competition. It is the subject of an Adjournment debate which I shall have the privilege to present tomorrow afternoon. The petition reads:

Wherefore the Petitioners pray that your Honourable House urge the Prime Minister and the Ministers of Defence, Trade and Industry in the light of forthcoming committed industrial participation to retain the job skills and workforce to support the Aerospace industry within the United Kingdom.

To lie upon the Table.

Urban Programme Funding

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

10.2 pm

Mr. Clive Betts (Sheffield, Attercliffe): I wish the House to consider the urban programme and its termination by the Government for reasons that are so far unexplained to the House. The urban programme began in its present form with the Inner Urban Areas Act 1978. That was preceded by a White Paper which is the only in-depth review of the needs of inner urban areas for the past 20 years.

Under this Government in the 1980s, there was a shift in emphasis from social and revenue-based programmes to economic and capital schemes. There was stricter monitoring of the schemes and programmes introduced in the 1980s. Detailed guidelines were introduced in 1985, and further management controls were introduced in 1990.

I take Sheffield, my city, as an example of what has been achieved under the urban programme, although I know that my remarks will be applicable to many other urban programme authorities. Sheffield happens to be the largest recipient this year, with £5·894 million under the urban programme. The programme is an important source of Government funding, especially in view of the reductions that local authorities have suffered.

The Government, when reviewing urban programme spending in Sheffield, found high-quality schemes which were precisely targeted, well developed formal assessment and appraisal arrangements, clearly defined and precisely stated objectives and an outturn performance that was delivered significantly well against allocations. That is not the normal picture of Sheffield city council which the Government like to paint.

In particular, I want to deal with the schemes that address and assist the problems of the unemployed and which come within the economic category of the programme. There has been a switch of emphasis during the 1980s, and I want to deal with the issue on the Government's terms. However, the social, housing and environmental aspects of the scheme are also important. The purpose of the Inner Urban Areas Act 1978 and the White Paper that preceded it was to highlight the issue of multiple deprivation in our inner cities and to produce new initiatives to tackle that problem.

The problems of unemployment have worsened since the urban programme began. While the programme has done much to assist the fight against unemployment, because of the wider economic difficulties we can see the horror of unemployment becoming worse in our urban areas.

The essential question must be: if the programme was designed to remove deprivation in inner cities; if unemployment is a key part of that deprivation—no one would challenge that—if, despite some successes, because of the wider issues, the problem of unemployment has grown worse, why should the urban programme be abandoned at this stage? If anything, the case is more obvious for an expansion of the urban programme to deal with those growing problems.

In the 1970s in Sheffield, unemployment varied between 10,000 and 15,000. By 1986, it had risen to more than 45,000. It had increased threefold. There was a slight recovery in 1990, but in the past two years it has risen by 44 per cent.

In Darnall in my constituency, one third of the people are out of work. Job losses have been greatest among the less skilled, the ethnic minorities and manual workers. They are the very groups that comprise large parts of the population in inner urban areas. In Sheffield in 1992, it is interesting to note that the unemployment levels in the most prosperous parts of the city have almost returned to the levels of the 1970s.

However, unemployment in the inner city is three times as high as it was in the 1970s. In other words, relative deprivation has grown. There must therefore be a need for more targeted resources. The logical view is that we need more schemes like the urban programme, not fewer.

No doubt the Government will respond by saying that other schemes have been introduced. Sheffield has no city challenge, despite an obvious need and despite, in our view, the quality of the bid. The Minister will probably say that the rejection letters become more pleasant each year, but that still does not give us the money.

We have an urban development corporation; we did not necessarily want it in the form given, but we accepted it. We asked for certain assurances, one of which was that there would not be a reduction in the urban programme to reflect the increased money through the urban development corporation. That assurance was given by the then Minister of State. To take a wider view of the problems of inner-city Sheffield, the people who live in the area have a life expectancy six to eight years less than those who live in the outer parts of the city.

I want now to consider some of the schemes that we have undertaken. Some £2 million from the urban development programme in addition to funding from the European regional development fund was devoted to a technology park. Some £4 million was spent on improving the appalling environment after the collapse of the steel industry in the lower Don valley to make it attractive for inward investment.

In addition, £1·5 million was devoted to the cultural industries quarter, which helped to create 300 to 400 jobs. There is on-going funding in relation to the black economic development fund and improvement grants to firms in improvement areas. There are business support schemes and a wide variety of schemes concentrating on the economy, regeneration, training and development. Partnership between the private and voluntary sectors is very much a feature of Sheffield life.

In Tinsley, schemes involving housing action money and transport supplementary grants have been used with urban programme funding to improve the environment of an area which had been neglected. That area has been improved and assisted by urban programme funding.

I will not quote from the city council or its officers to prove the scheme's success. However, particular credit should be paid to Phil Nuttall, the urban programme co-ordinator in Sheffield. Much of the success is due to him. Instead, I will quote from the audit review:

"The Council's allocation for 1990-91 was £6 million. About 55 per cent. of the programme is for economic development. Officers from the DoE's regional office in Leeds were very positive about the Council's approach. Their opinions were that the Council's programmes are of excellent quality, are submitted promptly and are monitored well by the Council. Also, the Council has more projects planned than

[Mr. Clive Betts]

resources are available from the DoE. Hence, more resources can be taken easily by the Council at short notice, which DoE officers thought to be very good practice."

Looking forward to next year, officers and councillors were planning as usual. In February 1992 came 44 pages of DoE guidance for the 1993-94 programme. In June 1992, a letter came inviting bids, with seven further pages of guidance. There were 51 pages of guidance in all for a programme which was to become non-existent.

Following this, the council produced an action statement for 1993-94, which was submitted to the Department of Environment in August and approved formally by that Department in September. The only information that the council had was that funding was likely to be 7 per cent. lower because of top-slicing of city challenge.

The implication was clear that the schemes would continue next year, including new schemes which had been submitted. In October, the submission was made with the scheduling of projects with regional officers of the DoE.

More important than all the work of the councillors and the council officers is the fact that the people of Sheffield in the urban areas have been actively involved in consultation about the projects and have had their hopes and expectations raised.

Then came the autumn statement, with the Government's emphasis on unemployment. Apparently it was no longer to be the price worth paying to ensure lower inflation. Capital investment was top of the agenda for spending. Some of us might have questioned whether that was just talk, or whether the Government were about positive action.

Some of us even welcomed some of the initiatives on private investment alongside public investment but also recognised that, in inner urban areas, it is much more difficult, because of their nature, to attract private sector funding unless public sector pump priming is there as well, but to us the urban programme criteria seemed to fit exactly with Government objectives: targeted spending on Government priorities; Government monitoring of performance; partnership with the private and voluntary sectors, Government and local authorities; increasingly economy-related, dealing with training and jobs; assistance to the poorest areas; new initiatives and innovations; successful projects approved by the Government's own monitoring; and infrastructure development. They were all key issues.

Shortly after the autumn statement, however, a letter arrived on the doorsteps of leaders of local authorities. It began by saying:

"we have been able to maintain the Urban Programme at £176 million for 1993/4".

In itself, that was a misleading statement, as maintaining it would have meant £250 million, not £176 million.

"This will allow some £20 million for new projects which we have decided will form the urban element of Capital Partnership."

That is a minuscule and inadequate response to the real needs of urban areas.

"These arrangements will therefore supersede the Urban programme guidance issued in February, although we will continue to meet UP commitments arising from approvals in this and previous financial years."

The urban programme has been terminated by the back door without reference to this House in mealy-mouthed words. They did not even have the honesty to admit what they meant.

To say it was an unexpected letter would be an understatement: it was received with amazement and incredulity. In my view, it was contrary to the autumn statement. It is a disaster for the poorest communities—a hidden cut which the Government was trying to sneak through the back door in an effort to keep within the public spending total, while allowing high-profile projects like the Jubilee line to proceed. This means that the poorest of my constituents are being asked to pay for a train ride to docklands which they do not want to take. The Government make no attempt at explanation.

To say that existing projects will be honoured is not true. Capital schemes which are committed to spend beyond March 1995, councillors and council officers have been told, will not be supported or funded after that date. Even commitments which have already been entered into will not be funded after March next year, even though commitments. I look to the Minister for a response on those important points. There has been no explanation for this fundamental change of policy.

In the meantime, the problems of our inner-city areas remain. Local authorities will be left to pick up the pieces. The same local authorities which have just been rigidly capped by the Government, and which will have to make cuts in their expenditure because of that capping regime, will have to curtail expenditure in areas that need it most. Councils cannot possibly redirect the main thrust of their mainstream programmes when they are under attack because of Government actions. It is impossible for councils and councillors to cope with the situation, and those same councillors are continually denigrated by Ministers for failing to cope with the impossible task that the Government have set them.

The other day, someone asked me the difference between being an Opposition Member in Westminster and the leader of a city council in the current climate. I replied that it was essentially the difference between throwing the hand grenades and having to catch them. Many councillors feel that way, given the present situation.

The need still exists, and people in inner-city areas should be our main interest and our main commitment in terms of assistance. There is still bad housing, a poor environment, poverty, unemployment and the multiple deprivation which the Inner Urban Areas Act 1978 was meant to help remove.

The urban programme has had some successes. It has not solved all the problems of inner-city areas, but it has improved on a desperate situation for many people. Are the Government serious about tackling unemployment? If they are, they have to be serious about tackling it where it is greatest—or is it still a price worth paying for those who live in our inner cities?

The urban programme will not remove the tragedy, waste and hopelessness of unemployment in the inner urban areas, but its removal will only make unemployment that much worse. I hope that the Government will accept their mistake in abolishing the programme, will accept that they have got it wrong, and—for the sake of £80 million in the next financial year—will restore it immediately and commit themselves to a major review of the needs of such areas. That review would prove the need for a significant expansion of schemes like the urban programme.

Yesterday evening, Sheffield city council unanimously, with all-party support, expressed its concern over the termination of the urban programme. It considered the action unacceptable and called on the Secretary of State to review the situation and to meet a delegation from the city. I hope that he will meet that delegation, to give it the good news that the programme is to continue.

10.16 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Robin Squire): The hon. Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Betts) has raised a subject which I know is of concern and interest to many. I want to get to the issues of policy eventually, but I must respond to his account of the way in which we introduced changes to the urban programme and introduced the urban partnership fund.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment announced the new capital partnership initiative on Friday 13 November—there is no significance in that date—and on the same day I wrote to all 57 urban programme authority leaders, to tell them about the implications of my right hon. Friend's announcement for the programme and our proposals for the urban partnership fund. That letter was copied to each and every local Member of Parliament. We followed that up with further guidance from Department of the Environment regional directors on 20 November, and my officials met about 50 local authority representatives including someone from Sheffield council, at the Association of Metropolitan Authorities headquarters on 26 November.

I hope that, on reflection, the hon. Gentleman will agree that that was a rather public way of "sliding an announcement out through the back door", to quote his earlier comments. I am also very aware of the work which local authorities and their partners have put into working up their urban programmes. The timing of the autumn statement and the decisions on relaxing the rules on useable capital receipts inevitably meant that work on urban programmes for 1993-94 was well advanced before we announced changes. I repeat that we took the first opportunity to let local authorities know the position.

Outside this Chamber, I was criticised by the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw), the Opposition spokesman on local government matters, because the letters were not signed by me. I was in a provincial town at the time and was anxious for the information to go to all the councils affected as quickly as possible.

I would also like to scotch the rumour that all urban programme expenditure is ceasing as of now. I know that some voluntary organisations have been uncertain about this and I am grateful to the hon. Member for giving me the opportunity to clarify the position. I must make it quite clear that we have made provision to meet in 1993-94 and 1994-95 urban programme commitments which have already been entered into in 1992-93 or earlier.

With regard to the point which the hon. Member made about years after 1995-96, there is certainly provision to meet revenue commitments for that year. Individual projects commitments should be discussed with regional offices. I know that there has already been some discussion between council officers and my regional office officials on this point, and I would expect that to continue.

Where projects have already been given a three-year approval, or four-year approval in the case of some voluntary sector projects, provision has been made for these commitments to be met. There is no question of our having cut off funding to existing approved projects. Indeed, some projects, because of the nature of their approvals, will continue to receive funding into 1995-96.

The hon. Gentleman naturally concentrated his remarks on the urban programme. The UP was for a long time the mainstay of urban policy. Originally conceived as a social programme in 1968, it has been steadily adapted and developed over the years. It assumed roughly its current shape after the 1977 inner cities White Paper. It has therefore had a very long run, and over its life tens of thousands of projects have been supported in urban areas. I fully recognise the contribution which the programme has made to urban regeneration over the years.

It would be unrealistic, however, to think that the urban programme is the sole answer to urban problems. Since 1979, we have developed a range of instruments alongside the UP to improve the competitiveness of our cities and the lives of local people. Urban development corporations, including the very active one in Sheffield, have attracted some £12 billion in private sector investment and created or attracted over 69,000 jobs. City grant and direct land grant have also levered in substantial private investment, and their approaches will be incorporated and carried forward in the Urban Regeneration Agency. On the housing side, initiatives such as estate action have made a tremendous impact on inner city and peripheral areas of problem housing.

I therefore think that the hon. Gentleman took a rather selective view of the resources which we are putting into urban areas. He did not mention, for instance, that we have secured an extra £93 million for the urban block as a whole for 1993-94 over the previously published plan. Taken together, total urban programme and city challenge resources will increase from £319 million in 1992-93 to £408 million in 1993-94. I would have thought this maintained commitment to urban areas in a tough economic climate would receive at least a flicker of acknowledgement from the hon. Gentleman.

On top of this, local authorities will have extra spending power in 1993-94 as a result of the changes in the capital receipts rules that I have mentioned. If authorities continue to realise capital receipts at the same level as they are forecasting for 1992-93, we estimate that the 57 urban authorities will have extra spending power of around £500 million as a result of the change in the capital receipts rule.

It is, of course, for each authority to decide how and when to use this extra spending power, but the urban partnership fund will help make these receipts go even further and directly support urban regeneration. The urban partnership fund will use uncommitted urban programme resources of up to £20 million. As the hon. Gentleman said, details of how the fund will operate have been placed in the Library of the House.

There is one change to our earlier advice to local authorities which I should mention to the House. In response to representations from the AMA, we have extended the deadline for bids to be submitted from 31 December 1992 to 15 January 1993. This will give authorities more time to prepare bids and to weigh up the use to which they intend to put their capital receipts.

The point of the urban partnership fund is to work alongside and complement other initiatives in urban areas. Anyone who is involved in the inner cities knows that each city has a different spectrum of problems and

[Mr. Robin Squire]

characteristics which call for a range of measures to tackle them. Hon. Members will be familiar with the combination of problems which come together in many urban areas such as the decline of traditional industries, unemployment, which the hon. Gentleman rightly highlighted, low skill base and educational achievement, crime, poor housing. That is why the drive to regenerate our cities calls for an effort across Government Departments and agencies and closely involving the private sector and local communities.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned city challenge. I was closely involved in looking at city challenge bids. What struck me above all else was the diversity of the problems that faced the different areas, matched by an equal diversity in the solutions and initiatives which were developed to address them. There is some force in the argument that we could do more to simplify and streamline urban policy, but the fact remains that we need a flexible and responsive set of instruments to tackle urban needs.

Even more important than getting the instruments and structure right is engaging the commitment and enthusiasm of local people and local businesses. Here, we have learnt from the urban programme and other initiatives. Partnership was built into city challenge from the word go, not grafted on as an afterthought. Ted Cantle, chief executive of Nottingham, wrote in the *Local Government Chronicle* of 4 September this year:

"No other regeneration project has, in my experience, ever created the same spirit of partnership and concentrated determination."

Ted Cantle also said:

"attempts by local authorities to involve others in the process of change and to actually devolve power can strengthen, rather than weaken, local government."

That was a key message. Public money goes a great deal further if it is backed by local effort. Even old urban hands have told me that they have been astonished by the enthusiasm which has been unleashed by city challenge. In many ways, city challenge draws out and applies best practice from the urban programme.

Of the 57 urban programme authorities, 32 currently benefit from city challenge, and as the hon. Gentleman pointed out, his city is not yet among them. We are fully committed to the approach embodied by city challenge of a locally devised and applied strategy, partnership with the private sector and the local community and effective management.

Even in areas which have not yet been successful with their city challenge bids, the whole process of bidding and putting together partnerships has yielded some valuable results. In Plymouth, for example, the local partnership responsible for the bid will, as "Plymouth 2000", seek to take forward major investment proposals. Burnley is exploring with my Department and other partners how major development projects contained in its bid can be supported. Through the city action teams and the Department's regional offices, we will do all we can to support and encourage such initiatives.

We shall be looking closely at the performance of the first two rounds of city challenge in deciding if and when to have a third round. The early results are encouraging. We shall also be looking at the outcome of the 1991 census in deciding the shape of urban policy for the next few years.

The hon. Gentleman drew attention particularly to the problems of unemployment and deprivation in Sheffield. I assure him that the review that I have in mind for early next year will be a thorough review of urban needs, drawing on the results of the 1991 census. It will cover multiple deprivation and will inform policy decisions for 1993-94 onwards. Among other things, it will cover unemployment, housing and dereliction. The results of the 1991 census should be available in January or February 1993. Only then shall we have a clear picture of how urban needs have shifted since 1981.

There are some measures we can take which do not depend on the census results. We need to simplify further the administration of support for urban areas. That is why, for areas of derelict and vacant land, the Urban Regeneration Agency will, at a stroke, bring together three existing instruments: derelict land grant, city grant and English Estates. We have already simplified procedures for city challenge and are looking at the potential for further rationalisation. The aim must be to make our programmes accessible to local people and local businesses while maintaining a proper regard for value for money.

The hon. Gentleman invited me to receive a deputation from Sheffield. I assure him, and other hon. Members, that my door is always open to authorities which want to discuss constructive ways to promote urban regeneration.

As the hon. Gentleman may know, I paid an early visit to Sheffield after the city challenge announcement, specifically to meet the partners behind the unsuccessful bid. I remain available to discuss with other authorities how we take forward the many exciting initiatives that are now available.

Mr. Betts: I have listened to the Minister with great interest. I understand that he is undertaking a review and examining many new initiatives. However, I have not yet heard an explanation why, while the review is taking place, the urban programme, with its proven success, has been effectively terminated and replaced by new schemes. Why was the urban programme not continued until the review had been completed and we had examined other schemes to see whether they were more suitable to achieve the success that we wanted?

Mr. Squire: The hon. Gentleman will be aware of the background to the autumn statement, in which my right hon. Friend the Chancellor said that, against tight controls on public expenditure, we would emphasise capital projects. As I made clear, the total urban block has been not merely preserved, but marginally increased. Within that block, we have emphasised capital projects, which is why the urban programme has been reduced.

I did not come here to be controversial. I hesitate even to mention the subject, but I find it a bit rich that the Government are blamed for the revenue problems that Sheffield city council faces at present. Any problems that the council faces—I have considerable sympathy with it—did not arise primarily from any Government actions. They arose from past leadership of the council and decisions taken by it. I have much sympathy with the people of Sheffield, who must now pay the price. It is not

fair or reasonable, but untrue, to suggest that the problems resulted from Government decisions. It is important to put that on record.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-nine minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 4 December 1992

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

United Nations

9.35 am

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend (Bexleyheath): I beg to move,

That this House pays tribute to the work of the United Nations and its agencies; congratulates the Government on the success of the Summit Meeting of the Security Council on 31st January; welcomes the Report of the Secretary-General Dr. Boutros Ghali, An Agenda for Peace, that flowed from it; considers that a speedy return by the United Kingdom to UNESCO is in the national interest; and seeks further action from the Government to improve the ability of the United Nations to secure justice and human rights and to maintain international peace and security.

I believe that this is the first time that the House has had an opportunity to debate the United Nations for many a year. By chance, we have chosen a particularly topical occasion. We heard with relief this morning the news of the release of the three British service men serving with the United Nations force in Cambodia. We learnt of the resolution of the Security Council in New York to authorise the dispatch of 28,000 American service men to that troubled, blighted country of Somalia. I hope that it will be not a one-nation force but multinational and will come under the full command and control of the United Nations.

Rather more disconcertingly, we heard from Serbia that British soldiers have been attacked from both sides. I hope that I will have a chance to say more about the former Yugoslavia in due course.

I will not speak too long. A former Speaker once said that speeches, to be immortal, do not need to be eternal. That is wise advice for us practitioners on the Back Benches, particularly as I spoke after a 53-minute speech by a Labour Member last week.

I am delighted that my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office is on the Government Front Bench. He and I have already had two chews at this subject. I was lucky enough last Thursday to initiate an Adjournment debate on UN peacekeeping. Last Friday we debated the middle east, on a motion moved by the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), who has come to have a second bite today.

My right hon. and hon. Friends will not be surprised if I take out one or two hobby horses and ride them around the paddock. For heaven's sake, if, after 18 years' membership of the House, one secures the first motion for debate on a Friday, one is a fool if one does not do so.

The background to the United Nations is the failure of the League of Nations to stand up to the aggression that broke out in Europe in the 1930s and which led to the second world war. We must never forget that failure to resist aggression. It was very much in my mind when we debated what to do about Kuwait and whether we should take on the military might of that ruthless dictator Saddam Hussein. The United Nations was conceived during the war. It was set up to take account of the political situation in the world in 1945.

I approach the subject of the United Nations with considerable humility. Recently I became chairman of the United Nations parliamentary group. Members of that group have spent much of their lives seeking to improve the performance and practices of the United Nations. When Lord Gladwyn sent me his £2 subscription the other day, I looked him up and found that, when I had a satchel on my back and was wearing shorts, he was acting Secretary-General of the United Nations. He then went on to be a very distinguished ambassador in New York.

I have placed on the Order Paper the words

"congratulates the Government on the success of the Summit Meeting of the Security Council on 31st January".

My advice to Back Benchers is that we should all resist congratulating Governments. If there is one thing worse than an obstreperous and bullying Whip—we do not have one here today—it is a smug Whip who is being congratulated. Members on both sides of the House should be able to unite on that point. "Congratulates" seemed to me, however, to be the appropriate word to use.

I believe that the United Kingdom is in a special and privileged position within the United Nations. Therefore, it behoves us to give a lead to that body. There was no better way of doing that than calling the special summit. The Prime Minister reported back to us on 3 February of this year and told us:

"I called the meeting in New York during our chairmanship of the Security Council so that the Council could meet at the highest level to reaffirm and develop its commitment to peacekeeping and peacemaking. The timing was particularly apt following the appointment of a new Secretary-General and with Russia taking the seat in the Security Council formerly held by the Soviet Union. The meeting was successful . . . This was the first time in the 47 years of its history that the UN had met at the top level. For the first time ever, the Heads of State and Government of the United States, Russia, China, France and Britain sat around the same table and pledged themselves, with the other members of the Council, to collective security, to international law and to our commitments under the United Nations charter."—[*Official Report*, 3 February 1992; Vol. 203, c. 21.]

The new Secretary-General's report "An Agenda for Peace" flowed from that meeting.

I understand that the British Government did not initially support the election of Dr. Boutros Boutros Ghali —perhaps for good reasons—but I believe that he will be a very capable and interesting Secretary-General. He has had great diplomatic and ministerial experience in Egypt. He is a Coptic Christian. His wife is Jewish. He played a big part in the peace talks between Egypt and Israel.

I warmly welcome "An Agenda for Peace"—I know that it is the bedside reading of my colleagues on these Benches. In 50 pages it makes, in very readable language, a number of sensible proposals. The Secretary-General not only produced this admirable report; he has also carried out a considerable measure of reform within the United Nations. There have been new appointments and a slimming down of the bureaucracy, which every hon. Member will welcome.

From this distance I am not sure whether I know enough about what more should be done in New York, but I am advised by those who know something about it that there are still too many committees, still too much international bureaucracy, and still too much waste. We have to accept that 166 individual sovereign countries, will

[Mr. Cyril D. Townsend]

rightly, ask that some of their diplomats should serve in New York, but when it comes to selection for promotion I should like greater emphasis to be placed on merit. That should be the key factor. The bureaucracy in New York has to deal on a day-to-day basis with the sophistication of the British Foreign Office, or the Quai d'Orsay, or the German equivalent. The United Nations bureaucracy is not yet up to the required standard.

The Secretary-General also drew attention to a major problem: the mismatch between the aims and wishes of the Security Council—and, I believe, of the General Assembly—and the financial reality. An unplumbed, salt-estranging sea lies between the two. The situation is frightening. The Secretary-General wrote recently:

"As of September 1992"—

only a few weeks ago—

"only 52 Member States had paid in full their dues to the regular budget of the United Nations. Unpaid assessed contributions total $908·5 million. Unpaid contributions towards peace-keeping operations stood at $844·4 million. At the end of August 1992, I was able to pay the salaries of the regular staff of this Organization only through borrowing from peace-keeping funds with available cash."

I am delighted to be able to tell the House that the Government have a superb record in paying their membership dues on time.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): What about the United States?

Mr. Townsend: The hon. Gentleman leads me into my next point. I am ashamed to find that a number of allies have not yet paid their dues. In July of this year, the United States of America owed the peacekeeping budget $277 million, Russia $202 million, Germany $73 million, Japan—recently I welcomed the Japanese contribution to the peacekeeping force in Cambodia—$48 million and France $47 million. When my right hon. and learned Friend meets the ambassadors of those countries, in particular Ambassador Ray Sykes, who is a great success in London, I hope that he will have a private word with them about countries that demand more peacekeeping by the United Nations but cannot get round to signing and posting a cheque.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): I do not argue with the general thrust of the hon. Gentleman's argument; I agree entirely with him. Simply for the record, however, may I say that the information that has been given to me is that the United States is by far the largest defaulter, as he said. It owes about $295 million to the United Nations regular budget and $145 million to the separate peacekeeping account. That amounts to $440 million, rather than the figure that the hon. Gentleman quoted. They are only figures, and I am absolutely sure that the principle is right, but my figure is almost double that which the hon. Gentleman gave.

Mr. Townsend: I shall leave it to my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State to deal with that point. I am clutching a paper that the General Assembly produced in July 1992, which shows that at that stage the United States owed $277 million.

There was, naturally, some talk at the special summit about who should be permanent members of the Security Council. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has made it perfectly clear that he feels that such a discussion is a distraction, that there is plenty of work to be done, and that the Security Council is working well. Those are admirable sentiments and there is much foundation to them, but the House should be aware that countries such as Germany, Japan, Brazil, India and Egypt think that they should have, if not a place in the sun, then a seat on the Security Council. It will not be easy for the United Kingdom permanently to defend the fact that, because the United Nations was set up at the end of the war, the United Kingdom, which has a comparatively low per capita income compared with that of other countries and a comparatively small defence force, should still maintain a permanent seat. At the end of the war the Royal Navy had about 600 surface ships but now has about 40 destroyers and frigates.

I hope that the Government will continue to do all they can to maintain our seat on the Security Council—they would be foolish not to—but we must be aware of which way the wind is blowing. We must justify our position with considerable activity.

I want to turn to an issue that is to the fore of the work of the United Nations—the sovereignty argument. In the hot summer of 1990, I had the pleasure of attending a conference in the beautiful surroundings of Ditchley park. The subject was the United Nations and its future. There was a long and excellent debate on the sovereignty question. I saw, in full array, the formidable legal might of the Foreign Office defending the unique concept of sovereignty. The advice of those learned gentlemen was that, once one moves that basic principle, one is in dangerous uncharted seas. When I said that perhaps there was something to be said for a change, they said, "No wonder this chap is still a Back Bencher. Has not he thought of Northern Ireland? What happens if the General Assembly reacts to a development in Northern Ireland and wants to send a peacekeeping force there?" The overwhelming view was that we should not change the status quo.

I remember arguing in 1990 the specific case of a United Nations convoy that had been trying to get food to a Palestinian refugee camp in southern Lebanon but was held up by a bloody-minded militia group. I remember thinking at the time, when women and children were starving in the mud, despair and squalor of those Palestinian camps, "Surely to God the United Nations, in the name of humanity, can force its way through that militia road block."

When the plight of the Kurds first broke on our television screens, the Government thought that nothing should be done. That was an understandable attitude. Public pressure mounted and, as we know, a successful operation was carried out—against, I believe, the wishes of the Secretary-General at that time and of many members of the General Assembly. It was a watershed and the situation has changed notably since then. I welcome that, but we should be cautious.

I attach to that what I call the United Nations imperial role. I am afraid that I must criticise the Foreign Secretary rather severely for using the word "Imperial" in a key speech on this subject which got the debate off on the wrong foot. The concept that the Foreign Secretary advanced, however, is extremely important, and I support it.

In a few weeks' time, the military position in Somalia will be transformed. Any baron who stands up to a force of United States Marines rather than bury his weapon in

the sand needs his head examined. Peace will prevail in Somalia before long, but the problem is that government has broken down. The schools do not function, the sewage plants have been damaged, and there is no health service, no work and no jobs. The country needs government. A new team of civil service must be trained. The schools must start working again, teachers must be imported, and the infrastructure must be rebuilt. I unhesitatingly say that that role must be performed by the United Nations. We must establish a new system of trusteeship, and I understand that we shall have to give it another name. We shall not have district commissioners or district officers, but my colleagues will agree that the principle is important: the United Nations should have the capacity to run, for perhaps five or 10 years, an independent sovereign country and bring it back to such a state that it can become independent, sovereign and have its own elected Parliament.

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): I accept my hon. Friend's general proposition that there can be no lasting solution to Somalia's problems without the restoration of a proper administration, but that does not mean that one must go down precisely the detailed road that he suggests. Under the effective system of protectorates, a nation would take on actitivies that he suggests on the United Nation's behalf.

Mr. Townsend: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. There are a number of ways of proceeding. He and I agree that the United Nations should be given powers to take over the administration of an independent country and bring it back to such a state that it can stand on its own feet and be independent and sovereign.

Mr. Rogers: Surely the hon. Gentleman will refute the proposition that we should return to the old concept of protectorates, with certain countries having economic and political control over particular areas. That was one of the disastrous measures taken betwen the two world wars which has led to so many problems since.

Mr. Townsend: I shall leave it to the hon. Gentleman to answer the point when he makes his speech.

I want to come to the need for Britain to rejoin UNESCO, about which I have taken up much of the House's time in Adjournment debates. I have a sore head on it, and I do not mind telling my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister that I believe that we have behaved disgracefully and that the sooner we rejoin the better. Ronald Reagan and the Heritage Foundation issued a lot of highly misleading propaganda about UNESCO. I am not an idealist about UNESCO. Many years ago, I had an Adjournment debate on the famous world information order, which has been disastrous; the organisation has been a shambles for many years. But if we wish to remain on the Security Council, the universality rule is fundamental. In its 1985 report, the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs concluded:

"A breach by the United Kingdom of the principle of universality in the UN and its Agencies could have long-term, and damaging, consequences for those organisations, and not merely for UNESCO alone."

When we were a member of UNESCO, we did better than most from it. We were one of the founder members and the conference that established it was held across Parliament square at the Institution of Civil Engineers. From the outset, Britain was on the inside track getting the goodies. British publishing houses and British consultants did well out of UNESCO. Since we left UNESCO, France has very sensibly been pushing the French language at our expense and at that of the English language. Our English-speaking friends in the Commonwealth do not understand why we do not stand up for British interests and for their interests. In any one year we earned more money from UNESCO than we put into it.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State and I have been around this course already. He will say that we cannot afford the £9 million which is at stake, but I can happily name some aspects of Government expenditure on which we should not be spending £9 million but on which we are spending that sum. If it comes to the crunch, I should deny a famous cavalry regiment of the Rhine Army—or what is left of it—two tanks so that we could get back into UNESCO and also help our balance of payments. I believe that the so-called cultural establishment is overwhelmingly in favour of our return. We are missing a trick.

The other day I wrote to one of my right hon. and learned Friend's colleagues in the Foreign Office. It got my goat when I had it explained to me that we could best influence the important reforms that have been taking place in UNESCO by standing back and scolding from the touchlines. You know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, how, with regard to the European Community, I and colleagues argue that we need to be on the field representing Britain and putting forward a British view instead of being told what to do. However, when it comes to UNESCO, we are told how much better we shall do by not having a shirt on our back and not being on the field. That is nonsense, and I should welcome our return. We left UNESCO on Ronald Reagan's coat tails, and it would be a shame if we returned on Clinton's coat tails. Let us go in with him, or before him.

Time is running out, but I wish to alight briefly on one or two trouble spots and the first must be Bosnia. My right hon. and learned Friend knows that I am extremely cautious, although some of my colleagues will argue in the opposite vein. I read that the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) has said that there is danger in going in half-cocked; he wants a far greater commitment from us and the United Nations. I am on the opposite side of the argument. There have been civil wars, disputes and feuds in that part of the world for hundreds of years. There is a possible analogy with Ireland.

The problems are deep seated, and my advice to the Government and, indeed, to the United Nations is to understand the strict limits and not to become party to a dispute. If we start bombing the Serbian artillery positions —and, God knows, the Serbs have behaved badly enough —we will put at risk the lives of the 3,000 British service men in that country and will have to withdraw the humanitarian aid on which we are concentrating. It should be a United Nations operation. We should concentrate on the humanitarian work and recognise the limits of the United Nations activity in this day and age.

I know that some colleagues will have a different view, but I did not welcome the dispatch of the Cheshires. It is a famous, down-to-earth, professional regiment, conducting itself with great ability and having considerable success. However, it has been placed in a very dangerous position and given an almost impossible task. It is sitting in white boxes, without artillery support or air cover, and we learn from the newspapers today that it has come under

[Mr. Townsend]

fire from both sides. I look forward to the day when my right hon. and learned Friend will tell us that the Cheshires have been withdrawn and that we are supporting the United Nations in that bitterly divided country with signallers, medical orderlies and truck drivers but without deploying a British infantry battalion.

It will be no surprise to the House if I deal now with the middle east, which was the subject of the debate initiated last Friday by the hon. Member for Linlithgow. I pay tribute to President Bush and Secretary of State Baker for getting the peace talks going. They have lasted a year. The problem is not a matter only for the American Administration under Bush or Clinton. There are vital United Nations resolutions on the books and the point of the Kuwaiti operation was to pay respect to those resolutions—we cannot pick and choose dishes from the menu. The United Nations passed resolution 242—a British-sponsored resolution—which deals with land for peace. It is essential that at some stage—I am not saying now—the United Nations becomes involved in the peacemaking process in the middle east.

The phrase "self-determination" is in the United Nations charter, which is a splendid document. I ask my colleagues please not to say, "What does that matter in such a situation?" When the self-determination of 1,800 Falkland Islanders who had decided to live 8,000 miles away was at stake, we took military action and lost about 250 lives in the process. We thought that the Falkland Islanders were entitled to self-determination and not to be ruled by the Argentine army but to choose their own political leaders. I say without hesitation that the Palestinians are also entitled not to be ruled by an army of occupation and a brigadier but, in due course, to elect their own leaders.

I deal briefly with Cyprus. My colleagues know that over the years I have taken up a great deal of the House's time in talking about Cyprus. I started my life there as a young soldier and guarded the last colonial governor of Cyprus. I was very nearly killed by EOKA, so I have no illusions about that tragic and bitterly divided island. As I recently told my right hon. and learned Friend, the watering down of the British contingent to the United Nations' peacekeeping force there was an error of judgment and was ill received in the south. It gives an unhappy example which others will follow.

I want to deal with the peace process rather than the peace force in Cyprus. To all intents and purposes, the talks have broken down and a good early-day motion deals with that. In this case, the Secretary-General has allocated blame to an unusual extent

Mr. Nirj Joseph Deva (Brentford and Isleworth) *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Townsend: My hon. Friend the Member for Brentford and Isleworth (Mr. Deva) will contribute to the discussion—he and I hold opposing views.

The Berlin wall has come down; other walls have come down in Europe. It is intolerable that a Commonwealth country—a European country—is divided down the middle by a so-called green line. I do not believe that the United Kingdom, as a guarantor power, can sit idly by and wash its hands, saying that it is all too difficult and leaving it to the United States or someone else.

Finally, I deal with the Atlantic coast of the Arab world—the western Sahara. The leader of the Polisario met many of us in London only a few days ago. The Secretary-General of the United Nations faces the appallingly difficult issue of who should vote in the forthcoming referendum. The Polisario says that the register should be confined to the census produced by the Spanish authorities, but, since then, Morocco has come up with a much longer list of names. In deciding who should vote, the Secretary-General largely decides the outcome of the referendum. I am waiting to hear the Government's view and what we can do to help.

Mr. Corbyn: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that there is a serious problem in that, while the United Nations representative was preparing for the referendum, the Moroccan army moved large numbers of people into the area to inflate the register and that that caused last year's referendum to be postponed?

Mr. Townsend: I do not think that the Moroccan Government have clean hands in the matter. But, having criticised the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone), for speaking for too long last week, I must bring my brief thoughts rapidly to a conclusion.

I mentioned the fact that I guarded Sir Hugh Foot in Cyprus. In his book "A Start in Freedom", Sir Hugh wrote some appropriate words about the United Nations:

> "I have always believed that the forces of conciliation are potentially stronger than those of conflict. The trouble is that the forces of hatred and conflict are so well organised and well led while the forces of conciliation are ill organised or ill led, or not organised or led at all. Now in the United Nations we have a permanent organisation for promoting international understanding and co-operation. It is this new initiative which gives us new hope in a divided world."

When the cold war ended, there was a great wave of optimism. There was a new spirit at the United Nations. President Bush made his speech about the new world order that would unfold before us like a map. Then disillusion set in. As we read our newspapers today, watch television and hear of the ruin and misery, death and destruction in Bosnia, where European civilisation is clearly withdrawing rather than advancing, we share that sentiment.

Inevitably, we must look to the United Nations to organise and prepare itself, and to adopt better procedures for setting up peacekeeping forces to deal with the new world in which we live towards the end of the century. It has been said that the United Nations was created not to take mankind to heaven but to stop it from descending into hell. I believe that there is a real danger that we shall go the wrong way unless the United Nations can assume a greater importance in world affairs. Of course, I look to the British Government to give a lead to the United Nations, and I hope that mankind will move onwards to new sunlit uplands.

10.12 am

Mr. Ernie Ross (Dundee, West): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Bexleyheath (Mr. Townsend)—although he sits on the other side of the House, he is my hon. Friend on this issue—on securing the debate and on getting it off to such an informed, useful and helpful start. There was almost nothing in the hon. Gentleman's speech with which I disagreed—except that I differ slightly, in detail rather than in principle, on his perception of how to resolve the Somalian problem.

I welcome the opportunity that the debate gives the Opposition to discuss the United Nations, and I am sure that when my hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) manages to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, he will agree with much of what the hon. Member for Bexleyheath said, and will flesh out some of what we should like to see as part of the role of the United Nations.

It is specifically written into the Labour party's constitution that we not only support the formation, the work and the activities of the United Nations, but we are committed to its expansion and support. In a personal capacity, I am the chairman of the Labour council on the middle east—just as the hon. Member for Bexleyheath is chairman of the Conservative council on the middle east. Item 2 of the Labour council's constitution is the aim to resolve the conflict in the middle east through the resolutions and the work of the United Nations, so I welcome the opportunity to speak on that subject.

Following the collapse of the old war—the conflict between the two great powerful nation states, the United States and the Soviet Union—many people had hoped that a new world order might emerge. However, although we played a major part in establishing the United Nations 47 years ago, we seem to have said little about how we believe that that organisation should move forward in the new world order.

Many of us were worried about a range of issues throughout the world, especially in the middle east. We were faced with the dilemma caused by the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, and the question whether we should stop and consider all the other major breaches of international law taking place in that area. We all agreed that it would not help international law or the processes of the United Nations if we did not immediately condemn the Iraqi invasion and, as part of those processes, see whether a force could be assembled that might relieve Kuwait and ensure that a new world order could emerge out of the old power structures that had supported the various dictators and repressive regimes that had existed hitherto.

Everyone in the House knows that many of the problems with which the United Nations has had to grapple over the years, some of which the hon. Member for Bexleyheath mentioned—Cyprus, for example—could have been resolved many years ago had it not been for the determination of the United States to keep a base in Turkey from which it could continue to threaten the Soviet Union. Unless we admit that, we shall not be able to convince the parts of the world that have suffered either directly or indirectly from dictatorship that we are determined to create a new world order. There is no doubt that had Turkey not been on the borders of the Soviet Union, and therefore not been suitable for use by the United States as a base for its forward ballistic missiles, the people of the north and the south of Cyprus might well have been convinced that their future lay together.

It also has to be said at the outset that although we in this country have not considered the new world order in any depth, many countries in what is called the underdeveloped world, or the south, have been concerned about how that new order might emerge. When I was talking about the United Nations during the emergency debate on 25 September, I said that I had been to a conference in Tunis, organised by the Tunisian Government, on that very subject. I was invited to attend the conference on behalf of the parliamentary Labour party, and I thought that it would be quite easy to find material—I could ring up Walworth road, our party headquarters, and ask the people there to supply me with the most recent Labour party statement on the new world order. But when I phoned I discovered that we had not said very much—in fact, I must be honest and admit that, although many statements had been made which we could use as part of our vision of the United Nations role in the new world order, the Labour party had said nothing specific on the subject.

I then said, "The Government must have said something. After all, the whole thrust of the debate here over many months was that the end of the cold war and the way in which we dealt with the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait was to be the basis of a new world order." I went to the excellent Library and asked the staff to give me all the most recent Government statements—statements by any Minister would do—on the new world order and how Britain saw it developing. I told them that the only problem was that I was going to the conference the following week, so I would need the material in three or four days—and I waited to see what I would be given. Three days later, the Library said, "Sorry, there is nothing that we can give you. The British Government have said nothing about a new world order either here or in the United Nations." I asked whether the Library had anything at all. The best that it could come up with was an article in *The Economist* and an article by my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) in *New Statesman and Society*. With those articles in my hand, I wondered what I should be able to say.

The foreign affairs section of the Library looked at what had been said in the build-up to the Iran-Iraq war and subsequently. With their usual ability, Library staff trawled through various documents from various countries and came up with something that I was able to use.

At the conference in Tunisia, I was able to speak with almost total abandon and lack of concern, knowing that no one in the British Government had said anything about the new world order. The conference was an enlightening experience. I discovered that I was almost the only representative from the European Community. There were some experts from the United States who were there in an advisory capacity rather than as speakers on behalf of their Government. The concept of the new world order has not been dealt with in any shape or form, so I welcome the motion of the hon. Member for Bexleyheath. It gives us the opportunity to discover how the Government perceive the new world order.

Like the hon. Member for Bexleyheath, I am a firm supporter of the United Nations. I was especially pleased by the appointment of Dr. Boutros Ghali to the secretary-generalship of the United Nations. I welcome his initiative to try to streamline the organisation.

As the hon. Member for Bexleyheath said, the United Nations has constantly been impeded by the determination of each nation state to ensure that it has a diplomat or a representative sitting on each body of the United Nations, sometimes for no reason other than to ensure that the particular body does nothing. That may seem strange, but there is clear evidence for anyone who cares to study the workings of the United Nations and its committees that specific placements have been made, especially by the more powerful western Governments, at various levels of the United Nations with the sole purpose

[Mr. Ernie Ross]

of ensuring that the committee either functions less efficiently or, in some cases, does not function at all. That happens when a particular Government do not agree with an aim or objective of an area of work of the United Nations.

I welcome the Heads of Government meeting on 31 January. If nothing else comes out of the British presidency of the Community, the Prime Minister can fall back on that meeting and, in Edinburgh, he may claim it as one of his successes.

The Secretary-General has brought forward "An Agenda for Peace" which I am sure all hon. Members welcome. The agenda fleshes out a new role for the United Nations and it gives specific definitions. Those of us who work with the United Nations have to deal with its resolutions and agendas. We know that the most important aspect of the work of the United Nations is not the resolutions themselves, but their implications and the language in which they are expressed.

I was impressed by the way in which the Secretary-General sought to spell out in language that was easily understood what the new agenda would mean and what the problems were. As a result, we can see how the United Nations will deal with problems and how it will move forward.

One important aim is that the UN will seek to identify at the earliest stage situations that may produce conflict. It can then try to use diplomacy to remove the source of danger before violence results. There are five aims in all, written in easily understood language. There will be less ambiguity in United Nations documentation, as long as Governments do not seek to change the language of the agenda.

As the hon. Member for Bexleyheath knows, we have had 40 years of deciding whether resolution 242 should contain the word "the" before the words "occupied territories". The French believe that the word "the" should be included, whereas the British interpretation is different. The argument over whether the word "the" should be included has been an excuse for many Governments who have failed to move forward with that resolution.

Like the hon. Member for Bexleyheath, I am a little concerned that in the multilateral talks, resolution 242 and resolution 338 are being regarded as background noise rather than as the basis on which the middle east conflict will be resolved. I hope that the Minister will clarify where the Government stand on the issue.

I read an interesting speech made recently by the Foreign Secretary to the Board of Deputies of British Jews. He had fun with his audience on the question whether the word "the" should be included when referring to the occupied territories. It is important that a message goes out today from this Chamber to those who are participating in the multilateral part of the middle east peace process that Parliament is committed to ensuring that the middle east peace process is resolved on the basis of resolution 242 and resolution 338, which refer to land for peace.

I very much welcome the Security Council resolution on Somalia. In our debate on Somalia a few weeks ago, I made the point that I saw Somalia as an area in which a UN peacekeeping force with effective military power could make a difference. There is an absolute difference between Somalia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. The aid agencies on the ground must be concerned that if more military firepower arrives in the area, their activities may be curtailed. In Somalia, many people have guns, but do not have the training or ability to use them other than menacingly. A professional army with a clear direction can make a substantial difference to aid. I welcome the Security Council's unanimous decision to accept the initiative by the United States Government and to dispatch a far more powerful military force to Somalia to establish a secure relief effort.

I also welcome the fact that the operation, on a day-to-day basis, will be under the direct control of the United States. The hon. Member for Bexleyheath spoke about the failure of the United States to make its financial contributions to the UN. It seems that rather than making contributions in terms of dollars, the United States, as a quid pro quo, is committing manpower and equipment to the many conflicts in which the UN is involved. It is using that to offset the imbalance in its financial contribution to the organisation and to the peacekeeping operation. I welcome the fact that the force in Somalia will be the main responsibility of the United States. The Minister made clear our support yesterday for the Security Council resolution. I hope that he will say today that, if necessary, there will be an input from the British Government to the peacekeeping effort in Somalia.

If a professional force entered Somalia, it would quickly convince the warlords, gangs and thugs that it would not tolerate the kind of activity that we have seen so far, where humanitarian aid has been pilfered at road blocks and, in some cases, has been stolen from the supply stores in the dockyards.

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): With regard to our involvement with the military force in Somalia, the hon. Gentleman is no doubt aware that there is already talk of the Government sending troops to provide logistic support. Does he share the concern expressed by hon. Members on both sides of the House about the fact that we are sending logistic support simply because we are incapable of sending infantry battalions because of the overstretch resulting from "Options for Change"?

Mr. Ross: I do not want to delay the debate, because other hon. Members wish to speak and there are other motions on the Order Paper. However, I assume that my hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda will deal with that point later.

Rather than keeping our Trident submarines, it would clearly be preferable to have the men and women and the military equipment on the ground to assist the United Nations peacekeeping forces. No matter how many Trident submarines we threaten Somalia with, the Somalis probably would not understand what we are talking about. However, an infantry battalion, logistic support or military air power would certainly impress the people in Somalia.

With regard to Somalia, I disagree with the hon. Member for Bexleyheath on only one point. Peace can be established very quickly in Somalia. Somalia is run on the clan system and many of the elders are still in the country. When the Soviet Union and the United States were competing super-powers, they gave weapons to different clans. Many other countries were also involved, but the

Soviet Union and the United States were the main protagonists. They were fighting over the bases and the other facilities in that country.

The old family clan tradition in Somalia broke down very quickly because if one group in a clan had more firepower, it was able to challenge the leader. I do not suggest that the elders or leaders are the most capable people, but at least they are the basis upon which, once peace has been re-established, we could begin to deal with the horrendous medical problems and the starvation and so rebuild the infrastructure.

I am not as pessimistic as the hon. Member for Bexleyheath about the length of time that we will have to be in Somalia. It may be possible to rebuild Somalia reasonably quickly if we can use the elders and leaders, many of whom are still in Somalia.

Mr. Corbyn: Does my hon. Friend accept that the United Nations and western Europe did not recognise the serious food problems in Somalia, and the country descended into the present chaos where gun law rules because of the lack of support much earlier on?

Mr. Ross: My hon. Friend is correct. I went to Ethiopia in 1981 with the former Member for Oldham, Central and Royton, Mr. James Lamond, and my hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett). It was obvious to us that feeding that country was a massive problem and we realised that there would be drought and starvation in the next few years. When we returned, my hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish wrote some first-class articles, one of which appeared in *The Guardian*, stating that Ethiopia was liable to sink into despair very quickly. Little or no attention was paid to that warning.

The reason for that lack of response was easy to understand. At that time, Ethiopia was considered to be under the power and influence of the Soviet Union. It was, therefore, much more important to bring down the Government, to attack the infrastructure and to support the various factions in Ethiopia that argued against the Government of Mengistu. Whether or not it was right to support democracy, it was not right to bring Ethiopia to the point that we needed Bob Geldof to rescue that country in later years.

That is the lesson to which my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) is drawing our attention. We must be honest with ourselves. If we are to convince the third world that there will really be a new world order, we must admit that we have been actively involved in supporting oppressive regimes for all the wrong reasons. Even at a casual glance, it is clear that the United States and the Soviet Union were competing for control of Somalia. They did not care too much about who they were affecting and the long-term problems that they were going to create for that country.

As I have said, I have only a minor difference with the hon. Member for Bexleyheath in respect of Somalia. A military force could quickly establish peace and ensure that the aid is released, start to rebuild the infrastructure and then use the system of clan elders in the area to rebuild democracy and some form of government in the country.

Like the hon. Member for Bexleyheath, I welcome the determination of western Governments and the United Nations to declare an air exclusion zone in the north of Iraq. Many Opposition Members, including my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North, disagreed with the attitude of many hon. Members in respect of the invasion of Iraq. As I have said, if we are to build a new world order, it must be built on the basis of international law. When international law is broken, we cannot say that we will not deal with that breach of international law because someone else is breaking international law at the same time. That is unacceptable.

I have spent much time supporting many organisations, particularly the Palestinians, and I know that many of my colleagues were surprised when I supported so forcefully United Nations intervention against Iraq. However, I did that on a simple concept. Iraq broke international law when it invaded Kuwait. It does not matter about the rights or wrongs of any other international conflict elsewhere in the world. That was not important. Iraq's breach of international law was a threat to international law and it had to be dealt with.

As I have argued that international law should be the basis on which to resolve conflicts through the United Nations, I was pleased that on that occasion, the world was prepared to do something meaningful. We all supported that. However, once that action was concluded, there were on-going responsibilities and many people had not thought about those responsibilities. The responsibilities were not only to the Kurds in the north but to the Shias in the south.

The air exclusion zone in the north of Iraq was set up speedily, but we assured Iraq that we did not seek to break up the country and that we would recognise it as a country once democracy was restored—whenever that is. It is for the Iraqi people to decide on the internal arrangements between the Sunni Muslims, the Shias and the Kurds. We were not prepared to allow one group to cleanse ethnically a part of the country of another group. The air exclusion zone has proved to be a success and is another building block, showing our determination to move towards a new world order.

The air exclusion zone in the south came rather late. It is difficult to know why some things become obvious and acceptable earlier than others. To those of us who knew anything about Saddam Hussein, it seemed obvious that unless force was shown to him, and in some cases used against him, he would continue to attack the Shias in the south, just as he had attacked the Kurds in the north and people in other parts of Iraq not covered by air exclusion zones. I welcome both zones.

I hope that all hon. Members will encourage the Iraqi opposition groups and members of the Iraqi Kurdish Parliament who will be in London during the next few weeks to meet the Foreign Office. I also hope that they will encourage all the other people who are concerned about democracy in Iraq and will assure them of our support.

The hon. Member for Bexleyheath mentioned Bosnia, which is a more difficult problem. The House has debated the subject many times, so I shall not stay on it too long. Our approach to Bosnia has been correct and has been one of moving forward slowly.

Almost every male adult in the former Yugoslavia has been trained to carry weapons more professionally than the people of Somalia, who have just had guns stuck in their hands and been told that they are in one gang or another. As part of the Yugoslavs' determination not to be invaded by the Soviet Union they had a patchwork of

[Mr. Ross]

resistance organisations and weapons throughout the country and all males were trained to use the weapons in time of need.

People who suggest that we could simply go in and quickly quell the various factions in any part of the former Yugoslavia are being taught one or two lessons. The Serbs have demonstrated that they can look after themselves and the Croats have also demonstrated that, even with less military hardware and firepower than the Serbs, they can put up stiff resistance in support of their local communities.

Clearly, Bosnia is a different proposition from Somalia, but, as has been said time and again, there are things that we could have done but have not. I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda will remind us that the agreed sanctions should be enforced more powerfully. The exclusion zone is being broken regularly. We must make it clear to the Government in Belgrade and to the Bosnian Serbs that that will not be tolerated. If they refuse to listen to us, we shall have to consider what actions to take to ensure that the air exclusion zone works. More than anything, we must ensure that sanctions work and become more effective, as that is the best hope for peace in the area.

Also, we must never miss the opportunity to restate our determination to ensure that the various groups in Bosnia have a right to a say in the final determination of the Bosnia Herzegovina problem, and must encourage the Muslim community to realise that we are just as concerned about its right to a say in the future of the country.

The decision taken by the Heads of Government of 50 Muslim states in Jeddah yesterday was helpful. It is one more weapon in the armoury of those who are committed to peace in Bosnia, to remind the Serbs that those 50 Governments gave us until 15 January 1993 to do something more effective to protect the Muslims and to ensure that the attacks on them cease. We can use that weapon to show the Serbian Government we are determined and it gives us a time scale within which we can tell the various forces in Bosnia Herzegovina that we are determined to bring the conflict to a peaceful conclusion.

The debate has been useful, if only to allow us to tell the United Nations that we are committed to the proposals in the Secretary-General's agenda for change. We understand that some of those proposals mean that we might have to give up some powers. On occasion, we may well be outvoted, as other countries may disagree with our view of how to resolve a problem. We may have to accept that, although we think that we have the answer, the collective wisdom of the General Assembly may decide otherwise. We shall have to accept the decisions taken in that body and learn to live with them.

I know that that is difficult, especially at this period in Parliament's history when we are having to deal with sharing power with another organisation just across the channel. It is difficult for the House to accept decisions made elsewhere, but, if there is to be a new world order, the more powerful nations must accept that they will not always win. If we are to share power and influence, on occasion we shall have to listen more closely to other parts of the continent or the United Nations. We might be called on to commit a larger financial contribution, or to provide military forces or logistics to ensure that a conflict can be resolved, although we might not be allowed to determine how it is to be resolved.

The hon. Member for Bexleyheath drew attention to areas in which the United Nations has played a role and clearly one of those is in human rights. The United Nations seems to me to be the only body which can be the world protector of human rights. Far too often, nation states are based on the rights of those in a particular group or area, and usually on a state's economic problems or aims, rather than on concern for the rigths of individuals.

I also congratulate the United Nations on the speed with which it has moved in certain parts of the world, for example, when trying to resolve the Cambodian crisis. A full member of the Security Council has allowed its client state or group to prevent the implementation of United Nations resolutions in Cambodia. It is clear that if China, which is a full member of the council, were to tell the Khmer Rouge that it has to abide by the resolutions and participate in the peace process, it would be required to do so. No one is in any doubt about that fact of life. The fact that the Khmer Rouge was able to retain members of a United Nations logistics force for two or three days—I join the hon. Member for Bexleyheath in welcoming their release—does not reflect the true problem.

The problem is that the Khmer Rouge has decided, unilaterally, not to abide by the agreements hammered out through the United Nations peace process. It is determined to hold out for more power, which will prevent real peace coming to Cambodia. It is clear that China could resolve that matter quickly. We need to ensure that the Security Council regularly reminds China of its responsibilities as a full member of that council. I hope that the Minister who is to reply will say something about Cambodia and the efforts that we are making to ensure that the peace process can move forward as quickly as possible.

The debate has provided the House with a useful opportunity to talk about the United Nations. I hope that it will spark off a series of debates in the Chamber and in Parliaments across the world so that we can achieve a greater understanding of the original concepts behind the United Nations and how they might be developed in the 1990s and beyond.

The end of the cold war was a spur for the new world order. However, I believe that the explosion at Chernobyl was far more significant, because it demonstrated to the world that even the so-called peaceful use of nuclear facilities in the Soviet Union could not protect the population of that country or those in many other parts of the world. I am not sure whether all the sheep and lambs in Wales and Scotland are now edible. The fact that the explosion at Chernobyl affected the food cycle in such far-away countries put paid to the concept that power was the basis on which one can run the world.

The accident at Chernobyl hastened the break-up of the monolithic state of the Soviet Union, but it also helped to refocus the minds of all politicians and ordinary people on the need to establish a world organisation that could arbitrate on and determine peace and human rights. That accident made everyone realise that no one country could deal with such a problem and that a responsible world organisation should be established. It is no good saying that because someone is our enemy, we will not help him, especially when—through no one's fault—a civil nuclear power accident in that person's country puts his people,

our own and so many others at risk. Chernobyl demonstrated the need for concerted world action to deal with major problems.

I welcome the opportunity to take part in the debate and I congratulate the hon. Member for Bexleyheath on his foresight in tabling the motion. It has allowed us to deal, if only briefly, with the problems facing the United Nations as it progresses and develops. It has also given us the opportunity to say that we are absolutely committed to "An Agenda for Peace" launched by Dr. Boutros Boutros Ghali. We will play our full part in ensuring that, in time, that agenda becomes this Parliament's agenda and that of the world.

10.53 am

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): The Secretary-General of the United Nations, Dr. Boutros Boutros Ghali, has just complained that the United Nations is facing a crisis of too much credibility. There is some truth in that, because enormous extra burdens have been placed upon that organisation now that it is, at last, beginning to fulfil the role for which it was established 47 years ago.

It is timely to debate the United Nations and the problems that confront it. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Bexleyheath (Mr. Townsend) on choosing that subject for today's debate and on proposing his motion so lucidly. I also congratulate him on his election as chairman of the all-party parliamentary group for the United Nations. The knowledge and passion that he displayed in his speech today shows that he is well qualified not only to initiate this debate but to chair that important parliamentary group.

I apologise to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to my hon. Friend the Member for Bexleyheath and to the House for my forthcoming early departure from the Chamber. I will be unable to wait for the winding-up speeches because I need to go to my constituency to face my business men and to explain to them that the green shoots of the economic recovery are there, but, rather like my winter wheat, still below the surface, just awaiting the right economic climate to break through and produce results.

I apologise to the hon. Member for Dundee, West (Mr. Ross)—he is not here; obviously he has departed for *Hansard* to read his very long speech. I apologise again, because I see that the hon. Gentleman is still in the Chamber. I will not follow the hon. Gentleman on his world tour, because I appreciate that other hon. Members want to speak and it is important therefore to be reasonably brief.

I agreed with almost everything the hon. Gentleman said, but I part company with him on the question of additional forces in Bosnia Herzegovina. We must be extremely careful about the way in which force is deployed there. I agree that we must give protection to the delivery of humanitarian aid, but it would be extremely dangerous to embark upon a straightforward military operation on the ground. None the less, I have advocated on many occasions that certain key targets should be taken out through air strikes to make it clear to Serbia that we do not wish the hostilities to be prolonged, or to encounter the danger of them spreading next door to Kosovo or Macedonia. If that were to happen, the UN would be involved in far greater and more dangerous activities, and ones which we all wish to avoid.

In facing up to Serbia, we must acknowledge that that country has, at wartime-use rates, some two years of ammunition, weapons and equipment with which to fight a war. One must be extremely careful, therefore, about the escalation of military activity in that country.

Only a few years ago it seemed credible that the UN would play the central role in the new world order that optimists assumed would flow from the collapse of communism. The cold war paralysis was gone and it was believed that the UN would be able to act as a police force, social work department and development agency on a world scale. I am afraid that it just has not worked out like that. Alas, with the passing of the cohesion of totalitarianism, we now have the chaos of tribalism and the breakdown of established order through the settling of old scores.

Dr. Boutros Boutros Ghali, in "An Agenda for Peace", has said that the foundation stone of the UN's work must be the member state. He said:

> "Respect for its fundamental sovereignty and integrity are crucial to any common international progress . . . if every ethnic, religious or linguistic group claimed statehood, there would be no limit to fragmentation that followed."

Cohesion would go and peace, security and economic well-being—the objectives of the UN—would be ever more difficult to achieve.

We have seen that happen in eastern Europe and most notably in Yugoslavia. However, we have not seen it happen in China. That country is home to one quarter of the world's population, and we must say to those in Hong Kong who press for ever faster progress towards democracy that the stability of China is extremely important to the world today.

Imagine what chaos the world would be in if China were to fall apart. In the present situation, a quarter of the world's population lives in a country which still has cohesion. I do not accept that type of cohesion, but for the time being I hope that China remains as it is.

It is as well to remind ourselves, as we consider the challenges facing the United Nations, what the UN is and what it is not. It is a voluntary association of states dedicated, through signing the UN charter, to the maintenance of international peace and security and the solution of economic, social and political problems through international co-operation.

The UN is not a world government, and although there has been a suggestion in the debate about the possibility of the UN fulfilling a role in Somalia—perhaps by trusteeship or the provision of a protectorate—that should be done on only a temporary basis to establish some degree of stability and enable that country to accept its own responsibilities in due course. So the UN is not, and can never be, a world government. It has no right to intervene in the essential domestic affairs of a nation state.

If the UN did not exist, we should almost certainly have to invent it. It succeeded the League of Nations and inherited many of its institutions and procedures. The name "United Nations" was first used in the Washington declaration of January 1942 to describe the 26 countries that were then allied together to fight the axis powers. The UN charter was drawn up by 50 nations in San Francisco in 1945, and following its ratification, came into being on 24 October of that year; and 24 October is still celebrated as United Nations Day.

The UN has as its emblem the pale blue flag that we all know. I suggest that its vehicles deployed in activities

[Mr. Michael Colvin]

around the world, such as in Yugoslavia and soon in Somalia and elsewhere, should be painted pale blue to leave no doubt in anyone's mind that they are UN vehicles. Painting them white with "UN" printed on the side is inadequate, particularly in areas such as Yugoslavia where there will soon be a great deal of snow on the ground. UN vehicles must stand out clearly so that people who may fire on them are well aware of what they are doing.

The original membership of the United Nations was 51 countries. It is now 178. It is significant that only just over half of those member states are democracies in the accepted sense. Only half of them are capable of fulfilling the sort of objectives for which the United Nations stands. Since the creation of the organisation in 1945, there have been more than 100 major conflicts around the world, leaving 20 million people dead. The United Nations was rendered powerless to deal with many of those crises because of the vetoes, 279 of them, cast in the Security Council. Those vetoes were based on the east-west divide of that period. Since the end of the cold war since 31 May 1990, there have been no more vetoes, and demands on the United Nations have soared.

The original promise of the United Nations can now be fulfilled, but how is it to be achieved? I suggest that it can be done in four ways: first, through protective diplomacy; secondly, through peacemaking; thirdly, through peacekeeping; and, fourthly, through the new concept put forward by Dr. Boutros Boutros Ghali of post-conflict peacebuilding. He defines all four in "An Agenda for Peace." Preventive diplomacy seeks to resolve disputes before violence breaks out. Peacekeeping and peacemaking are required to halt conflicts and preserve peace once it has been attained; if successful, they can strengthen the opportunity for post-conflict peacebuilding, which can prevent the recurrence of violence among nations and peoples. It is all set out clearly. We must now find ways to apply those definitions.

Taken together, there is no doubt that, with the backing of all United Nations members, those four areas of action could fulfil the aims of the charter. By "backing", I mean the means and resources, for we have plenty of politicians and diplomats. The United Nations needs money and materials. The Secretary-General is the first to acknowledge that the organisation is not financially or structurally able to cope with the problems that it now faces.

It has been pointed out in the debate that far too many countries are in arrears with their subscriptions, and the United States is no exception. We must pay our bills to the United Nations on time. A number of proposals about finance appear in Dr. Boutros Boutros Ghali's "An Agenda for Peace." For example, he refers to the possibility of charging interest on assessed contributions not paid on time. Indeed, I should like that applied to people in this country who do not pay their bills on time. I hope that a measure to that effect, similar to a private Member's Bill put forward some time ago, will be proposed again.

There is the possibility of suspending the financial regulations of the United Nations to permit the retention of budgetary surpluses, should there be any. There is also the possibility of increasing the working capital fund to $250 million and endorsing the principle that the level of the fund should be about 25 per cent. of the annual assessment under the regular budget.

We might establish a temporary peacekeeping reserve fund of £50 million. The Secretary-General would like the United Nations to be able to borrow commercially, and he has suggested a humanitarian revolving fund of £50 million and the establishment of a United Nations peace endowment fund with an initial target of $1 billion—a lot of money, to be provided, presumably, by direct contributions from member states.

Two other interesting suggestions for raising the money have been made. One is a levy on arms sales and the other a levy on airline tickets, remembering that no business has a greater interest in preserving world peace than civil aviation. A levy on tickets might be a significant way to raise United Nations funds.

There is also talk of a standing force of troops. I regard that as not only impractical but far too costly. But there is no reason why the logistics—equipment, trucks, wireless sets and so on—should not be stored around the world in places where they could be quickly available for use.

The essential point is that member states must be willing and able rapidly to deploy peacekeeping troops in international emergencies. I question whether the United Kingdom, under the "Options for Change", will be able to do that. As I said, providing logistics for Somalia quickly is one thing. I do not believe that we could mobilise even a battalion-strength force to send to Somalia if we had to do so. The number of personnel deployed around the world in blue helmets has increased from 11,000 a couple of years ago to 50,000 today. That deployment is often delayed because authorisation is dependent on approval for financing.

I will comment on only three current United Nations operations, the first being in Somalia, where preventive diplomacy has failed miserably. About 350,000 people there have died of starvation and a further 250,000 could be dead by the new year if humanitarian aid does not get through. About 1 million people have fled that country and 2 million—a third of those who are left—are at risk of being shot or starving to death. The United Nations admits that four fifths of the food and medicine aid that it is sending does not reach the starving and needy.

The token United Nations military contingent is useless and the UN relief organisations are not much better. They were criticised by Mr. Sahnoun, the Algerian who was sent there by the United Nations to oversee matters. For criticising, he has been given the sack. I think that he was absolutely right and that, now that further action is being taken, he should be reinstated as soon as possible.

If only force will save Somalian lives, it should be used. Therefore, the House welcomes the United Nations Security Council resolution. It is right to shoot in order to feed. I hope that the force will be truly multinational.

The second trouble spot that I wish to mention is Angola and the elections which took place at the end of September under UN supervision. I did not witness those elections, although I was invited to do so, but I have spoken to several hon. Members who were there. There is no doubt that the 6,000 polling stations set up around the country worked well. The organisation and turnout to vote were good.

However, in communicating the tabulated results from those polling stations, through the municipal headquarters, then via the provisional headquarters and the

Ministry of Security to the national electoral council, much went wrong. In short, some 500,000 votes went missing, largely from rural areas where UNITA is strongest. The UN should investigate that matter. I believe that the African subcommittee of the United States Congress Foreign Relations Committee has already requested that the UN investigate the matter. When UNITA representatives went to Luanda to negotiate over the removal of some of the electoral irregularities which they say and many others acknowledge took place, several were murdered.

UNITA has already said that it accepts the election results. It is often misreported that it was against the results. However, in the presidential contest that took place at the same time, no candidate achieved the 50 per cent. plus one vote required to be elected. Under the constitutional rules, there must be a re-run of the presidential contest within 30 days. That simply has not happened and the UN should carry out an investigation as soon as possible and ensure that a re-run takes place without irregularities.

Mr. Corbyn: If the hon. Gentleman cares to examine the election results, which have been authenticated and verified, he will see that it is clear who won and who lost. Obviously, the second round of the presidential election should take place without delay, but it is impossible to have an election if the UNITA forces have once again restarted a civil war.

Mr. Colvin: I acknowledge what the hon. Gentleman says. There is no doubt that, if a re-run of the presidential election is to take place, there must be a ceasefire. That is agreed by the parties concerned, but it needs proper United Nations supervision. Moreover, it must be ensured that, when the voting is finished, the ballot papers and election results reach where they are supposed to be finally announced. That did not happen before.

The third trouble spot that I wish to mention is the western Sahara, which has already been mentioned by other hon. Members. The United Nations peace plan, which started with the official ceasefire between Moroccan troops and the Polisario on 6 September 1991 under Security Council resolution 690, established the United Nations mission to oversee a referendum in western Sahara about its future and whether it had independence. That was agreed by both Morocco and the Polisario.

There is now evidence that Morocco is sabotaging the peace process. There have been more than 100 violations of the ceasefire, and there is evidence of the gerrymandering of the referendum result by the transplantation of large numbers of Moroccan people into the western Sahara—some 100,000 in all. When one acknowledges that, in 1974 when the last population census took place under the Spanish regime, there were only 74,000 people in the western Sahara, one sees what difference it will make to the referendum's outcome if so many Moroccans are moved in. Why are there only 400 United Nations observers in the western Sahara at present, when everyone acknowledges that at least 2,900 observers are required to do the job properly?

Those are just three examples of serious trouble spots and of the current United Nations peacekeeping actions, which illustrate the difficulties that that organisation faces. The United Nations has been the focal point of world concern in the past year as those and other problems escalate. There are great hopes that, under the new Secretary-General, reforms will be introduced at the United Nations to enable us to capitalise on the new world order and not be beaten by it.

However, the whole is only as strong as the sum of its parts, and the House will agree that Britain will continue to play more than its part to ensure that the United Nations can and will fulfil the aims and objectives that we need to achieve for a better world for this and future generations.

11.16 am

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): I thank the hon. Member for Bexleyheath (Mr. Townsend) for the characteristically elegant and thoughtful way in which he introduced the debate.

The hon. Gentleman complained that there had been a speech lasting 53 minutes last Friday, but he cannot possibly have been referring to me, because I took only 52 minutes to introduce that debate. He must have been referring to my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone).

I share the hon. Gentleman's vehemence about UNESCO. As he said, UNESCO was started not far from here, in the Institution of Civil Engineers. As he well put it, we could have renewed our subscription for the cost of two tanks and should frankly never have left in the first place.

I also share the hon. Gentleman's sense of caution about what is happening in Bosnia. We would do well to remember that Tito's deterrent was not nuclear weapons or even tank regiments. It was training his people in the techniques of guerrilla warfare. That was what deterred Stalin. It is the idea of holding those people down—people who had occupied 37 German divisions from 1943-44 that makes one shudder. To think that one would come out unscathed from that is tempting providence.

I also share a sense of caution about Somalia. We all heard this morning that the Americans plan to be in and out before 20 January. Does it really work like that? From Northern Ireland to Afghanistan, people have found that it is much easier to put in armies than to take them out. The experience is in, in and in—deeper into the mire. Because of the appalling pictures that one sees of terrible cruelty and starvation, I do not jump to the conclusion that it should not be done, but I should be much happier if their entry were under full United Nations control rather than seen as an American-led operation. Indeed, it should not be a non-United Nations coalition.

Has the Foreign Office given any thought to peacekeeping training? Those of us who did national service must realise that people who have normal training in the forces are not well trained as peacekeepers. As a national service man, I would not have been much good as a peacekeeper. It is an art in itself.

Is the Foreign Office in contact with the Bradford university school of peace studies at which much serious work is being done on the theory and practice of peacekeeping? I understand that a major study by Betts Featherstone, Dr. Nick Lewer and Dr. Tom Woodhouse is to come out in January.

Any of us who have had the good fortune to go on parliamentary delegations to the United Nations and, in my case, to be welcomed most hospitably by Sir Anthony and Lady Parsons and Brian Urquhart, know that

[Mr. Tam Dalyell]

financing the United Nations constitutes a perpetual problem. The United Nations must be properly resourced because we cannot expect to conduct unpaid peacekeeping operations. The hon. Member for Bexleyheath gave a figure of $844 million. Those of us who expect the United Nations to help in various parts of the world must understand that our countries have to cough up.

What is the policy of the United Nations and Britain on what is happening in the Sudan? It seems to be an especially pathetic position. I should be interested in any information that the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the right hon. and learned Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg), could give on that matter.

There is a new drive in the world to export arms, simply because of the dearth of domestic orders. As the home market for arms slumps in many countries, the drive to keep jobs becomes more frantic. That is why last Friday in the House some of us argued for a United Nations conference to cope with what can be described only as an arms bazaar. We believe that there should be at least a United Nations register of arms sales. I should be grateful if we could be told of any Foreign Office thinking on that issue.

That brings me to the issue of nuclear arms and the non-proliferation treaty. I have the good fortune of being able to ask the Prime Minister an oral question on 15 December. It is a closed question on the nuclear proliferation treaty. As is my wont, I wrote to Downing street as soon as I knew of my luck in the ballot and offered the Prime Minister an explanation on the exact background to the issue. The issue was summed up in the *Observer* last Sunday. What is the reaction of the Foreign Office to the statement that the

"revelations, together with documents showing Ministerial knowledge of the supply of nuclear equipment to Baghdad, raise for the first time Britain's flouting of international law, not just the Government's own guidelines"?

The report in the *Observer* continues:

"John Gordon, until 1988 head of the Foreign Office's Nuclear Energy Department, says he is prepared to give evidence to the inquiry under Lord Justice Scott . . . Matrix Churchill's deep involvement was known to MI6, which alerted other Government departments. Despite these warnings, export licences were still being granted for machine tools with potential nuclear use up to the eve of the Kuwait invasion in August 1990 . . . Mr. Gordon, who has been shown copies of some of the secret Foreign Office documents on the Matrix Churchill case, believes Britain may have breached Article 1 of the 1968 treaty, which forbids signatories from doing anything 'to assist, encourage or induce any non-nuclear weapon state to manufacture or otherwise acquire nuclear weapons'."

Is this so?

"In the minutes, Stephen Lillie, a Middle East Department official, noted that the Baghdad company that wanted the Matrix Churchill lathes was involved in 'Iraqi attempts to obtain equipment for the development of gas centrifuge technology for uranium enrichment'."

Is that so?

On 18 December 1979 at 5·12 in the morning in the Consolidated Fund Bill debate I raised in detail the case of Dr. Ali Qadar Khan and the thefts of knowledge about centrifuge technology from the Urenco establishment at Almelo in Holland. Since then, I have had a deep interest in the subject.

I ask the Minister whether the article in *The Observer*, under the byline of Martin Bailey, John McGhie and Peter Beaumont is accurate. I do not know whether it is accurate, and I ask that as a genuine question which must be answered. The question is critical, as it relates to whether the United Nations sanctions are being flouted and busted to such an extent. If the Minister does not answer today, I fear that I will go on and on at it, and I will hope to ask a direct question of the Prime Minister during Question Time on 15 December.

I move on to the problem of Iran. To many of us it seems that the United States is in danger of frightening Gulf neighbours by expressing concern about Iran armaments. Western powers and their news media state that Iran is seeking military dominance in the region through the purchase of advanced weapons. That is the view, rightly or wrongly, of President Rafsanjani. He argues that there is an attempt to raise alarm in regional countries so that the west can sell new weapons.

Part of the argument for calling some sort of United Nations conference on arms control is that one hopes that Iran will be high in the in-tray of President-elect Clinton. The issue is whether President Rafsanjani will try to turn militant Islam into a substitute for the cold war threat from the Soviet Union. It would be tragic if that happened. We should restore civilised relations between the most powerful nations and one of the world's oldest nations.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, knows that both in Committee and in the House I have gone on—he would say, "banged on"—about Libya. Last Friday I was fortunate enough to come top of the ballot and I chose for debate the reassessment of our relations with the Arab world. No attempt was made to answer a number of the serious questions asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Tottenham (Mr. Grant)—who has been to Libya several times—and me. Therefore, I do not apologise for returning to the subject, because the United Nations is involved in the issue of sanctions on Libya——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. I hope that the hon. Gentleman's points are relevant to this debate.

Mr. Dalyell: Yes, they are directly relevant to the United Nations, as they relate to United Nations sanctions. At the United Nations on, I think, 15 December the issue of sanctions against Libya will come up again.

In a question on 22 October 1992, I asked

"the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will seek amendment to the rules on international extradition regulations, with a view to clarifying the legal position of Libyans suspected of the Lockerbie bombing."

He replied:

"The legal position is not in doubt. By its resolution 748, the Security Council of the United Nations decided that the Libyan Government must surrender the accused for trial, either in Scotland or in the United States. Under the United Nations charter this obligation prevails over any other obligation which Libya might have under any other international agreement."—[*Official Report*, 22 October 1992; Vol. 212, c. *371*.]

What is the position of the law of individual states? This is the sovereignty issue which was raised by the hon. Member for Bexleyheath. Are we sure that United Nations law takes precedence over Arab law? In the Government's view, does United Nations law automatically take precedence over international law? This was the Ditchley problem. Those of us who have had the good fortune to benefit from the Ditchley case from time to time during our public lives know that it is a serious matter. I can understand the hon. Member for Bexleyheath saying that

he was brow-beaten by Foreign Office lawyers. What is current thinking on the question of the precedence of international law and United Nations law over national law?

I shall slide away from Libya by repeating a question that I asked last week concerning Father Patrick Keegan. I shall give the reference to shorten the argument. Father Keegan is the Lockerbie priest, and he was returning from the United States. He said:

"The cat does not want to catch the mouse because the mouse would not just squeal but scream and implicate Syria, Iran and Bush and Thatcher."—[*Official Report*, 27 November 1992; Vol. 214, c. 1099.]

I should like some comment on Father Keegan's view.

On several occasions the United Nations has allowed itself to be manipulated by the the United States and the west. That is far from healthy for the international organisation. In November 1990, Mr. Speaker Weatherill chose me to lead a parliamentary delegation to Zaire because of my interest in rain forests. The delegation went to see the Foreign Minister of Zaire in Kinshasa. At that moment the Security Council was making decisions on the Gulf. We asked the Foreign Minister, naturally enough, why a rotating member of the council, Zaire, should have chosen to support the western position rather than supporting a position that did not recommend military force. It transpired that Zaire's position did not rest on any judgment on the merits or otherwise of the decisions being taken on the Gulf. It was felt that by obliging the Americans during a day-long meeting with Secretary Baker, aid—it had been understandably denied by the Americans to Zaire because of that country's appalling human rights record—would be restored if, as a quid pro quo, Zaire supported the position of the United States in the Security Council. In one form or another, that could have been said of the Ivory Coast and possibly of several other states. There is a real problem of manipulation by the west of the United Nations, which will bring the UN into disrepute.

I return to the Iraqi sanctions. This is not a matter of hindsight. To protect myself, I shall quote *The Scotsman* of 11 November 1992. The article reads:

"Back in early 1990, Tam Dalyell, Labour MP for Linlithgow was accusing officials and Ministers of turning a 'Nelson's eye' to the sale to Iraq of materials capable of being used for weapons, including the so-called 'super gun'."

Last Friday, I dealt with the views of the British Afro-Asian Solidarity Group on Iraq sanctions. I promise you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that both its submission and that of Christian Aid is in order. That is because we are talking about sanctions.

One of my constituents, Hazim Mahbobe of 45 Echline drive, South Queensferry, came to see me at my surgery, he comes from Najaf and he is a Shia. He urged that urgent action should be taken—not quite along the lines advocated by the hon. Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson)—

"Using the Iraqi frozen assets, which are the property of the Iraqi people, to provide food and medical supplies for the suffering Iraqi people, especially the Shias of the south of Iraq and Kurds in the north. To ensure that the sanctions imposed on Iraq are aimed at the Saddam regime and do not cause further suffering to the Iraqi people. To ensure that UN Resolution 688 which deals with safeguarding the safety of the civilian population from the human rights atrocities of the regime is fully implemented."

I shall quote also Riad El-Taber, who is an Iraqi who was born in Basra. He writes about the effect of sanctions. Again, he takes a rather different view from the one held by the hon. Member for Torridge and Devon, West. He writes:

"Similarly, the port of Um Qasr is being brought back to use. this is another example where the people of Iraq cannot understand the attitude of the United Nations' Security Council. When they allowed the importation of food (not that Iraq has any foreign currency to buy any!) they stipulated that Iraqi ports such as Um Qasr must not be used. Iraq can only import through another country, such as Jordan. They ask, why? They can find no logical answer. It seems to them yet another example of the American and British Governments' desire to humiliate the people of Iraq and make them incur unnecessary costs.

One aspect of war damage that was not reported on was the deliberate destruction by British and American bombing of civilian food stores such as grain silos and cold storage units. I saw two of those. At Bab Al-Zubair in Basra and Al-Taji near Baghdad. Most of the people I talked to find it difficult to understand the reason for the targeting of these obvious civilian installations. The destruction of almost 75 per cent. of grain silos rules out operational errors. It appears to be deliberate. At least, that is what the local people believe.

Even today, American and British war planes based in Turkey regularly break the sound barrier over the northern city of Mosul, terrifying the population. They also drop flares and other incendiary devices on crops. Farmers watch as their meagre crops are burned, again unable to comprehend the reason for it."

We must be extremely careful about how United Nations sanctions and United Nations policy is working out with the new generation in Iraq. If we are not careful, we shall breed a generation that is extremely bitter against the West. Is that really what we want?

I ask the Foreign Office yet again the questions that are set out in column 1133 in *Hansard* last Friday, especially those that relate to arms dealings that are alleged by Box Productions to have been conducted by Mark Thatcher.

Last Friday, the Minister said that he would not reply to the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, East. That is a matter between my hon. Friend and the Foreign Office. I asked seven extremely careful questions. Hundreds of thousands of people have seen the allegations. I do not know the rights and wrongs of them, but there must be some answer. My first question was as follows:

"First, are the Government aware that an executive of the defence company, United Scientific, introduced Mark Thatcher to the arms dealer Sarkis Soghanalian in the autumn of 1983 as part of its efforts to win a contract to sell night vision devices, ultimately to be used by Iraq?"—[*Official Report*, 27 November 1992; Vol. 214, c. 1103.]

There followed six other questions.

That coincides with the issue of whether the British Government secretly connived with defence contractors to run a coach and horses through their own arms embargo and United Nations policy.

The delicacy of United Nations policy obviously bothered *The Sunday Times* leader writer of 15 November:

"The export licences were secretly granted in February 1988, the DTI warning that 'there seems to be considerable merit in keeping as quiet as possible about this politically sensitive issue' and the Foreign Office observing that 'if it becomes public knowledge that the tools are to be used to make munitions, deliveries would have to stop at once.' Clearly, ministers had embarked on a policy they were ashamed to defend in public."

This is apparently flouting United Nations policy.

I ask another direct question. Under the byline of Tim Kelsey, *The Independent* asserted:

"The British Embassy in Baghdad knew that British-made machine tools were being used by the Iraqis for the manufacture of weapons."

[Mr. Dalyell]

Did they?

"A British technician who worked on the Iraqi weapons programme for one of its international subcontractors said yesterday that he kept diplomats in the Iraqi capital informed. Another source said that diplomats were under 'no illusions' that 'civilian machine tools' were being used in the weapons programme."

Is that so?

I take the view—a number of my colleagues think differently—that the present Prime Minister did not know about those matters, for a combination of two reasons. It was put acidly by someone who knows the Foreign Office well that perhaps they were very busy trying to teach the right hon. Gentleman where Africa was. I believe that he is far quicker on the uptake than that, but I think that there is the basis of fact in suggestions that relations between him and the right hon. Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave) when he was in the Foreign Office were not the happiest.

That was outlined in *The Independent* of 24 November, by Jonathan Foster:

"Jealousy and resentment of John Major led to important papers about arms exports to Iraq being kept from him as Foreign Secretary in 1989, political and civil service sources have claimed.

William Waldegrave, Minister of State at the Foreign Office, felt 'passed over' when Mr. Major was appointed.

'The relationship between them was extremely chilly,' a Foreign Office insider said. 'Nothing hostile was exchanged in a form of words, but William Waldegrave looked down his nose at John Major. Instead of consultation between junior minister and Secretary of State, matters were referred up only on a need-to-know basis.

Mr. Major's term of office ran from July to October 1989. During that period, Mr. Waldegrave became alarmed by an increasing volume of evidence about Iraqi arms procurement in Britain.'"

Mrs. Emma Nicholson (Torridge and Devon, West): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I know that the hon. Gentleman is seeking to link his attack on the British Government's conduct in the Iran-Iraq war with the United Nations, but I suggest that that link is wholly spurious. There was no unilateral United Nations arms embargo against Iran or Iraq during that eight-year period. The hon. Gentleman is indulging himself, and that is unwarranted and at the expense of others who hope to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I will be the judge of that. The hon. Gentleman is getting very near the mark, but he keeps returning to United Nations sanctions—and, bearing that in mind, so far he has just remained in order.

Mr. Dalyell: I would say rather sharply to the hon. Lady that the House was told that the whole Gulf operation was justified by United Nations resolutions. Her point of order reveals that in the minds of many, it was an American-British operation. Therein lies a lot of the trouble.

Mr. Rogers: I find the remarks of the hon. Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) rather disturbing. There was a United Nations embargo on arms imports into the middle east. Lord Howe, who was Foreign Secretary at the time, has repeatedly asserted that the British Government were sticking to the guidelines laid down by the United Nations and reinforced by the Government. There was an embargo, and the Government's criminality in putting arms and the potential for making them into the area needs to be examined—and the Scott inquiry will do that.

Mr. Dalyell: Out of deference to the House, I will not pursue Jonathan Foster's argument, but that matter must be investigated. I was being a bit defensive of the present Prime Minister, and I thank my hon. Friend for his intervention. It is a bit generous being defensive of the Prime Minister, because on 2 December, in reply to a written question of mine that asked

"whether the briefing material relating to United Kingdom exports to Iraq, prepared for the Foreign Secretary's meeting with Tariq Aziz, the Iraqi Foreign Minister in September 1989 still exists",

the Prime Minister replied:

"Yes. The brief referred to British media interest in Iraqi procurement activities in the United Kingdom, naming Learfan and Matrix Churchill as examples. No further details were given and there was no other reference to United Kingdom defence exports to Iraq."—*[Official Report*, 2 December 1992; Vol. 215, c. *220.]*

So he knew that much.

The Prime Minister wrote to me on 23 November, and the last paragraph of his letter stated:

"At the beginning of August 1990, following the invasion of Kuwait, I did see a copy of a minute about the implications of the invasion for trade with Iraq. That minute referred to Matrix Churchill as one company with potential exports that would need to be prevented."

On Tuesday 17 November *The Daily Telegraph*, which is not exactly a Labour paper, ran a long and detailed article by Sean O'Neill under the headline

"The stories Major missed on his way to see Aziz."

Whatever the situation in relation to the Prime Minister, it is clear that his predecessor, Lord Howe—who left the Foreign Office on 24 July 1989, when the present Prime Minister was appointed—was, indeed, informed.

I have the authority of my hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Blackley (Mr. Eastham), who is the secretary of the Amalgamated Engineering Union parliamentary group, to refer to his correspondence in relation to sanctions. On 18 February 1988 my hon. Friend wrote to the then Foreign Secretary:

"I enclose herewith correspondence which has been passed to me by our union"—

that is, the AEU—

"regarding the growing problems of the machine tool industry relative to Iran and Iraq. I should be most grateful to receive your observations".

There has come into the hands of my hon. Friend the Member for Blackley a document identified as 000046 and dated 29 February 1988, headed

"MP's letter: machine tools for Iraq."

It states:

"Ken Eastham MP wrote to the Secretary of State on 18 February enclosing a letter from D. K. Todd, District Secretary of the AEU, concerning the export of machine tools to Iraq. I submit a draft reply."

That document was signed

"A.J.H. Cowell, Middle East Department."

It continues:

"The AEU's concern seems to have been prompted by an article in the Daily Telegraph which gave the misleading impression that a complete embargo on this equipment has been approved. In fact, in the second half of 1987, the IDC agreed a series of licence applications for the export of machine tools to Iraq worth over £44 million. The IDC was satisfied that the lathes and tools were civilian items for general industrial purposes, as the companies had claimed.

Since the licences were approved we have received information from secret sources that the two Iraqi consignees, Hutteen General Establishment for Mechanical Industries

and Nasir General Establishment for Mechanical Industries, intend to use the equipment to set up a munitions manufacturing facility. We have also received a letter from an employee of Matrix Churchill of Coventry, an affiliate of the T I Matrix, Brechin, referred to in Mr. Todd's letter, concerning that machine tools for manufacturing shell cases are being supplied to Iraq. It was decided last month, given the companies contractual position, and the industrial consequences should the licences be revoked, that existing licences should be allowed to stand. Further licences should, however only be granted after careful scrutiny and once we are satisfied that their export would not contravene the guidelines."

He did know.

There has also come into my hands from my hon. Friend the Member for Blackley document 00048:

"Thank you for your letter of 18 February enclosing a letter from D. K. Todd, District Secretary of the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers, concerning the export of machine tools to Iraq. As you may be aware, the Government operate special guidelines on the export of licensable goods to Iran and Iraq, which reflect our stance of strict impartiality, and our commitment to preventing any escalation of the conflict. Since the beginning of the conflict we have prohibited the sale of any lethal equipment to Iran and Iraq. In 1985, this policy was tightened and refined into the current Ministerial guidelines which were announced in the House in October 1985. Essentially, we prohibit the sale of any defence related equipment that could significantly enhance the capability of either side to prolong or exacerbate the conflict. This policy is enforced by a strict export licence regime and all applications are rigorously scrutinised. It is possible that industrial machinery which could be used for the manufacture of military equipment would fall within these guidelines. However, contrary to the report in the Daily Telegraph of 1 February, there is a complete embargo on such goods. Each export application is assessed against the guidelines on a case by case basis and we have no plans to change this policy."

The Foreign Secretary knew.

My hon. Friend the Member for Blackley has another document, 00050, which he has given to me. It says:

"I attach the draft reply which was submitted for the Secretary of State's signature"——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have listened carefully to the hon. Gentleman. While he has been strictly in order, in one sense, there is so much repetition and quotation in his speech that I hope he will now consider making a speech with fewer quotations.

Mr. Dalyell: I shall bring them to an end very briefly, but I have to be extremely careful about fact in such delicate issues. My point is that Mr. Culshaw said:

"On reflection it seems better for Mr. Mellor to reply to this letter. The Secretary of State has commented"

—that means that he knew—

"only that he is not sure which side our correspondent wishes us to take on this issue. It may therefore be best just to restate our standard policy, although Mr. Mellor might consider the possibility of including the points in the last paragraph of MED's submission."

The official position was very different. On 9 March 1988, reprinted in *The Sunday Times* of 22 November, the official position of the Foreign Office junior Minister—because the Foreign Secretary was not going to touch it—was that

"The Government operates special guidelines on the export of licensable goods to Iran and Iraq, which reflect our stance of strict impartiality [in the Iran-Iraq war], and our commitment to preventing any escalation of the conflict. Since the beginning of the conflict we have prohibited the sale of any lethal equipment to Iran and Iraq. The policy was tightened and refined in the current ministerial guidelines. We prohibit the sale of defence-related equipment that could significantly enhance the capability of either side to exacerbate or prolong the conflict. This policy is enforced by a strict export licence regime and all applications are rigorously scrutinised."

I would just say, because of your warning, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that on 6 September there was a letter from the then Minister of State, Foreign Office, the right hon. Member for Bristol, West—printed in *The Independent* On 12 November—to Lord Trefgarne which tells a very different story. This is the difficulty with the whole question of sanctions: that Ministers say one thing to Parliament, my hon. Friend the Member for Blackley and others when they know that there is another whole policy on arms exports. I might just mention the various statements of Alan Clark, who is no longer with us. There are dual standards.

Although I said earlier in my speech that, maybe, the present Prime Minister did not understand or was not fully briefed in his short time at the Foreign Office on the intricacies of all these matters, his successor was a very different kettle of fish. Few men have come to the office of Foreign Secretary with a greater knowledge of world affairs than the present Foreign Secretary. He is a man who is very clever and very quick on the uptake.

I cannot believe that Foreign Office officials would have dared, in these matters, not to brief this incoming Foreign Secretary.

Therefore, I ask, in relation to United Nations sanctions, what was the role of the present Foreign Secretary who chaired the Cabinet committee in July 1990 which questioned the efficacy of the guidelines. Again—this is a matter of public knowledge—

"Highly-placed United Nations sources told *The Independent* . . . that Matrix Churchill computerised numerical controlled (CNC) machine tools were used to make components for gas centrifuges and calutron electro-magnetic isotope separation equipment used in enriching uranium for nuclear weapons."

I do not make too much of it, but for 27 years I have been the weekly columnist of the *New Scientist* and understand a great deal about these matters. I raised them in December 1979. They are of lasting interest to me. Then I read that

"The CNC equipment was found by UN inspectors making searches of Iraq's nuclear development installations in Iraq. The components have been destroyed, but the Matrix Churchill machine tools have been sealed and logged by officials."

Mr. Rogers: I do not want to prolong my right hon. Friend's speech because I understand that he is coming to the end of it. However, I want to reinforce what he has said and to bow to his extremely well-founded scientific knowledge. Does he not also find it strange that the ignorance that seems to be professed by the Government at present, whether it be the Prime Minister, the Foreign Secretary or anyone else, is confounded by the fact that the schedule that was given to the Trade and Industry Select Committee contained many of the items that my hon. Friend has just mentioned and that there was also a schedule of many other pieces of equipment that were enhancers, as well as actual pieces of military equipment, that were exported to Iraq?

Mr. Dalyell *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It may help the House, and certainly the hon. Gentleman, if I draw his attention to page 365 of "Erskine May", which says:

[Mr. Deputy Speaker]

"A Member is not permitted to read his speech, but he may refresh his memory by reference to notes. A Member may read extracts from documents, but such extracts and quotations should be reasonably short."

The hon. Gentleman has been going beyond that, and I hope that he will bear it in mind.

Mr. Dalyell: I shall end, therefore, with one short quotation. Hon. Members may recollect the Foreign Secretary's statement on nuclear trigger devices. The subject was at the top of his mind; this was not an ill-considered, off-the-cuff remark. He turned round to my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman)—I suspect that my hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, West (Mr. Ross) remembers the occasion; I certainly do because I was one of the uncalled by Mr. Speaker Weatherill—and said:

"The right hon. Gentleman knows that we do not supply arms to Iraq, and I am glad of the opportunity to make that clear." [*Official Report*, 29 March 1990; Vol. 170, c. 673.]

I do not want to be thrown out of the House because I know that that is what happens when one uses the word "lie", but when a man as well informed as the Foreign Secretary tells the shadow Foreign Secretary that

" we do not supply arms to Iraq, and I am glad of the opportunity to make that clear"

it calls for some explanation—and certainly long before Lord Justice Scott reports to the House, by which time the Foreign Secretary may have ceased to be Foreign Secretary, may be greatly honoured and perhaps moved to another place.

I think, if not in the wind-up, at least very soon, against the detailed background that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, have allowed me to give this morning, an explanation must be given of how the Foreign Secretary could give his considered opinion that

"we do not supply arms to Iraq, and I am glad of the opportunity to make that clear."

I think that that is misleading the House of Commons.

12.3 pm

Mr. Roy Thomason (Bromsgrove): I shall be fairly brief as I am aware that a considerable number of hon. Members wish to participate in the debate. I shall endeavour to ensure that my remarks have some proximity to the motion.

Dag Hammerskjold said that

"The United Nations was not set up to get us into heaven but to save us from hell."

It is inevitably a fallible human organisation. Our expectations of it must, therefore, be low.

I welcome the debate. As my hon. Friend the Member for Bexleyheath (Mr. Townsend) said earlier, it is the first debate on the range of the United Nations' functions for many years. In fact, a dip into *Hansard* failed to reveal when the last debate was held. I congratulate him on drawing the subject to our attention, which gives me the opportunity to say how much many hon. Members appreciate the work that he does in association with the United Nations.

Like my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin), I must apologise for being unable to stay long in the Chamber due to other commitments.

A few years ago, I was a United Nations sceptic, but I am not now. I am encouraged by the effort with which it seeks to address a wide range of issues, a number of which have been referred to, so I shall not repeat them. It must consider issues such as population growth, environmental protection, human rights and health and the regulation of essential international accords—a roll call of numerous worthy objectives.

In a nutshell, the United Nations's charter governs the conduct of international behaviour between sovereign states. If it did not do so, what else could fill the gap? The world needs a talking shop. It must retain communications betweeen states in a formal, procedural manner. It must have an opportunity to vent violent pressures, and the General Assembly is the only place for universal international talks. If nations are not talking, we may be warring.

The world needs an international policeman ensuring that international laws and standards are not based on might and a code of international morality that does not undermine the legitimate sovereignty of Governments—a point to which I shall return in a moment.

The United Nations was established after the second world war with the primary objective

"to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war."

One could argue that it has failed miserably in that objective. It ran into the cold war, and there has been repeated regional or local warfare ever since. But there has been no world war. Is that because the United Nations or of the nuclear deterrent? Certainly at moments of great international crisis the role of the United Nations has been important. The Cuban missile crisis and the middle east conflict in 1973 showed that the United Nations can work as a positive power to reduce international tension. It has been successful in mobilising world opinion against aggressors, as it did over Afghanistan.

In its first 40 years, the United Nations was involved in eight peacekeeping operations. Since 1988, there have been at least 10 others, including Cambodia and now the former Yugoslavia. In addition, other nations have been sanctioned to take action on the United Nations's behalf, as in Korea and Kuwait.

As the cold war has rolled back and the threat fof nuclear warfare between the two super-powers has receded, so the importance of the United Nations for dealing with localised conflict has grown. The old conflict between the allied powers of the Soviet Union and those of the United States led to some international discipline. So it follows as that role changes with the breakdown of the super-power groupings there is an increasing need for localised discipline to be imposed by nations acting in concert.

I want briefly to praise the work of the troops that perform the peacekeeping functions of the United Nations because little has been said yet on this. It is important to place that on record. They are people who go into action, often without arms and under threat of their lives. Fortunately, the six observers who were detained in Cambodia have just been released, but they demonstrate only too clearly the risks that are run by many on behalf of world peace.

I want to return to the point about national sovereignty and whether it is appropriate for an international force to override the legitimate Government of a country. What is a legitimate Government of a nation? Are Governments legitimate only because they are elected, or because they are carrying out the functions of government?

It is difficult for the United Nations to be called in to support a corrupt regime against its own people. Yet that

regime might be the legitimate Government of the country concerned. Is it legitimate and proper for the United Nations to prevent risings by oppressed minorities when human rights are threatened? Is it correct that law and order should be restored by the United Nations when it has broken down within the boundaries of one country and when the Government of that country do not seek outside help?

It will never be easy to address such issues. They must be judged item by item as they arise. It is perhaps wrong to set down in advance too many criteria for judging whether it is appropriate for the United Nations to be involved. It is certainly true that the United Nations must act as a doctor, saving life after an accident rather than as a law enforcer seeking to prevent the incident.

I shall suggest criteria that it might be appropriate to consider. All, or certainly most, of these criteria should apply before it is proper for the United Nations to become involved in the affairs of a nation. The first criterion is that there should be extreme violence, not isolated terrorist acts. Secondly, there should be a breakdown of law and order. Thirdly, world or regional peace should be threatened. Fourthly, there should be extensive suffering of the civilian population. Unless those criteria apply, I do not believe that the United Nations should take action.

Mr. Rogers: Does the hon. Gentleman say that all those criteria should apply at any one time?

Mr. Thomason: Certainly most of them should apply. I have already said that each case should be considered on its merits. It is wrong to lay down hard and fast rules in isolation from individual cases.

Hon. Members have already referred to the United Nations costly operations and its difficulties in dealing with its duties without proper funding. I shall not repeat what has been said, but much criticism has correctly been levelled at the United States. However, the United States contributes—or at least is due to contribute, although it does not always do so—30·7 per cent. of the United Nations budget. We must bear in mind the considerable burden that falls upon that one country.

Mr. Corbyn: It does not pay it.

Mr. Thomason: The United States funds the United Nations substantially, but the funding is often rather late. The critical problem is the United Nations cash flow. The figures cited earlier reveal that more than 80 per cent. of the current year's subscriptions as at July were unpaid. That represents the accumulated total, including arrears of previous years' subscriptions. In addition, there are peacekeeping costs.

Mr. Corbyn: The hon. Gentleman is doing a good job of defending the indefensible. Should not the United States simply pay up? As it wishes to play a major role in the United Nations, the least that it can do is to pay its subscriptions.

Mr. Thomason: I have made it clear that I believe that the United States should pay, and it is rightly criticised for not paying its contribution, but some provisos should be added to that argument. I am interested to note that in the past few hours the United States has announced that it will send 28,000 troops to Somalia. It is not clear whether they will be paid for by United States taxpayers or whether a contribution will be made from the United Nations budget. If the former, by contra-entry, as it were, the United States may make a substantial financial contribution to the peacekeeping budget.

There is no doubt that to function properly and effectively the United Nations must be properly funded. It is disgraceful that it is left in its present condition, not knowing whether it can pay its salaries month by month. I make it absolutely clear that the United Nations needs the financial as well as the moral support of the nations of the world. The United Kingdom has been in the forefront of ensuring that the contribution is made. So have other European countries—at least, with regard to the subscriptions. The criticisms of nations such as Germany and Japan relate not to the payment of subscriptions—they often pay up well—but to their contributions to the peacekeeping role over which they have been laggardly in doing their duty.

The United Nations structure needs to be reformed. I shall not repeat what was said earlier about the work of the present Secretary-General in introducing much-needed initiatives in that process. He has not yet been able to go far enough, and I hope that so far we are seeing only a start.

Duplication between agencies must be avoided, and the management structure must be reviewed to show a clear chain of command. Inter-agency in-fighting must be reduced, and staff must be chosen according to merit rather than nationality. The credibility of the organisation needs to be enhanced, to general good will.

Only the United Nations can provide action in the wide spheres that require a complex and important organisation. The International Maritime Organisation, and the International Civil Aviation Organisation are important bodies whose work must be acknowledged. So is the World Health Organisation, which has achieved the eradication of smallpox, and the Food and Agriculture Organisation, the United Nations Commissioner on Narcotic Drugs, the World bank, the Universal Postal Union, and the International Telecommunication Union. They are all essential parts of the work of an important international body.

I must emphasise the importance that the United Nations now gives to the environment. The United Nations initiated the Rio summit, and has addressed vital issues—but the pace is slow. Our initiatives in this country have not been reflected across the world. The issues must be addressed with greater urgency.

The United Nations charter governs the conduct of international behaviour between sovereign states. To succeed, therefore, the organisation must be effective and efficient, and must raise its profile so as to command respect. It must deal with current international issues such as the environment, but it must not become involved in issues that are irrelevant to international action. It must direct and initiate action to help the helpless, but it must not simply provide food for the starving people of a nation while thereby allowing that nation's Government to be free to buy arms and equip troops. Food must be given to those who need it, not to remove pressure from a Government to allow it to equip troops who then steal that food because of their power.

The United Nations must avoid becoming a permanent policeman. I noted what was said earlier about the organisation becoming locked in to certain areas of

[Mr. Thomason]

difficulty in the world. It must be an agent for peaceful settlement and then withdraw. Its affairs must be managed with transparent accountancy.

Above all, the United Nations must help all the nations of the world appreciate the difficulties of international operations. Patience is needed where time is short. Achievement is measured by the shuffle, not the stride, and success is often merely survival.

12.17 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I shall emulate the hon. Member for Bromsgrove (Mr. Thomason) by making my comments as brief as possible, and to the point.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Bexleyheath (Mr. Townsend) on choosing the United Nations as the subject of the debate. That is especially appropriate in view of yesterday's announcement on Somalia by the Security Council.

I welcome the general tone of the debate and the attitude of the Government these days to the role of the United Nations. Not long ago one could have been forgiven for thinking that there was sheer hostility in the Conservative party towards the role, functions and work of the United Nations. That is not true under the present Prime Minister, but it was under the previous Prime Minister in her more strident mode.

It is a depressing fact that, as those hon. Members who have been lucky enough to be called so far have said, the end of the cold war has led to an upsurge in regional conflict. The existence of two military super-powers naturally provided a stalemate, but a stalemate is not a solution to problems. All it does is to keep the lid firmly pressed down on them. It was a dangerous stalemate because it was brought about by the possession of vast quantities of nuclear weapons on each side. That was clearly unsatisfactory. Whatever price we are now paying for the end of the cold war, it is, to echo the words used by others, a price well worth paying on this occasion. However, we must accept that there is a price to pay.

The break-up of the Soviet Union and its empire has posed enormous problems, specifically for Europe. Yugoslavia is the most bloody at present, but there could be more and far worse to follow in eastern Europe. I am worried about the 14 newly independent former Soviet republics in whose territories there are 25 million ethnic Russians. The thought of Russia intervening militarily in any of the republics is a frightening prospect. We need to be aware of that possibility, and we need to ensure that the United Nations is able to deal with any problems in the area.

There is great economic suffering in Russia and I want to use this debate to mention that fact. We read so much about the suffering of the Russian people and others in eastern Europe. I do not believe that the west is doing enough. It is no good wringing our hands and saying that we hope that things will work out well for people there. Of course we have the problems of recession in this country, but, even with the Conservative Government's economic policies, our problems are probably temporary.

The problems of the former Soviet people are long-term problems which can be solved only by a massive transformation of their economies. That will require an equally massive transfer of wealth from the west to the east, such as the Americans gave to war-ravaged Europe after the second world war by means of the Marshall plan. We need a latter-day Marshall plan. Our failure to transfer resources to eastern Europe could result in a tragedy of historic proportions.

The end of the cold war has highlighted the work and role of the United Nations in a changed world. I am sure that all hon. Members agree that the United Nations is the hope for the future because of all its international roles. At the moment, its peacekeeping role is the most significant. As a result of the way in which the world has changed in recent years, the peacekeeping role of the United Nations is now putting enormous demands on that organisation. The United Nations has done as much peacekeeping in the past four years as it had done in the previous 40 years. That is the scale of peacekeeping facing the United Nations.

Conservative and Opposition Members have said that peacekeeping is an expensive function. It cost $233 million five years ago. It is estimated that it cost $421 million last year, and that the figure for this year will be $3 billion. The United Nations budget is roughly $2 billion a year for all its functions, including peacekeeping. The hon. Member for Bromsgrove was asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) about costs and contributions and about the fact that we should ensure that this country and the United States pay their full subscriptions on time. It is important that subscriptions are paid on time. The United States, Russia, Germany and France are well behind with their contributions. Although it is good to know that the British Government have paid their annual subscription, I understand that about $500,000 is still owed by the Government as a contribution towards peacekeeping.

The United Nations is undertaking 12 peacekeeping operations around the world. To ensure that adequate support can be given to those operations, it is necessary greatly to expand the United Kingdom budget. These are difficult times in which to talk about giving more money to international organisations, but the price of failure is so great that we cannot simply ignore the need to put more resources at the disposal of the United Nations. We must take a long-term view. We must not merely look at our own short-term economic problems when there are so many long-term problems facing the world which require action now if they are not to develop into tragedies.

The Secretary-General, Dr. Boutros Boutros Ghali, has called for a standing UN peacekeeping unit. That is an excellent idea, but it has not met with a favourable response from other countries, especially the United States. I welcome the announcement that many extra troops are to be sent to Somalia, but I make the point that the United States is very reluctant to put its own troops under the military control of the United Nations. As long as the United States refuses to do that, the finger of suspicion can always be pointed at it, even when it is acting in the best interests of the world.

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend: The hon. Gentleman is being a little unfair to the United States. He knows that it has been the convention over the years that the super-powers should not take part in United Nations peacekeeping operations. The United States has been discouraged from joining in.

Mr. Banks: I take that point. However, in view of the problems we now face which require such large numbers of troops armed with sophisticated weaponry, only countries such as the United States can fulfil the needs.

I remain one of the great critics of American foreign policy, but it is necessary that the finger of suspicion does not point unfairly at the United States when it is acting in the best interests of the rest of the world. I cannot see what the United States will gain nationally out of sending 30,000, or 60,000, troops to Somalia. Indeed, the United States Administration may become the target of strong criticism internally as soon as American soldiers start coming back in body bags. I understand that. The American Administration might be better protected and less misunderstood if they were more prepared for their military forces to be placed under United Nations control when they intervene in countries with the sanction of the Security Council.

I believe that there should be a United Nations army under the control of the Security Council. I believe that Britain should pledge its full defence resources to the United Nations and should put them at the disposal of the United Nations. One of the great benefits of the peace dividend is that we could say that the United Nations should be able to call on this country whenever it needs to, so that our military could intervene in areas where it was considered necessary for it to do so by the Security Council.

I believe that the UN should have the right to interfere in the domestic affairs of other countries. I know that there are Conservative and Labour Members who disagree. In a world that purports to be civilised—I do not believe that we can call ourselves civilised, but I hope that we are moving towards a more civilised world—we cannot allow the political leaders of a country to massacre their own people while we stand aside and claim that that is a matter of the internal affairs of another country. I cannot see how the people who are being massacred will be grateful for that legal advice.

On the basis of unanimity within the Security Council, the United Nations should have the power and be prepared to intervene in the domestic affairs of other countries. I know that there are dangers in that respect, but there are even greater dangers for the people who are on the receiving end of the barbaric actions of a number of political leaders around the world.

It was right for the United States to be prepared to send troops to Somalia. I hope that the British Government will provide military support. Why should gangsters in Somalia prevent humanitarian aid reaching the Somali people? It is right that there should be intervention. Why should Serb thugs in Bosnia be able to do what they are doing?

It is now time for the United Nations to intervene militarily in the former Yugoslavia if only to stop that conflict stretching into Kosovo and Macedonia and then involving Albania, Greece, Bulgaria and even Italy. There are dangers; but the greater danger is that of doing nothing at all.

Although I will not adopt the "action man" mode of the leader of the Liberal Democrats and want to send large numbers of troops in without thinking about it, the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) has a point. However, it is very easy for politicians within the comforts of the Palace of Westminster to decide to send troops abroad to intervene in trouble spots; we do not run the risks. In those circumstances, troops should be volunteers. I do not know how that fits in with the fact that ours is a professional army, but we should send troops on a voluntary basis rather than on the basis of, "Pick up your pack and off you go, laddie." It would be wrong for politicians to adopt that attitude.

Military intervention rarely provides a long-term solution. We must look to the United Nations political role to solve those problems. We must make people sit around tables and ensure that they stay there until they find solutions to their problems. Naturally, economic sanctions must be imposed, and perhaps with greater enthusiasm than they have been imposed. As has been said, arms control is also essential. We must cut off the causes of regional conflicts rather than deal with the symptoms.

I am clear in my mind. I have not changed my position with regard to the United Nations. I have always believed in the role and function of the United Nations. It holds the key to the very future of world peace, and it deserves our unstinting support.

12.31 pm

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): I welcome the opportunity to speak in this debate. However, I add my apology to the apologies of several others as I will not be present for the winding-up speeches, because my wife had a baby yesterday and I must pick her up from hospital. However, I will read the winding-up speeches with some interest.

Mr. Rogers: The hon. Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier) is now the third Conservative Member to preface his remarks by saying that he will have to leave the Chamber early. I am aware that there is no coercion on hon. Members to stay. However, it is most discourteous. If it is simply a Government trick to scupper the debate on colliery closures, that is appalling. Conservative Members come into the Chamber, make their speeches and then walk out without any courtesy to the Minister or anyone else who has to wrap up the debate.

Mr. Brazier: I have taken a considerable interest in this subject and three of my letters on the subject have been published in the press. Although my wife had a baby yesterday, I have come to the House today to speak on the subject because I feel exceptionally strongly about it. I will read the record carefully to see what the Front-Bench spokesmen have to say. However, it is not unreasonable that I should want to return home, especially as I have to pick up my wife from the hospital.

Mr. Rogers: I sincerely apologise to the hon. Gentleman. As the father of four children, I appreciate the calls of the family. If I had known the facts, I would not have attacked the hon. Gentleman in that way. However, I deprecate the actions of other Conservative Members. I am aware of the strong commitment of the hon. Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier) and I apologise unreservedly to him.

Mr. Brazier: I am most grateful for the hon. Gentleman's apology.

Mr. Thomason: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Brazier: Several hon. Members are waiting to speak and I have very little time left. However, I will give way to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Thomason: I thank my hon. Friend. It is interesting that quite a few Conservative Members wish to participate in the debate. This is an important issue on which many of us spent a considerable time preparing papers because we are interested in the subject, but there are large empty spaces on the Opposition Benches. It ill-behoves Opposition Members to make such points when hon. Members have taken time to be here.

Mr. Brazier: I thoroughly endorse my hon. Friend's remarks, but it is time that we returned to the subject of debate.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Bexleyheath (Mr. Townsend) on choosing a good topic and on his excellent speech. Before I continue to the main burden of my speech, on the UN policy in the Balkans, I must endorse his argument that there can only be a long-term solution to the problems of Somalia with the restoration of an Administration there. I do not want to discuss how that can be achieved, but unless an Administration is restored, the chaos will return as soon as the troops leave.

The international community—in particular the United Nations and the European Comunity—is pressing all parties in the Balkans, particularly the Serbs, to establish a peace based on the internationally recognised borders of Bosnia. In principle, that aim is commendable, because we should uphold international law and because if we give way on the principle of borders, there are frightening precedents for other parts of eastern Europe and the ex-Soviet republics. I am sure that my central message will be unwelcome in some parts of the House, and it runs contrary to Government and United Nations policy. Nevertheless, I think that that aim is unattainable. If we choose to use Bosnia as the test case for that valuable principle we shall test it to destruction. Furthermore, I do not want the lives of British service men—perhaps substantial numbers of them—to be lost in an exercise in trying to make water run up hill. I welcome the recent comments of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence, which gave the strongest possible hint that all military advice is that the aim is unattainable.

The burden of my speech is to establish that fact. I shall briefly consider a more attainable objective and mention the implications for our defence policies of trying to assist the United Nations in such areas.

Why is the aim unattainable? If we look back as far as we like in Balkan history we find that there have been wars there. Today, the focus is on Serbian aggression, but in world war two the Serbs suffered horribly at the hands of the Ustachi Croatians and their Bosnian Hanjar supporters and one sixth of the occupying Wehrmacht was made up of Muslims.

It is important to look further back in history to the five centuries of extremely bloody Turkish rule in Serbia. The spiritual mother of the Serbian nation is a lady who lost nine sons fighting the Turkish occupying forces.

Mr. Rogers *rose*——

Mr. Brazier: I shall not give way again because some of my hon. Friends want to speak and I must make progress.

Turkish rule is significant because against the background of that terrible historical heritage, the worries of the Serbians and their Greek allies are constantly fuelled by recent examples of brutality by Muslim regimes against Christian minorities, to which all too often they see the western powers and the United Nations casting a blind eye. One example is the Azerbaijani treatment of Armenian minorities and another, is the Syrians' treatment of Lebanese Christians. An example that is even closer to home is the near silence on the treatment of Christian minorities in mainland Turkey. A Greek Member of the European Parliament reminded us of that in a pamphlet which we all received last week. Those considerations make the Serbs determined not to be ruled by an Islamic Government.

I do not for one second seek to justify the hideous atrocities committed by the Serbian guerrilla forces in Bosnia—I think that they have been largely committed by such forces rather than by the Serbian regular army. I simply want to explain why they are fighting and their motivation for doing so.

Mr. Ernie Ross: Does that make it okay then?

Mr. Brazier: No, not at all.

A number of options have been put forward for restoring Bosnia to its original borders. I should like to eliminate two of them. The stronger of the two options is that we should deploy ground troops in an offensive. I have already said why I believe that the Serbians are fighting and it is interesting to consider how they would be likely to fight.

When the Germans rolled into Yugoslavia on the heels of the Italians in the second world war, there was, contrary to popular belief, little initial fighting. Wehrmacht casualties ran to a few hundred only. Once the Germans had established themselves, however, the guerrilla war began. I believe that if the United Nations were to deploy a fighting force in Serbia, which had nothing to do with delivering humanitarian aid, exactly the same thing would happen. Initially they would not oppose it, but, subsequently, a guerrilla war would begin and, as in so many other places—Palestine, Cyprus and Afghanistan—the Serbians would make extensive use of children and the elderly, the most vulnerable, in propagating that war. Eight-year-old children would shoot at British and other United Nations soldiers. Women and children would be pushed to the front of crowds to act as a screen for terrorists.

Once we saw our soldiers being killed and the world media began to cry out at the killing of civilians, which would be unavoidable when trying to hold down a hostile population, the inevitable result would be the withdrawal of those United Nations forces. After that the fighting would begin afresh with renewed vigour.

The other option for re-establishing Bosnian control of the original Bosnian state is the so-called air option. If the first option is unwise, the second one does not exist. It is ludicrous to draw a parallel with the Gulf war. Then, air crews were flying over vast empty spaces that were home to no one. There was no forestation and air power could be used without the slightest hesitation. Are we really going to bomb Serbian gun positions in the middle of villages and bomb their ammunition dumps, which would be located in the middle of their concentration camps?

If we conducted sporadic bombing in Serbia itself against selected targets, all the evidence from past wars suggests that that would stiffen morale and deepen hatred. Surely no one is suggesting that we should initiate a Dresden on Belgrade.

The truth is that there is no limited air option. There is no way in which we can put Bosnia back together again by following an acceptable policy with acceptable casualties. What, then, should we try to do to overcome the plight of the wretched Bosnians?

We must recognise that the border must change—there is no other option. The Serbs have already said and the Croats, too, I believe, that they would be happy to give up some of the ground that they have captured in exchange for a negotiated settlement involving a genuine border change. In effect, Serbia would be given a substantial chunk of Bosnia and Croatia would be given a smaller chunk. The Bosnians would be left with a smaller, viable "place in the sun", to coin the famous phrase. I believe that such a solution could be negotiated. We have had suggestions from the Serbians in Bosnia that they would be willing to consider and negotiate that option.

Even that might prove unattainable without the use of force. The longer we wait before entering negotiations based on a border change—the longer we try to uphold a good principle of international law in the face of an impossible example, with a state that has existed for only 18 months and which was created against the wishes of the two minorities who together form a majority of the country—the more we undermine the possibility of success. I believe that we should go for it now.

What would be the implications for our defence policy if we were willing to intervene on behalf of the UN in a really active military fashion in Bosnia or a similar type of situation? I accept that matters could become so bad that it might be necessary to intervene, but I would be willing to contemplate intervention in only one event, and that would be after a serious attempt had been made to negotiate fresh boundaries for a much smaller Bosnia in which the Bosnian Muslims were left to live in peace.

Only if that proved impossible—the signs do not suggest that it would be impossible—might it be necessary to try to establish the sort of enclave that we have for the Kurds on the basis of a much smaller and defendable patch. But we must be clear that the consequences for our defence policy would be absolutely profound if Britain were willing in principle to intervene in that type of way there or anywhere in eastern Europe.

Mr. Ernie Ross: The hon. Gentleman cannot be allowed to leave the matter there. He refers to our taking action. Is he aware that it is not for Britain to decide what shall happen in Bosnia? The purpose of the UN having a new agenda is to make it acceptable to minorities, particularly minorities in parts of the world which have felt that only the big powers, the majorities, have taken action against them. It is for them—not just the Serbs but the Muslims and Croats—to decide whether they want to divide up their country. It is not for us to tell them how to divide it up.

Mr. Brazier: The hon. Gentleman missed the point I was making, which was that the UN and EC line at every peace negotiation has been based on the objective of making all parties agree to restoring Bosnia to its original or perhaps I should say "nominal", boundaries. That has been the pre-condition at every conference, including the recent one in London, and my basic message is that that demand is unattainable and that until the UN moves away from it, there can be no prospect of a successful peace conference. The British Government and the UN should be aiming for a conference designed to negotiate a realistic border change, and the Serbs have said that in such circumstances they would be willing to give up some of the ground they have captured.

I am anxious to consider the implications for British defence policy should Britain, either in Bosnia or some other eastern European situation, agree to play a significant military role, similar to that which we played in the Gulf, as part of a United Nations force that was doing real fighting and was not engaged in a purely peacekeeping operation.

Our armed forces, and particularly the Army, are moving from being very small to even smaller. Indeed, after "Options for Change", our Army will be only slightly larger than that of Holland or Belgium. It is desperately overstretched and we could not realistically expect such a tiny force—we are catering for only 100,000—to take on a commitment of that size, over and above all its other commitments.

The funding is also in the process of being squeezed, even more so than manpower, from 5·2 per cent. of GDP in the mid-1980s to a projected 3·2 per cent. in the mid-1990s, a squeeze of 40 per cent. For us to become involved in the type of campaign in prospect in, say, Bosnia, would involve us in vast quantities of new and expensive equipment, of which helicopter gunships are an example.

It would be unwise for the United Nations to become involved in trying to enforce in a military fashion its present objective, which I believe to be unattainable. Moreover, if we were to contemplate military intervention in defence of a much more limited objective of providing an enclave for the Bosnians—it is the only circumstance under which I might be willing to contemplate military intervention—it would require a total reappraisal of our defence policy and "Options for Change", with enormous resource implications.

I am genuinely sorry that I shall not be present to hear the wind up of this debate by my hon. Friend the Minister, but I shall read the record with considerable interest. In summary, I firmly believe that the United Nations' present objective in the Balkans is unattainable and I am horrified at the idea of pouring away the blood of our own service men and women in trying to attain it. An attainable objective could and should be formulated at a conference, without pre-conditions. It should be based on substantial changes in borders which, after all, are of only 18 months' standing as internally recognised boundaries.

Finally, we should be clear about the fact that if, under any circumstances, we plan to become involved in a United Nations war-fighting role as distinct from small-scale peacekeeping operations, the implications for resourcing our armed forces will be profound.

12.51 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): I welcome the fact that we are having a debate on the United Nations role. It is high time that we did so and I congratulate the hon. Member for Bexleyheath (Mr. Townsend) on getting the debate and on his consistent interest in UN matters. It

[Mr. Jeremy Corbyn]

underlines a problem in the House—we seldom get round to debating matters to do with the United Nations or have Government time set aside during which the Foreign Secretary can report on Britain's contributions to the UN and its agencies. It is an extremely important issue and we do not spend enough time discussing it.

I strongly support the view that Britain should renew its membership of UNESCO. To have left that organisation was appalling and a kick in the face of a valuable part of the UN's operations. It was also a signal to the rest of the world that we did not care about cultural and scientific aspects of UN operations or about the rest of the world. I disagree with the hon. Member for Bexleyheath, because I think that one of UNESCO's most important contributions was its attempt at setting up a world information agency. It was trying to ensure that the pro-western bias in the world's media-gathering agencies was at least in part redressed.

The new UN Secretary-General, Dr. Boutros Ghali, has produced a report on how he sees the UN and its agencies developing. It is important that he has done that and useful that he has set out his objectives. Although I do not agree with all the objectives or with several decisions that he has already taken, at least he has attempted to set out the scenario by which the UN can develop.

There are fundamental structural problems within the United Nations. It was born at the end of the second world war and the victors of that war played a large part in its establishment. They set up the concept of the General Assembly and the Security Council, and gave permanent members of the Security Council powers of veto, essentially to keep the Soviet Union and the United States in place in the United Nations. Since then, we have been bedevilled by the Security Council's power and the limited powers of the General Assembly.

It cannot be right that the Security Council's five permanent members—Britain, France, Russia, the United States and China—should still be the same permanent members after all this time. Why cannot there automatically be a place on the Security Council for at least one representative of each continent? Why does no third world country have a permanent place on the Security Council? Why are not economically powerful countries such as Japan permanently represented? No African or Latin American countries are permanently represented. India, with the second largest population in the world, is not represented. There are many arguments about it.

Unless the issue of the structure of the United Nations is properly dealt with, and real democracy is developed in it, the process that we have seen in the past four years of growing United States interest and control over United Nations decisions will eventually lead to the disintegration of the United Nations. Third world countries will increasingly band together through the movement for non-alignment, the Group of Seven or whatever, depending on the area involved. It is all very well for western triumphalism to be in charge and in the ascendancy of the United Nations at present, but, unless the issues are seriously addressed, the United Nations simply will not survive. I say that not as one who wants to see the United Nations fail—I do not—but as one who wants to see it succeed. Unless the United Nations is prepared to change and recognise the reality of the world, it will start to decline.

The Rio summit should have been a great triumph for the United Nations. But it was not a great triumph because of all the caveats that were pushed into the final communiqués on environmental considerations, especially by the United States. Unless one of the world's largest industrial economies, the United States, is prepared to agree to the wishes of the rest of the world to protect the environment, the species and the regeneration of natural environments, the whole concept and consequences of the Rio summit will be called seriously into question.

There is a great deal of concern about the restructuring of the United Nations in favour of its economic role. After all, the United Nations economic role is one of its key roles. That role is being taken away from the redistributive agencies of the United Nations and handed over effectively to the International Monetary Fund and the World bank. I say that because I know that most of the debate today has been dominated, understandably, by the issue of United Nations peacekeeping operations and the dangers of wars, including civil wars, in various parts of the world. I understand that, but the majority of the world's population do not have secure employment, secure housing, available education, available health care or decent food supplies. A quarter of the world's population is malnourished. More than 500 million people in the world regularly face starvation. Life expectancy in most of the world is rather less than 50. We are looking at a world that is deeply and grossly divided and becoming more deeply and grossly divided.

The United Nations and its attempts at fair trade through the UN Conference on Trade and Development in the past, its distribution of food through the World Food Programme and the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation, and its attempts to examine the enormous power that multinational corporations hold in the world, must be applauded. In that sense I deeply regret the decision taken by Boutros Boutros Ghali immediately after the Rio summit to close down the United Nations office which dealt with transnational corporations.

A very good article has been published in the July issue of *Third World Resurgence*, which is produced by the Third World Network in Penang, Malaysia. The article is entitled

"UN restructuring against South's interests".

The reality is that the restructuring of the United Nations is done very much according to the image and the wishes of the United States. That image seems to be that the only thing that matters in the world's economy is the power of multinational capital and the freedom of multinational capital to trade. Much less interest is taken in the needs of third world agriculture or the redistribution of power and wealth around the world.

I refer to the point I made earlier. Unless the issues are taken seriously by all member states of the United Nations, and we recognise the need for democracy within the United Nations and for contributions to be made to it, I do not think that the United Nations will last much longer. The tensions within the organisation will become far too great. Boutros Boutros Ghali expressed it well. Thinking back to the period when the great powers of the world spent a long time ignoring the United Nations in the 1960s, 1970s and the early 1980s, Boutros Boutros Ghali

now sees that the rest of the world has a surfeit of interest in the United Nations. We saw that surfeit of interest in the procedures leading up to and surrounding the Gulf war.

I have never been an apologist for Saddam Hussein. I was calling for an arms embargo on Iraq in 1986, a long time before the British Government recognised the dangers there, so I do not need to apologise about that. I thought that the Gulf war was immoral. The consequences of that conflict, which was fought under the auspices of the United Nations, but not under its day-to-day command or control, included the death of at least 250,000 Iraqi soldiers and civilians and a profit to the British Government from the income received from the war. The Government conveniently forget about the money that they lost in export credit guarantees from sales to Iraq in the past. The war also brought instability in Kuwait, poverty in Iraq, and instability in the south where the Shias live and in the north where the Kurds live.

Perhaps we should have taken more notice of what the Kurds said about their right to self-determination in the late 1970s and early 1980s, rather than taking an interest far too late in what they were saying. Instead, this country and others were more interested in building up the power of Iraq and Saddam Hussein.

Mr. Ernie Ross: I agree with my hon. Friend, but what would he have done about Iraq's invasion of Kuwait? We all know that Saddam Hussein was maltreating citizens. I agree that we should not have been selling arms to Hussein, irrespective of whether he intended to invade Kuwait. But once Hussein was in Kuwait, it was clear that he was attempting to destroy the Kuwaiti nation, so how else could we have dealt with that problem?

Mr. Corbyn: We could have dealt with it in a number of ways. First, we should not have been supporting Iraq by selling arms to it, particularly during the Iran-Iraq war. Secondly, much closer observation should have been taken of Saddam Hussein's intentions in the lead-up to the invasion of Kuwait, particularly the United States intelligence information that was made available to all parties. Thirdly, the sanctions were having some effect. Fourthly, President Gorbachev had broken an agreement that Iraq was, in principle, prepared to withdraw from Kuwait at that stage. However, the United States war machine was so large and was very much in place by then, so there was no question of President Bush being prepared to allow an opportunity for other action to be taken. The subject of my speech is not solely the Gulf war, but its consequences have been absolutely horrific and it is hard to find any benefits from it at present.

On the issue of peace around the world in a more global sense, the United Nations sponsored the non-proliferation treaty. The British Government say that they support the United Nations and that a cornerstone of their policies is their support for the United Nations. In that case, why are the Government ordering and building a fourth Trident submarine? They are, apparently, prepared to consider further nuclear weapons in future. The Trident submarine programme is the most massive proliferation of nuclear firepower in any world state at present. If all the warheads are put in place it will increase Britain's nuclear firepower by 400 per cent. over the existing Polaris fleet. The programme is nonsense, a waste of money and deeply immoral. I say that as one who is not prepared to countenance the holding or use of nuclear weapons in any circumstances. We should pay some heed to the non-proliferation treaty, which was sponsored by the United Nations.

The United Nations is attempting to have an effect in some regions of the world. However, in some cases, what is happening is not what we are led to believe is happening. We know of the past horrors of the Pol Pot regime in Cambodia and the hundreds of thousands of skulls found in chambers—the charnel houses of the dead of Cambodia. Everyone recognises the evilness of that regime. The degree of genocide in Cambodia was on a par with the genocide of the Nazis against the Jewish people, gipsies and others in Germany, both pre-war and during the war. I accept that, but the reality in Cambodia at present is that the United States strategy has always been to get rid of the Han Sen regime in order to destroy the Vietnamese influence on Cambodia. At the same time, the United Nations presence in Cambodia is working alongside the Khmer Rouge and the remains of the former Pol Pot army.

Pol Pot is there. His influence is powerful. The regime has control over large areas of Cambodia. I draw the attention of the House to an article by John Pilger that appeared in last week's *New Statesman and Society*. One passage states:

"The United Nations is normalising the unthinkable in Cambodia."

He quotes a conversation that he had with the United Nation's Australian commander, Lt. General John Sanderson. This is John Pilger:

"I referred to the 'genocide' committed by the Khmer Rouge. 'Genocide is your term!' he came back. I reminded him that actually, no, it wasn't. In 1979, the United Nations Human Rights Commission described Pol Pot's crimes as 'the worst to have occurred anywhere in the world since Nazism'; and in 1985, the United Nations special rapporteur on genocide ruled that what the Khmer Rouge had done was 'genocide. . .even under the most restricted definition.'"

That is what is going on in Cambodia at present.

The United Nations promised development aid to Cambodia of £880 million. That was pledged at the Tokyo conference. Hardly any of that money has found its way into Cambodia.

There are enormous armies in Cambodia and the army of the Pol Pot regime is settling down alongside them. I fear that in the long run we shall see a return for Pol Pot by some back-door method with the connivance of the United Nations. A seat was kept throughout at the United Nations, with the support of the British Government, for the remains of the Khmer Rouge regime.

In an Adjournment debate last year I talked about the situation in the western Sahara. The rights of the Polisario and the rights of the people of the western Sahara to self-determination are understood and generally recognised by the United Nations. Like all conflicts, however, nothing is simple. The conflict in the western Sahara interests the people who are there, but interest does not extend beyond that. There is, of course, interest in the minerals that are there and the fish in the sea. Interest extends to the Spanish colonialists of the past.

In supporting the Polisario movement, the people of the western Sahara have amply demonstrated over many years their deep commitment to their own self-determination and independence. That must be well understood. It is in that setting that the behaviour of the Moroccan forces in the past must be examined, along with the role of the United Nations now.

[Mr. Corbyn]

The United Nations was due to broker a referendum in the western Sahara. Some United Nations officials were suspended during the preparation of the electoral roll because they were passing on to the Moroccan Government information that should not have been made able to them. They were showing partiality, and they were disciplined. The referendum should have been held about a year ago, but there has been delay. Moroccan forces have moved civilians and further Moroccan armed forces into the area that is claimed by the Democratic Republic of the Sahrawi People. By moving in these people the Moroccans have produced a deadlock when it comes to determining who will vote in any referendum. We know that determining who is to be on the electoral roll can be the deciding factor in who wins the referendum.

I do not want to see the present situation in the western Sahara continue for any longer. Can it be right that the vast majority of the population of the western Sahara have been forced to move out of their own homes, areas and villages to live in refugee camps in Algeria. It is not right. I think that everybody recognises that. It is essential that something is done about it. It is all very well passing United Nations resolutions on the subject, but if, at the same time, we maintain normal relations with Morocco —normal trade, military relations and all the rest of it— that country will not feel in the least inclined to carry out the wishes of the United Nations and hold a plebiscite, which I believe would lead to a peaceful settlement once and for all. It is clear that the people of the western Sahara wish to have the opportunity that is provided by self-determination, which will bring an end to an appalling conflict. That is the only part of Africa where the Organisation of African Unity supports the declaration of an independent state within existing political borders. African borders are fraught with difficulty, and the OAU's support for the Sahrawi case is interesting.

I want to make brief mention of the terrible conflict in Liberia, which is in part a matter of United Nations interest, in that the Security Council has discussed it. The article in last Sunday's edition of the *Observer* was chilling in its horror. It told of the children who have been dragged into the war by all sides, all factions. Five-year-old children have been handed knives and guns and taught how to kill. The long-term psychological damage done to those children and the chaos in that country ought to concern everyone deeply.

In that civil war, the supposed peacekeeping force organised by the west African states is overwhelmingly dominated by Nigeria. That force has air supplies and air cover and has taken to shelling the positions of the army led by Charles Taylor. That has become a civil war, and the forces of the west African states—with the military support and intelligence of the United States—have in effect become a war against the forces of Charles Taylor.

My purpose in raising that issue is to point out that unless a brokered ceasefire can take effect and there is a genuine halt to the fighting and support for the refugees in Liberia, many more will die than the 20,000 already killed in that civil war. Another potential Somalia or Beirut is developing in west Africa.

Many do not accept that the west African peacekeeping forces are particularly even-handed or interested in securing the peace. It has, with the support of other states within the region, become a civil war. The United Nations must take that situation seriously and try to broker an urgent ceasefire. Otherwise, the killing will continue.

There are many other places in the world where issues of war and peace are not yet resolved, and where there is a need for peacekeeping forces and to recognise the rights of people to live in peace. That is an important and major role for the United Nations.

I remind the House that the absence of fighting or belligerence in a conflict does not mean that people are living at peace. It cannot be right that we know that the behaviour of the majority of industrialised nations is ruining our environment and potentially ending life on this planet. We know also that the world economic system does not redstribute wealth from the richest nations to the poorest but sucks yet more wealth from the poorest and hands it to the banking systems of the richest. One thinks of the debt crisis, the power of multinational capital, unfair trading arrangements, and the low prices paid for commodities.

It cannot be right that millions of children are growing up in slums on the outskirts of capital cities. It cannot be right that life expectancy in so many countries is less than 50. It cannot be right that millions are dying of starvation while we are getting rid of surplus food to maintain high prices.

The United Nations can provide the framework and the solutions to those problems, but if the United Nations becomes solely the plaything of the powerful, rich, industrial nations of the north, that might satisfy the egos of those nations initially and give them a feeling of well being and self-satisfaction, but in the not-too-distant future it will lead to the United Nation's demise, as the poorest nations grow angrier and angrier at experts arriving from the International Monetary Fund and the World bank to tell them how to run their economies. They know full well that advice will be "Cut your public spending, and close your hospitals and schools", to repay a debt that is unfair and non-repayable. Unless we take those issues seriously, we shall not be doing any favours to ourselves, the world or our own futures.

1.14 pm

Miss Emma Nicholson (Torridge and Devon, West): It is classical to start by congratulating the movers of motions on their success in obtaining them and by thanking them for their speeches in support of them. This morning, we have been privileged to hear some fine speeches and some profound truths expressed. I should like to say how much I honoured and valued the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Bexleyheath (Mr. Townsend) that began the debate this morning. It was, however, no less than I expected, because the fine standard of his debates on international issues, particularly on the United Nations, is an example to the rest of the House. We are fortunate to have the benefit of his knowledge, and I was glad to be present today to hear him.

I particularly welcomed my hon. Friend's comments on the value of UNESCO. I do not share his warm glow about some of UNESCO's earlier actions, but, like him, I believe that the time has come for Britain to rejoin. We do ourselves and UNESCO no favours by staying out.

I thank my hon. Friend warmly for drawing the House's attention to the report of Dr. Boutros Boutros

Ghali entitled "An Agenda for Peace," consequential upon the Security Council summit meeting of 31 January. It is an important document which we need to study carefully.

I have just become a member of the executive council of UNICEF, and I am glad to have the opportunity to pay tribute to the fine work of UNICEF in so many areas of the world.

Dr. Robert Spink (Castle Point): On UNESCO, is not the only remaining issue of any substance of the nine points of dissatisfaction that were raised by Sir Geoffrey Howe, as he then was, in his notice of withdrawal in 1984 the decentralisation of personnel from their headquarters? Is not the fact that the United Kingdom—and probably the United States of America—will rejoin UNESCO in this parliamentary Session to be welcomed?

Miss Nicholson: I thank my hon. Friend for his excellent intervention. As a signatory to two letters to *The Times* from the parliamentary group seeking the United Kingdom's rejoining of UNESCO, I support what he has said and I am confident that the Government will have heard and taken note of it.

I do not wish to sound a jarring note too early in the debate, but I have been saddened by one speech. I raised a point of order when your predecessor, Madam Deputy Speaker, was in the Chair and I wish to put down a marker. I did not raise it for a frivolous reason. An hon. Member opposite, who is not here—he has barely been here since, and I do not name him—used his speech to read out extract upon extract, letter upon letter and statement upon statement attacking the Government on an issue unrelated to the United Nations. He cobbled together some tenuous link with the debate by continually dropping in the name "United Nations". I pointed out that in the Iran-Iraq war the United Nations had passed no motion saying that there should be an arms embargo on Iran and Iraq by members of the United Nations. He claimed that I was wrong. I understand that I am correct in saying that the United Nations attempted to pass such a motion but did not manage to do so.

I believe, therefore, that the entirety of the hon. Gentleman's over-lengthy and, frankly, boring speech was an irrational attempt to attack the Government. It was against the spirit of the debate, the spirit of the House and the spirit of the mover of the motion, my hon. Friend the Member for Bexleyheath. I am sad that he did that. Of course the United Nations issued guidelines, but so did the Government, which were drafted in 1984 and passed by the House in 1985, but that subject is a topic for a different debate. I am sad that so much time has been misused this morning.

I deal again with the United Nations, as is proper for everyone else who speaks in the debate. I pay tribute to the relative success of the United Nations work in Somalia. I say only "relative" success because what is happening is a tragedy and it is difficult to use the word "success" in that framework. However, the work done by UNICEF and other United Nations agencies has been remarkable and I am sure that it will continue.

Despite the many criticisms made of the interventions by the United Nations and other bodies such as the Government in the former Yugoslavia, I know that the United Nations has brought hope to many troubled victims there and I entirely support its work.

I turn now to a part of the world in which I believe that the United Nations has failed drastically, dramatically and without good cause—Iraq, south and north. Sadly, I lay special blame at the door of Dr. Boutros Ghali for his signing of the recent United Nations draft memorandum of understanding between the regime of Iraq—which is defined in the memorandum as a Government—and the United Nations. I am aware that the memorandum of understanding was considered by many to be better than nothing and I am also aware that the negotiations were undertaken by James Grant, the executive director of UNICEF, whose good will and energy in bringing aid to children in Iraq and many other countries is unceasing and must be honoured and praised by all. However, what the United Nations did was wrong.

I know from experience the miseries and deprivation in the south of Iraq. I have not yet visited the north, but hope to do so—I have a number of outstanding invitations. I well know—and have told the House on many occasions—what a wretched business it is now to live in the south of Iraq especially, being what is familiarly known as a marsh Arab, a member of the Ma'dan. I have seen the victims and have discussed the tragedies and traumas at length with my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and my right hon. and noble Friend the Minister for Overseas Development. There is much torture and many deaths and imprisonments underground year after year. That is the stuff of my daily work and thinking, and I know that what is happening is unacceptable to all right-thinking people's wishes.

In addition, I have much evidence of the victims' experiences and of the tragedies now occurring. Only yesterday I received a fax about the Third River project which states that water in 46 villages in the Messan marshes has dried up. Those villages were in the middle of water, but there is now an acute shortage of it. The population of 40,000 people has started to dig wells to get water for daily use. This is a marsh area: it is not an area such as the Norfolk broads but is about half the size of Switzerland and always has deep water. It has now dried out and the surface of the reed bed of the marshes is cracked.

My corresponent, who is the local rapporteur for human rights in Iraq in the south of Iran, tells me that the villagers are in a very bad way because their ability to keep hunting and fishing and to retain the water buffalo depends on marsh water. The fax states that the Iraqi regime has started to cut the date palms to deprive the people wholly of their ability to feed themselves. It is a tragedy of enormous magnitude. I have the names of the villages and the numbers of people, and I am certain that the facts are correct.

A couple of weeks ago I learned of a new report to be submitted to the United Nations by its special rapporteur for human rights in Iraq, Mr. Max van den Stoel. I have the document here, and I would gladly share it with the rest of the House. Reading out the full report would indeed add to the tragic thoughts of everyone in the Chamber, but it would not add to my speech, as I know that hon. Members understand what I am saying.

Max van den Stoel, formerly the Netherlands ambassador and now special United Nations rapporteur on human rights in Iraq, has written a report to the United Nations which makes devastating reading. He criticises the United Nations for failing to act effectively in the south

[Miss Nicholson]

and the north of Iraq, but most of his criticism, properly, is directed at the regime of Saddam Hussein and its complete destruction of any pretence of the practice of human rights in Iraq. I have the dossier here to show my colleagues.

What has been the United Nations reaction to the tragedies that Max van den Stoel and others, including myself, have been bringing to its notice for months? The reaction has been the drawing up of the final memorandum of understanding, signed by Mr. Nizar Hamdoon—who signs himself ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary, permanent representative of Iraq to the United Nations—and by Jan Eliasson, the under-secretary general for humanitarian affairs. Yet this is no humanitarian report. I shall tell the House just a few points which I have culled from it. I must stress that they show my own perspective on it.

First, the memorandum of understanding recognises the sovereignty of Iraq. Yet the concept underlying all the United Nations resolutions on Iraq has been that the Security Council has already taken away Iraq's legal authority. If the Security Council has essentially overridden Iraq's sovereignty on humanitarian matters, through a combination of the sanctions resolution and the humanitarian assistance resolution—known so well to us as resolution 688—what is the point of the debate over the memorandum of understanding?

Iraq has long since lost any moral authority that the regime may ever have possessed. The games involving the memorandum of understanding cost valuable months, and took away the United Nations initiatives, playing into the hands of the Iraqi regime. Furthermore, the memorandum recognises the sovereignty of the Iraqi regime, which is unacceptable and unthinkable. It also took months to achieve, despite the earlier UN statement that if the memorandum of understanding on humanitarian supplies was to achieve anything supplies had to be in place before the winter set in. Supplies were not in place. The memorandum has only just been signed, and it is based on a plan that does not even exist, and which has to be agreed by the Iraqi regime. Indeed, paragraph 6 says that the Iraqi regime will co-operate with the United Nations. When has Iraq ever done that? How can that be proved, how can it be made to happen? The idea is nonsense.

The joint co-ordination committee, the body behind the memorandum of understanding, grants Iraq two more vetoes, one over implementing the programme—we must remember that that programme does not yet exist—and another over attempting to resolve

"any difficulties that may arise in practice".

The whole memorandum defies logic and understanding for those of us who care for the oppressed people of Iraq. Furthermore, it allows only a small number of UN guards to be available. The number is ridiculous. There is none for the south, and there are only eight for Baghdad. One can tell that even to keep United Nations property safe in Baghdad would require at least 30 guards—to protect UN buildings, vehicles, stocks and so on. Over and above that, the United Nations guards' actions and their communications network will be funnelled through the Iraqi regime.

The present memorandum of understanding is an admission of failure on the part of the UN and especially on the part of Mr. Eliasson's office. In the light of that so-called "agreement", we should ask ourselves two questions. First, is Iraq to be trusted with such an agreement? Millions of lives hang in the balance. Secondly, what contingency plans have been prepared for the possibility of the Iraqis failing to live up to expectations?

A couple of weeks after the memorandum of understanding was signed, we heard that trucks were going into the north. We were told that we should not be too fussed about the memorandum of understanding because it was going to be effective. I leave aside the fact that no aid was to be given to the south, that there were no guards in the south and that the south was not even mentioned in the memorandum of understanding. What has happened? The convoy of trucks to the north was fire-bombed by the Iraqi regime and the supplies went up in flames. That is the United Nations memorandum of understanding in practice. I believe that the United Nations has failed Iraq and that we should do all that we can through our membership of the Security Council and of the various committees of the United Nations to bring about a greater political will among all countries in the United Nations to achieve something more effective.

I am glad that, on 19 November, the European Parliament adopted a resolution on the Shias in Iraq which was sponsored by Anthony Simpson, the British MEP for Northamptonshire and South Leicestershire. I will not read it out, but it is here for all to see. I am also glad that members of Congress are at last trying to achieve something. I am in correspondence and telephone contact with Senator Edward Kennedy.

The British Government have been wonderfully supportive of the efforts of those of us who have been trying to help Iraq. I have here a recent letter from my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary in which he gives his support and says:

"We will keep a close watch on developments in southern Iraq . . . If necessary, we will go back to the Security Council to consider what further action we might take to help protect the population of southern Iraq against systematic repression in contravention of UN Security Council Resolution 688."

The time has come. I urge the Minister today to consider carefully taking that action now.

1.32 pm

Mr. Nirj Joseph Deva (Brentford and Isleworth): I also congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Bexleyheath (Mr. Townsend) on having made an elegant and witty speech. The hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) is no longer here. I was bewildered—I am sure that it was entirely my fault—by his point about my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister being unaware of where Africa was when he was Foreign Secretary. The hon. Member for Linlithgow must be unaware that my right hon. Friend lived and worked in Nigeria for many years.

It is timely to talk about the United Nations and about its future role. We are in a new epoch in the history of the United Nations and Britain will play its part in the future destiny of the United Nations as we have done in its past. The 20th century has seen some of the most dramatic power struggles in world history. There was first the carnage of the first world war and then the genocide of the second world war. There was the ending of the great colonial powers, such as Britain. There were the steps into the atomic age and the emergence of two super-powers, with the race for supremacy. There was the formation of two ideological and military armed camps which faced

each other through the cold war. There was the rise and fall of communism. We now stand on the brink of ever-increasing numbers of regional conflicts.

The United Nations in the cold war was largely ineffectual, as the two super-powers were mostly at odds and, to a large extent, dictated international policy on the basis of brinkmanship. The role of others on the world stage seemed to be merely as advisers, camp followers and supporters, with the so-called "non-aligned" movement being anything but that.

In recent times, the United Nations has played a stronger and more vital role around the globe. It was instrumental in ending the Iran-Iraq war with the deployment of the United Nations Iran-Iraq Military Observation Group—UNIMOG; it played a similar role in the Afghanistan conflict and it has played a peacekeeping role in Cyprus, Angola and Kashmir. However, despite the good intentions, in situations like the Lebanon and Somalia, it has made very little headway.

However, for the first time in its history, the United Nations should now be well placed to establish itself as a primary agent for peace as a consequence of the ending of the cold war. Some would say that the United Nations is now under greater strain than at any time since the end of the second world war.

Change begets conflict and the world has changed rapidly over the past five years and the first point that I want to consider is whether the United Nations has changed fast enough to keep up. I welcome the appointment of such a distinguished person as Dr. Boutros Ghali as the first Secretary-General of the United Nations from the African continent. He has stressed his concern about north-south relations showing a sensitivity to development issues as well as to political and security matters.

Although I have some sympathy with Dr. Boutros Ghali's statement that if there is no development without democracy, there is no democracy without development, I have been somewhat taken aback recently by the fact that, bearing in mind all the problems that we face, Dr. Boutros Ghali surprised us with his ethnic comments.

It is a cardinal rule of the United Nations that ethnicity should never enter the argument. Dr. Boutros Ghali seems to be trying to set himself up as a champion of the third world. However, what is now required is statesmanship and not an attempt to transform the paralysis that permeated the United Nations during the cold war into a further period of impotence through a new north-south standoff.

It is entirely possible that Dr. Boutros Ghali's error of judgment rose because he had been accused of pushing African interests to one side during his leadership. That criticism obviously hurt and his rebuke to the Security Council over its concern for the war of the rich in Yugoslavia rather than about that of the poor in Somalia was perhaps hasty. No one concerned with the United Nations should make such distinctions and allow the world to be polarised once more.

However, I agree with my right hon. Friend the Secretaryof State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he said:

"The Secretary-General finds the queue outside the door growing all the time. I was not surprised he feels occasional exasperation, but we are on his side and we will work with him."

We must at all costs avoid a collision of cultures between the member states that speak for the advanced world and those that represent the third world. We must prevent the United Nations from plunging deeper into a growing identity crisis that threatens to paralyse its efforts

Under the United Nations charter, the Secretary-General is something more, but not very much more, than a servant of the Security Council. He can draw situations to the attention of the Council, make recommendations to it and has the duty of interpreting its decisions—often to the displeasure of some of its members. However, no previous Secretary-General has reprimanded the Security Council as Dr. Boutros Ghali did recently.

The root problem, which is more fundamental than the style of the Secretary-General, is his belief that the Security Council is out of tune with the needs of the people represented at the United Nations and that the east-west split of the cold war risks being replaced by the north-south split of the new world order.

The difficulties between the Secretary-General and the Security Council are symptomatic of the great changes that the organisation has undergone since the end of the cold war. While the cold war lasted with the Security Council deadlocked between the super-powers, both sides wooed the countries of the third world. The General Assembly was still of some importance, though in prolonged decline.

The Secretary-General was of considerable importance as a mediator between east and west. In future, we must not get into another adversarial position where the Secretary-General is the mediator between the north and the south. At the recent Security Council summit 15 heads of state set out a timetable assignment for the new Secretary-General. What is he to implement in the current world context?

The collapse of the eastern bloc and the disintegration of the communist Soviet empire, welcome as it is, has only made the world a more volatile and dangerous place. The rising tide of nationalism in the old USSR and the inevitable fall-out after the suppression of many years of freedom, has had a knock-on effect around the world as countries are torn apart by ethnic and religious differences. We are also faced with escalating civil wars in the countries that are least able to cope with them, such as the Sudan, Ethiopia and Somalia.

Among the liberal democracies there is an increasing belief that models of sovereignty need to be altered when the internal affairs of one state can so easily affect those of another. The spread of conflict and nationalism in eastern Europe, the international drugs trade and the vexed issues of refugees and migrants provide examples. Those are matters of national self-interest. Additional to that self-interest, the concept of humanitarianism establishes a moral identity with citizens of other states, as recently demonstrated in Iraq after the Gulf war.

In April 1991, Security Council resolution 688 insisted on
"immediate access by international organisations",
to those in need of assistance
"in all parts of Iraq".
Although that was not systematically pursued, it was followed by the safe havens project for the Kurds. In September 1992, the French proposed a new international code of conduct, allowing minorities to request humanitarian assistance from outside powers during a crisis. That followed the December 1991 resolution which

[Mr. Nirj Joseph Deva]

allowed the United Nations to intervene in a member state to provide humanitarian assistance, given the consent of the state concerned. That was an effective compromise between western demands for respectable interventionism and softer definitions of sovereignty, and third world fears of military action against dictatorships under the guise of humanitarianism.

I am conscious of the time and so will conclude by saying a few words on Britain's continued role as a permanent member of the Security Council. Britain is not merely another member of the European Community. Britain and its people have historically and uniquely fashioned the world that we know today. British institutions—our concept of the rule of law, of democracy, of commercial practice, human rights and value systems—are the norms recognised by the majority of the world's population. The English language is spoken by more than 1·5 billion people in the Commonwealth and is the glue that keeps people of different ethnic and national groups together.

Britain's continued role in the European Community should be seen as an augmentation of its existing world position, as a force for good, given its historic experience in world affairs. Finally, neither gun boats, armed capability or sheer population size should now be the criteria for membership of the Security Council. In the new partnership for change that I mentioned earlier and in the changing circumstances of the United Nations and its future role in the world, it is vital not only that Britain remains a permanent member of the Security Council in its own right, but that it is recognised by other nations as being an arbiter and a moral force for good.

1.37 pm

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): The debate has been extremely interesting and I am glad that we were able to squeeze in the speech of the hon. Member for Brentford and Isleworth (Mr. Deva). I shall certainly not comment on his speech, but I shall read it with interest in *Hansard*.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Bexleyheath (Mr. Townsend) on obtaining the debate. His profound interest in issues as large as the United Nations is an example to us all. Often in our domestic politics, as well as in our general approach, we seem to get bogged down on specifics and do not have the breadth of approach that the hon. Gentleman has shown. I do not say that condescendingly and I sincerely thank him for the opportunity to debate this subject, although I do not think that my wife in Wales, who was flooded out this week, will appreciate the fact that I have had to stay here on a Friday.

I am sorry that the hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland) could not get into the debate. I think that she is the only hon. Member who has sat from beginning to end who could not speak. I remarked on the fact that some people were unable to speak and I am sincere about that. If hon. Members cannot stay for the whole debate perhaps they ought not to speak in the beginning.

The hon. Member for Bexleyheath rightly emphasised the role of the UNESCO and that subject was taken up. I entirely support the proposal that the British Government should take us back into it.

I was disturbed by the suggestion made by the hon. Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier) that we might want to set up protectorates and that the rich and more powerful countries might want to adopt weaker ones. Judging from experience, both before and after the war, the protectorate system is not one which we should seek to emulate at this stage in the 20th century.

The hon. Member for Bexleyheath questioned whether sufficient support has been given to the Cheshire Regiment since it was sent to Yugoslavia. I entirely agree that it is no good sending troops, especially infantry, into situations where they do not have proper cover. In common with the hon. Gentleman, I say that as a former infantry man. Failure to provide such support could be criminal. I pray that our young lads—they are all young lads in the Cheshire Regiment—will not be exposed to far greater weaponry than their own.

It is all right to talk about not wanting to escalate the problems in former Yugoslavia, but we do not want troops—Croat or British—to be slaughtered because they do not have sufficient weaponry and arms capability to respond. For that reason, I urge the Minister of State to take up this matter with his right hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces. When that Minister of State and I previously discussed Bosnia he refused to accept that it might be a good idea to supply some air cover for our troops. There will be much blood on the hands of the Government if they do not back up our troops, after putting them into such a dangerous situation.

If we take it as a matter of policy that combatant troops will be sent to Yugoslavia, the delivery of humanitarian aid might go out the door. However, if troops are sent in to carry out a humanitarian function, they must be protected.

Lady Olga Maitland (Sutton and Cheam): I have a rhetorical question for the hon. Gentleman. What if we do not give full support to our troops and if we do not encourage the United Nations to put forward a resolution for the protection of forces on the ground? Surely that would be at great cost to the entire Balkan region, which is something we would find hard to bear.

Mr. Rogers: I agree with the hon. Lady and I believe that we are on the same side of the fence on this.

I also agree with what the hon. Member for Bexleyheath said about watering down our commitment to Cyprus. Cyprus represents an intractable problem. President Bush may say that United States troops will be in and out of Somalia by 20 January, when he leaves office. Troops went into Cyprus and may stay there for ever, exactly the same as in Northern Ireland and so many other places. It is easy enough to commit young people of whatever nationality to a certain place to deal with a difficult situation, but I firmly believe that the first option that one must then consider is how to get those troops out. We saw how difficult the Americans found it to get out of Vietnam even with all the resources available to them.

The hon. Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) spoke about the difficulty of sending British troops to Yugoslavia in response to demands from hon. Members on both sides of the House, but in particular from the leader of the Liberal party. I notice that no member of that party attended this important debate. Today's attendance

has not been as good as it should have been, but dozens of hon. Members have listened to parts of the debate; not one member of the Liberal party has done so.

I should have thought that today was an admirable opportunity for the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) to put forward a constructive argument to back up his Action Man plans for our young soldiers. The right hon. Gentleman says we should send troops here and there; that is his knee-jerk response to all the problems in the world. However, as the hon. Member for Romsey and Waterside has said, as a result of "Options for Change" we do not have the troops to do that. Even if we wanted to send far more troops to Yugoslavia, we have not got the resources to do that. As a result of "Options for Change", the size of our infantry battalions has been cut dramatically in the past year. Such cuts provide a classic example of the fact that we no longer have the means to meet the aims that we support.

Lady Olga Maitland: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that we are not talking about just British troops being sent to Bosnia and the Balkans, but all the world joining in a United Nations response?

Mr. Rogers: I appreciate the point that the hon. Lady makes, and we can discuss that in due course. First we must consider what happens when we ask others to come in. There is the problem, if the super-powers are excluded —the hon. Member for Bexleyheath pointed out that it was traditional to exclude them—and they do not contribute troops, which countries provide them? Then we must go on to consider the logistics and back-up support. It is all very well, in many situations, to say that we will provide the logistics and others can provide the men, but eventually the point is reached when we run out of logistics —*[Interruption.]* It is not a never-ending resource, and, having spent five years shadowing the Minister of State for Defence Procurement, I assure the House that our logistics are even more run down than our manpower numbers.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) spoke about the provision of aid to Russia and eastern Europe and suggested that we needed a latter-day Marshall plan. That might be a good idea. We have a substantial interest in helping the emerging democracies of eastern Europe. We applaud the collapse of corrupt communist Governments, but we must now support the emerging democracies and be more positive in our attitude to them. As I say, most of those on these Benches come from a Christian Socialist tradition and are committed to extending our international role.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Douglas Hogg): Is the hon. Gentleman saying that his hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) is a Christian Socialist?

Mr. Rogers: I do not intend to criticise the views of any of my hon. Friends in relation to the way in which they come to the concept of socialism. That is up to them, so long as they do not become communists. I hope that the Minister can be sure that some of his more right-wing hon. Friends, who are well known to us, do not slip that little bit further into the fascism that we see raising its head in central Europe. I leave it there, accepting that the right hon. and learned Gentleman has his own problems.

The hon. Member for Bromsgrove (Mr. Thomason), who spoke and then had to leave, attempted an analysis of, and drew up a list of criteria for, the ways in which people should interfere in other's affairs and how the United Nations should enter situations. When I asked how he would select those situations and arrive at the balance of which he spoke, he failed dismally to answer. As I say, he has retreated the field, though probably not for that reason.

The hon. Member for Bromsgrove also attempted an analysis of sovereignty and rather lectured us on how the concept of sovereignty had altered in recent years. He went on to suggest when and how we might interfere in the affairs of sovereign states. We must also consider when to keep out of events as regimes oppress and murder their populations, because they have been elected to office, or maybe simply because somehow they have got into power. We see that happening in East Timor, where we are doing nothing to help the people who are being slaughtered by a so-called legitimate Government.

Mr. Corbyn *rose*——

Mr. Rogers: I hope my hon. Friend will forgive me if I do not give way. Time is very short.

The hon. Member for Canterbury said that while he did not justify the actions of the Serbs, he understood them, and he revealed his position when he added that we had to remember that many Muslims had served in the Wehrmacht. Whether he regarded that as justification for the Serbs now killing the Muslims I do not know. I thought of intervening to tell him that many Germans served in the Wehrmacht and that that was not a good reason for killing Germans today.

If we adopt such attitudes, we shall never resolve any issues. Yugoslavia represents an intractable problem and we appreciate how people's fears go back over the years and raise issues of revenge for tribal, family and nationalistic indignities, cruelties and so on. Not to acknowledge that there is substantial fault on the Serbian side in the conflict is to miss what is happening.

I praise my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) for drawing attention to the Kurdish problem years before many hon. Members did so. I was pleased to join him a couple of years later, when we were the only two hon. Members battling away about the export of arms to Saddam Hussein. As Opposition defence spokesman, I challenged the Government about exporting arms to Iraq and the Minister of State told me that it was a vile calumny and an obnoxious statement. We have now been proved to be right and the Scott inquiry will prove that.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Rogers: It is no good the Minister shaking his head. He simply has to look at schedule 2 of the submission to the Select Committee on Trade and Industry to see a list of arms and weapon-enhancing equipment. I cannot understand why the Minister is not prepared to accept evidence submitted by his own Government to a Select Committee. It is not stuff that was brought up in the newspapers or which we have dragged up, but information supplied by the Government. If he does not believe that the equipment on that list enhances the weapons and capabilities of Saddam Hussein——

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The hon. Gentleman must not elide between weapons and machinery—they are different.

Mr. Rogers: I am not talking about the export of machinery or Matrix Churchill which, in some ways, is irrelevant. I am talking about weapons that were exported, such a mortar-locating laser equipment. It was not much fun for our troops sitting at the end of guns, firing at the Iraqis, when they knew that the Iraqis could identify their positions because of the equipment that we had exported to them. I challenge the Ministers to go to the Library and look at the four-page list submitted to the Select Committee on Trade and Industry of arms and equipment exported to Iraq by the Government.

Saddam Hussein was a butcher with whom we should never have become involved, however much we may have wanted to use him to stem the tide of Islamic fundamentalism. The Government made a bad mistake, which rebounded on us. Were it not for the overwhelming weaponry of the United States, we would have landed up in a bad position.

Iraq is an example of the implementation of the United Nations role because of the breakdown in the cold war, which prevented the veto of certain action. As my hon. Friends the Members for Islington, North and for Dundee, West (Mr. Ross) said, the United Nations should be involved in many other areas, outside purely peacekeeping roles. The problems of the population explosion, environmental pollution, AIDS and the huge drugs markets that are eroding the basis of our democratic societies and confounding our young people must all be tackled on an international scale. A properly serviced and funded United Nations could be an admirable vehicle for that.

The United Nations should be able to take up many issues in a better way. It is all right to talk about intergovernmental co-operation, but, unless a comprehensive approach is taken to many of those problems, bilateral or even multi-governmental relationships will not work. Nowadays, we seem to be swamped by non-governmental agencies, which are probably creating their own problems.

The United Nations as it exists today is only a framework. It needs to be fleshed out and given more muscle. The Labour party has consistently supported the United Nations. As my hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, West said, it is part of our constitution. Perhaps when we were in government there were occasions when we did not do all that we should have done. We are prepared at this stage to accept those criticisms. I only hope that when we get back into government in a few years' time we will fund the United Nations and support it to a greater extent than the present Government are.

We are a global society, and we have seen the development of communications and general relationships. We simply cannot live on our solitary islands, throw shields around ourselves, and say that we are not influenced by what happens in every other part of the world. All people are human, irrespective of whether they are Yugoslav souls, or little black Somalia souls dying, or children dying from a bomb, a shell, starvation or disease. Whether people are black, white, yellow or blue, they are still humans. People who have never had an opportunity to live a full and proper life are just as precious to us as anyone else.

The argument that we must take care of one problem because it is nearer to us in Europe is not a good one. That is why I am pleased that more resources will be put into Somalia. I applaud the fact that the United States will send in sufficient troops to structure the aid development of Somalia. However, I do not think that development will be completed by 20 January.

There is a possibility of developing and training a cadre of people. The hon. Member for Bexleyheath said that we should adopt the more positive aspects of United Nations training and funding, not take a negative approach and say that we will go in and commit resources when a big problem is highlighted on our televisions and when the public conscience is stretched to such a point that we must do something. I hope that we will increase the number of missions in the southern part of the former Yugoslavia, from Kosovo down into what is called Macedonia—one must be careful how one uses that word these days—to anticipate the problems that we know will arise if we are not extremely careful.

Many hon. Members have raised the issue of finance. It is true that the United States has fallen badly behind—by almost $400 million. It is misleading for people to say that they cannot afford peacekeeping forces. Peacekeeping is probably one of the cheapest options open to the United Nations. The cost of one-and-a-half days of the Gulf war woud have paid for all the United Nations peacekeeping operations worldwide for one year. It is much cheaper to keep the peace than to allow problems to develop into a war. The role of the United Nations needs to be developed. We have a strong and positive commitment to the United Nations.

I pay tribute to people such as Brian Urquhart, who published a pamphlet entitled

"The United Nations in 1992: problems and opportunities".

We should all read that pamphlet. I have certainly done so. The pamphlet raises many of the issues that I have outlined today.

Labour Members have been consistent in their views, not only as outlined by my hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, West but throughout the Labour party. At our party conference my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith), the Leader of the Opposition, said:

"Right at the heart of our policies should be strong and consistent support for the United Nations. I have always believed this is the best means of principled and collective international action. I want to see the powers of the United Nations strengthened, and I want to see it broaden its agenda to tackle the economic and social issues which call out for a global approach just as desperately as do the environment, poverty and peace-keeping."

That is the commitment of the Labour party to the United Nations. As soon as we, the Opposition, are in government in the next couple of years, we shall be implementing the poicy that has been outlined by my right hon. and learned Friend.

2.5 pm

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Douglas Hogg): Every Member who has contributed to the debate has prefaced his or her remarks by congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Bexleyheath (Mr. Townsend) on selecting the United Nations as a subject for debate. I join in congratulating my hon. Friend. The elegance and lucidity of his speech, delivered largely without notes, impressed all those present.

It is right that we should be debating the United Nations, both for a particular reason and a general reason.

The particular reason is that we have seen the deployment of United Kingdom troops in what was Yugoslavia, and last night there was an important resolution by the Security Council on Somalia. The more general reason is that over the past two years or so we have seen an enormous expansion in the prestige, responsibility and authority of the United Nations. We need, therefore, to ask ourselves both general and particular questions about the United Nations activities.

I speak of the enhancement of the authority of the United Nations. There are probably at least three reasons for that. First, there was the success of the Security Council with regard to the middle eastern war two years ago. Secondly, the former Soviet Union collapsed and we are now able to work harmoniously within the permanent five. That is an important contribution to the proper workings of the Security Council. Lastly, I believe that there is an ever-increasing desire, manifested in this place not least, to see the humanitarian and political problems of the world addressed in a collective way.

The increased activity of the United Nations can be demonstrated by some basic figures. There are now about 52,000 United Nations personnel deployed in peace-keeping roles whereas early in 1992 there were only 11,500. To take another measure, in 1987 there were 49 meetings of the Security Council, 43 consultations of the whole and 14 resolutions of the Security Council. In the first seven months of 1992 there were 46 resolutions, 81 meetings and 19 consultations of the whole. We can see a substantial expansion in the operations of the United Nations.

The hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) raised a range of questions. I shall not respond to them, but I shall give him the credit and courtesy of explaining why I shall not, as I regard the hon. Gentleman as a friend of mine. First, I think that he was abusing the motion to pursue issues which, in my judgment, were of little relevance to what the House was discussing.

Secondly, and in any event, it was a very curious ordering of priorities. We were debating matters of major international significance, but, frankly, the hon. Gentleman was not. Thirdly, there are practical difficulties associated with responding to him, and he may care to keep these points in mind.

The hon. Member for Linlithgow asked many immensely detailed, complicated questions—perhaps 20 or so. I could not even to begin to respond to them and leave any time to deal with the main debate. In any event, I would not do so, because I do not have any personal knowledge of any of the detailed issues. Consequently, I would have to rely on ad hoc notes from the Box, which is not a sensible way to deal with detailed questions of that kind.

I say to the hon. Member for Linlithgow—I regard him as a friend—that he is wasting his time and that of the House in dealing with such issues in the way that he chooses.

Mr. Dalyell *rose*——

Mr. Hogg: I have been critical of the hon. Gentleman, so I will give way.

Mr. Dalyell: It was my intention to call the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to account, and I have just one further question. The Foreign Secretary said that "we do not supply arms to Iraq".—[*Official Report*, 29 March 1990; Vol. 170, c. 673.]

How is it suggested that the House should pursue that crucially important matter? It is a matter of truth to Parliament.

Mr. Hogg: One way is to give notice of that question to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, and he will give the hon. Gentleman a fair and robust answer. There is no point to hopping up in the middle of a debate, dragging out a quotation of which no one has received previous notice, and expecting anything like a full answer. It is absurd. The hon. Gentleman does neither his reputation nor the time of the House any good.

Mr. Rogers *rose*——

Mr. Hogg: No, I will press on.

Mr. Rogers: Will the Minister not give way?

Mr. Hogg: No, I will press on. I am quite firm about that, Madam Speaker. I am going to get on with it.

Many tributes have been paid to the United Nations Secretary-General, Dr. Boutros Ghali—and quite right too. I have had the pleasure of meeting him on a number of occasions, and I believe that he will prove an important and innovating Secretary-General.

Dr. Boutros Ghali has already presided over a number of important initiatives. Last night's decision of the Security Council to deploy American troops in Somalia owes a great deal to his own initiative. Moreover, the Government welcome the Secretary-General's response in his report, "An Agenda for Peace", to the request made to him in the early part of this year by the Security Council meeting at Heads of Government level. That meeting was instigated by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, who was the first to convene a meeting of that kind and who asked the Secretary-General to advise us all how the United Nations could develop its policy of peacekeeping, peacemaking and preventive diplomacy.

The suggestions in that report are of considerable interest and importance, and we propose to address them as constructively as possible. One can see certain ways in which they have already been acted upon. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister convened the London conference on the former Yugoslavia, working closely with the United Nations. That was one instance of two important, international organisations working together.

The House will know also of the United Nations deployment in Macedonia, the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe deployment in Kosovo, and the European Community monitoring mission in the former Yugoslavia. They are all examples of preventive, pre-emptive diplomacy, and show that we are reacting responsibly to a number of the Secretary-General's proposals.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bexleyheath mentioned the important issue of reform of the Security Council, as did the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn), to whom I apologise for not hearing all his speech but I was having a morsel of food——

Mr. Dalyell: A morsel?

Mr. Hogg: It was only a morsel and it was quickly eaten; none the less, I apologise.

Both hon. Members, and others, dealt with reform of the Security Council. The Government are not seeking to

[Mr. Hogg

change the composition of the Security Council, not least because it would require a change in the charter, which we do not want at the moment. I should be surprised—I speak now as a national politician rather than as a world statesman—if it were in the interests of France or the United Kingdom to promote such change. It is probably not in the interests of anybody else either, because for about the first time since the war the Security Council is working harmoniously together and the five permanent members have been constructive about the way in which the council has been using its power. We should not interrupt that which is going well. Moreover, there are many postulants, and whereas a Security Council of 15 may work extremely well I am far from sure that that would be true of a Security Council of 25 or 30.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bexleyheath is right to say that the members of the Security Council have obligations. I hope that you, Madam Deputy Speaker, will feel that the Government are conscious of the obligations that they owe as a permanent member. It was with that consideration in mind, at least in part, that we deployed about 2,000 men to what was Yugoslavia, making us the second largest troop contributor to the region. It is why we have a large military presence in Cyprus and why we deployed military personnel to Cambodia. To answer the question of the hon. Member for Dundee, West (Mr. Ross), we do not plan to put troops into Somalia.

We have obligations in addition to the military ones that I have just described. We must keep our colleagues in the European Community closely informed. We must inform them of what is going on, must take and represent their views as appropriate and must be very sensitive to the aspirations and desires of other members of the European Community to have their interests fully reflected by us. We shall certainly do that.

Much of the debate has rightly focused on Bosnia. I echo and endorse what my hon. Friend the Member for Bexleyheath said. He told us to be cautious; I agree. He said that we should concentrate on humanitarian work; I agree. He said that we should not take sides; I agree. I shall come to the question of the Cheshires in a moment, because I believe that that is the only source of disagreement between us.

It might be helpful to outline our policy in broad terms. It is a twofold policy: first, to do all that we can to promote a peace settlement by defining what seem to us to be the guiding principles and by excluding the things that are not acceptable. I have great respect for my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier), to whom I always listen with much attention, but I am bound to say that I wholly disagree with what he said about Bosnia. We will not allow Bosnia to be partitioned and we will not allow its frontiers to be disturbed by force. If we allowed that to happen, there would be anarchy in central and eastern Europe, so to those principles we will hold.

Lady Olga Maitland: Does not my right hon. and learned Friend agree that a political solution for Bosnia is the only answer at the end of the day, and that Milosevic's supporters must be made fully aware that if they continue to support him they will have to bear the consequences of any continuation of his expansionist programme?

Mr. Hogg: The present policies of the Serbian Government, which reinforce the warlike efforts of the Bosnian Serbs in Bosnia, will bring disaster on themselves and on the adjoining countries.

The second part of our policy is to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid. That is why we thought it right and proper to deploy the Cheshire Regiment. I accept that that is a risky business, and that there are real hazards involved, but I tell my hon. Friend the Member for Bexleyheath that I believe the deployment of the Cheshire Regiment and the other members of UNPROFOR 2 has made a great contribution to the rest of the world's ability to deliver aid. I hope that we shall be able to continue that policy with the support of the House.

I say to the House—or rather, I say to this country, through you, Madam Deputy Speaker—that the House is greatly impressed by the courage and skill shown by the United Kingdom service men now in Bosnia and the rest of the former Yugoslavia. By that I mean the Cheshire Regiment, the field ambulance units in UNPROFOR 1 in Croatia, the RAF units flying sorties day on day into Sarajevo, and the RAF personnel who support them. What they are doing is worth doing, and the House thanks them for it.

Several specific points have been raised in that connection, including the no-fly zone for the Serbs. I should be very surprised if the Security Council felt it appropriate to allow grave breaches of the no-fly resolution to pass unpunished. Furthermore, if the Serbs used force in Kosovo that would introduce a new dimension to policy making; it would be gravely contrary to the interests of Serbia to embark on such an exploit.

I entirely agree with the hon. Member for Dundee, West that the proper enforcement of the sanctions regime is the key to our policy. That is right. The House may not fully understand the success of the sanctions regime now in place. For example, industrial output in Serbia has fallen by 75 per cent. since December 1989, and trade is down by between 50 and 70 per cent. However, I concede that oil and petroleum products are crossing the frontiers into Bosnia in very much larger quantities than we would wish. It is possible that to some extent supplies may have been released by Milosevic from military stores. Nevertheless, supplies are getting across, and that is not good enough.

That is why resolution 787, which prohibits transhipment across Serbia of certain strategic products, was passed, about 14 days ago. As the House knows well, we have already put in place what are laughingly, or friendlily, called the SAMs—sanctions assistance missions. We are in the business of tightening sanctions enforcement and making sanctions bite. That is the policy of the Government, which we shall drive forward.

The hon. Member for Dundee, West also asked another question about Bosnia. The Muslim peoples are right to be concerned about what is happening in Bosnia. It is a crime. It is the worst tragedy in Europe since the end of the second world war. We are extraordinarily sensitive to the plight of the Bosnians in Bosnia. That is why I have to say, as robustly as I did to my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury, that I cannot support his policy on partition and the forcible changing of frontiers. That is not our view of what is right. We believe that we need to achieve a settlement that respects people's religious, ethnic and civil rights within the frontiers of existing Bosnia.

Lord Owen and Cyrus Vance have come forward with a range of constitutional proposals which we back. We will

not allow that country to be fragmented, occupied by others, eaten up by aggressors or partitioned. Anybody who supposes that the western world will accept that is making a grave error.

The question of the budget was rightly fixed on by my hon. Friend the Member for Bexleyheath and by others as being of great concern to us. There has been a dispute about figures. I am always cautious when I come to figures because I normally get them wrong. I am especially cautious when the hon. Member for Linlithgow is in the House. I believe that the arrears at the moment are of the order—weasel words if I ever heard them—of $1·25 billion.

It is true that the United States is the largest debtor. The second largest debtor is the Russian Federation. We are deeply concerned about that. It is for that reason, at least in part, that we welcome the Secretary-General's decision to establish the international advisory group to advise on United Nations funding. The House will know that Sir David Scholey is the United Kingdom representative on that body.

There are some encouraging signs. President Bush has made it plain that he plans to pay off the outstanding arrears within a five-year term. Congress has appropriated $376 million for peacekeeping operations in 1993. The United States recently paid $229 million to the regular budget and $100 million to the peacekeeping amounts. There may be further payments. I understand that the Russian Government intend to pay off $130 million of arrears by 31 March 1993. Although the point was not raised, it is worth saying that we strongly support the peacekeeping reserve fund and we shall find ways, if we can, to fund that.

The hon. Member for Dundee, West and my hon. Friend the Member for Bexleyheath raised the important subject of the middle east which was also touched on by my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson). Politicians, especially before elections, always talk about unique opportunities, so we should always be cautious about uttering or believing such a phrase. However, I actually believe that there is an opportunity to be grasped. If we do not secure peace within the foreseeable future, there is likely to be war in the middle east within a decade.

All one can do at this stage is state principles. There are three principles worth stating. First, I believe that the security of Israel is of paramount importance and must be assured. Any scheme that does not provide for that will not be acceptable. Secondly and closely related to the first principle, the Palestinians are a people with a right to self-determination and with a right to land to make a reality of that self-determination. The hon. Member for Dundee, West is right; negotiations must proceed on the basis of resolutions 242 and 338 because that is the only sensible way in which they can go forward.

Thirdly, it would be a mistake for the Government of Israel to suppose that they can achieve a free-standing peace with any Arab state. In the end, the thing must be comprehensive, by which I mean separate peace with the an Arab states and an acceptable arrangement with the Palestinian people. One cannot get one without the other.

The process has gone on for 13 months and it has been a grind. People have despaired from time to time. I say to those who are participating in the negotiations that they must grind on. The thing is worth the doing. I very much hope that everyone party to it will keep that fact well in mind and show the kind of flexibility and compromise that is necessary if we are to bring the thing to a necessary conclusion.

This has been an extremely instructive and helpful debate and there has been an extraordinary amount of consensus on both sides of the House. There is no doubt that the Security Council and the United Nations will be at the core of British foreign policy in future. I am glad to think that the House will rally behind that proposition.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House pays tribute to the work of the United Nations and its agencies; congratulates the Government on the success of the Summit Meeting of the Security Council on 31st January; welcomes the Report of the Secretary-General Dr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, An Agenda for Peace, that flowed from it; considers that a speedy return by the United Kingdom to UNESCO is in the national interest; and seeks further action from the Government to improve the ability of the United Nations to secure justice and human rights and to maintain international peace and security.

Orders of the Day

Private Members' Bills

HOSPITAL SECURITY BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

To be read a Second time on Friday 11 December.

AIRPORTS (TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

To be read a Second time on Friday 11 December.

MISUSE OF DRUGS (ANABOLIC STEROIDS) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 5 February.

OBSCENE PUBLICATIONS (AMENDMENT) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Objection taken. Second Reading what day? No day named.

EUROPEAN UNION (PUBLIC INFORMATION) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

To be read a Second time on Friday 15 January.

PROCEDURE

Ordered,

That a Select Committee of not more than seventeen Members be appointed to consider the practice and procedure of the House in the conduct of public business, and to make recommendations.

That five be the quorum of the Committee.

That the Committee have power to send for persons, papers and records, to sit notwithstanding any Adjournment of the House, to adjourn from place to place and to report from time to time.

That Mr. Tony Banks, Mr. Paul Channon, Sir Peter Emery, Sir John Hannam, Mr. Charles Hendry, Mr. James Hill, Mr. Eric Illsley, Mr. Gordon McMaster, Lady Olga Maitland, Mr. Raymond S. Robertson, Ms. Rachel Squire, Mr. Paul Tyler and Mr. David Winnick be members of the Committee.

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House until the end of this Parliament.—*[Mr. MacKay.]*

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS (JOINT COMMITTEE)

Ordered,

That Mr. Edward Garnier and Mr. Patrick Thompson be discharged from the Select Committee appointed to join with a Committee of the Lords as the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments and Mr. Roy Thomason and Mr. Nigel Waterson be added to the Committee.—*[Mr. MacKay.]*

EUROPEAN STANDING COMMITTEES

Ordered,

That European Community Document No. 9697/92, relating to guide prices for fishing products for 1993, shall not stand referred to European Standing Committee A.—*[Mr. MacKay.]*

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at the sitting on Wednesday 9th December, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business), the Speaker shall put the Questions necessary to dispose of proceedings on the Motion in the name of the Prime Minister relating to Fisheries not later than Ten o'clock.—*[Mr. MacKay.]*

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at the sitting on Thursday, 10th December, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business), the Speaker shall—

(1) put the Questions necessary to dispose of proceedings on the Motion in the name of Mr. Anthony Nelson relating to Banking not later than one and a half hours after the Motion has been entered upon; and

(2) put the Questions necessary to dispose of proceedings on the Motion in the name of Mr. Secretary Heseltine relating to Consumer Protection not later than one and a half hours after the Motion has been entered upon;

and the aforesaid Motions may be proceeded with after the expiry of the time for opposed business.—*[Mr. MacKay.]*

EUROPEAN LEGISLATION

Ordered,

That Mr. Hartley Booth be discharged from the Select Committee on European Legislation and Mr. Peter Atkinson be added to the Committee.—*[Mr. MacKay.]*

Point of Order

2.32 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Will you draw to the attention of Madam Speaker for reflection a question of what I might call Friday behaviour in the House? I do not doubt that the hon. Members for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin), for Bromsgrove (Mr. Thomason) and for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier) had pressing and important engagements in their constituencies or elsewhere. However, we all have important engagements and we have to make a choice.

If they have, we have, I have or any other hon. Member has important engagements, we had better decide not to speak in Friday debates. It used to be the case that whenever an hon. Member spoke, unless there were quite exceptional circumstances, at least he or she waited for the winding-up speeches.

Frankly, my hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, West (Mr. Ross) and I spoke for a long time. However, I would certainly not have done so had I not known that my hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron), whose motion is the second on the Order Paper, had had it made quite clear to him that there was no chance of his motion being reached.

If, as the Minister said, I asked a number of detailed questions, when is there an opportunity, other than in a Friday debate, to ask serious questions against a background of evidence about what a——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. The hon. Gentleman is going rather wide of his original point of order. He asked whether I would pass on his views to Madam Speaker, which I readily undertake to do; but the matter cannot be taken further at present.

Employment (Leavesden)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. MacKay.]*

2.34 pm

Mr. Richard Page (Hertfordshire, South-West): I wish to raise, more in sorrow than in anger, the subject of employment for the skilled workers at Rolls-Royce. I regret that I have had to come to the House to criticise the position taken by the Ministry of Defence. In essence, the reason behind the Adjournment debate is to ask the Minister why the Ministry is not giving British workers at Rolls-Royce in Leavesden the opportunity to quote for a Ministry of Defence contract but is instead handing the work on a plate to a French company. To reinforce that message, last night I presented to the House a petition on the subject of jobs and skill losses at Leavesden.

The background to this sad affair is that Rolls-Royce has operated on the Leavesden site for decades. Quite understandably, it is consolidating its activities on fewer sites. While it is moving many of its present operations to other sites, which is commercially understandable in difficult economic times both here and abroad, it is not moving every activity from Leavesden. That is the nub of the problem.

Because of the change, the repair and maintenance of the MOD-owned Turbo and Astazou 3N and 16D French helicopter engines, which takes place on the Leavesden site, will be not transferred but terminated. The 70-plus workers—who have more than 1,000 years' experience between them—who do the work would like to bid for it and to have the contract. To put it bluntly, the Ministry will not even give them the opportunity to quote, which effectively means that a skilled and technically qualified team of specialists will be broken up and its use and value lost to the nation.

The Ministry of Defence wishes to give the work on a plate to the original engine manufacturer, Turbomeca, and thus at a stroke increase United Kingdom unemployment and our already sad balance of payments deficit. I argue that as those British workers have been doing the work for decades and have been providing repair and engine support work for the facilities at Leavesden, they should be given the chance to quote, to find out whether the work could remain in the United Kingdom.

That is the background to, and the reason for, this debate. As the House may imagine, there has been correspondence on the matter between myself, the Ministry of Defence and the Minister. As the replies to those letters rolled in, the words of a fellow Conservative Member of Parliament came to mind. About four years ago he was in a dispute about monopolistic practices concerning supplies to the MOD and he wrote:

"If we cannot . . . get the assurances . . . which my constituents seek then I shall feel obliged to embark on a parliamentary campaign until the matter is resolved."

That is exactly how I feel. I have a suspicion that my hon. Friend the Minister will closely identify with the position, the words and the person who uttered them.

In the same vein, I confess that I am at a loss to understand the Ministry's reaction to the request by my constituents to be allowed to quote. What they are asking for is directly in line with what I understand to be the Ministry's policy.

[Mr. Richard Page]

I should like to refer to an article in *The Guardian* on 18 November concerning the programme that my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement announced to allow British firms to quote for MOD work. The article reported that my hon. Friend

"emphasised that he did not want foreign companies to win the work. 'Any suggestion, say, that the Italians or the Germans might win work to service our ships and planes is remote.' He also threatened to use articles under the Treaty of Rome to ensure that foreign competitors do not win the work."

Those were strong words and I would not want to go as far as that, but I could go along with the sentiments that my hon. Friend expressed in an article in the *Financial Times* when it reported that

"he envisaged the companies which won the contracts using the staff who currently carry out the work."

The Daily Telegraph reported that my hon. Friend had explained that

"the aim was to invite bids from private contractors and in-house MoD workforce. Areas will include helicopter maintenance".

I stress that my hon. Friend said that that work would include "helicopter maintenance".

It seems to me that what I am asking for sits neatly and squarely inside my hon. Friend's policy. Instead, I received a letter from my hon. Friend, dated 21 November, which said—I shall not read out the entire letter, only the appropriate part:

"In line with our policy to widen our competitive base for the repair of all helicopter components, including engines, we are holding discussions with Turbomeca with a view to offering the work for competition in the future. Although progress is being made, we have no alternative at the present time but to place the new contracts with Turbomeca for a period of up to three years"

That letter is extraordinarily insensitive. It was probably drawn up by a civil servant with an inflation-proof pension to whom the scythe of unemployment is virtually unknown. It is insensitive to say to men who will lose their jobs in about three months, "No chance this time, lads, but come back in three years' time." What chance will they have to compete then? My hon. Friend knows the answer, and so do I—absolutely zero. The team will be broken up, the opportunity lost and my constituents will be out of work.

It is not as though the work force are going along blind. They have got together with a company, Strongfield International, the managing director of which also lives in my constituency. That company is not a newcomer to the scene. It is an engineering support service company with worldwide interests. The mainstream business of the company is the provision of engineering services to the aviation industry. I understand that, among its major projects, it provides support services to MBB for the Tornado. It is also helping with an aircraft-build programme in Indonesia. In fact, the managing director is in Indonesia today to meet with Baroness Thatcher, who is inspecting that plant.

I am just a Back-Bench Member doing my level best to promote my constituents' cause, which I believe to be just. I am not pleading for subsidies or handouts. All I am asking is that my constituents, who, under the Rolls-Royce banner, have done such work for decades, be allowed to quote. They should be allowed to see whether they can continue in work. If their quote is too high and the work goes to France, so be it. All I am asking for is an even break.

2.45 pm

The Minister of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Jonathan Aitken): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, South-West (Mr. Page) on securing the debate, and it has been entirely appropriate for him to use our Adjournment debate procedure to voice the concerns and fears of his constituents. He adduced a forceful and lucid case.

I also congratulate him on the interesting nature of his research. He attempted, in a subtle way, to pin on me the charge of inconsistency between my previous correspondence as a Back Bencher and now my ministerial speeches and letters. Far from indulging in monopolistic practices, about which I was complaining in the correspondence from which he quoted, I shall later in my remarks hope to persuade him that we at the Ministry of Defence intend to follow our declared policy of full and fair competition. I shall go into that at some length later.

I share his understandable concern for the plight of those who are being made redundant by Rolls-Royce at Leavesden, and he presented their case admirably. He was right to call it a sad affair, but it is much more complicated than he suggests and, before coming to the issue of those jobs at Leavesden, I shall explain the background to the situation.

The repair and overhaul of United Kingdom-owned French helicopter and Jetstream engines, with a number of other engines, has been undertaken by Rolls-Royce at its Leavesden site for many years.

As part of its business rationalisation plans—which my hon. Friend thought were justified—the company has advised us that it intends to withdraw from the support of the three types of French engines currently in service. They are the Astazou 3N for the Gazelle; the Astazou 16D for the Jetstream; and the Turmo 3C4 for the Puma. I understand that Rolls-Royce intends to transfer the repair of its other engines elsewhere.

I should stress that all of those French engines are proprietary to Turbomeca, the French engine company based in Bordes, southern France, which is the original equipment manufacturer. Neither the French nor the United Kingdom Ministries of Defence have any user rights in the design. That is what the phrase "proprietary to" means. That sort of arrangment is common to most engine manufacturers, which in that way retain full responsibility for the quality and, above all, safety of their engines.

Clearly, any manufacturer would have to be satisfied that an incoming prospective repair company was fully competent to meet the extremely exacting safety and other standards before granting it a licence. Rolls-Royce is at present licensed in that way by the French company to conduct repair and overhaul of the United Kingdom-owned engines, and it is the only British company so licensed.

The present maintenance contracts are due to expire at the end of this year. To put its closure plans into action, while still maintaining support for our helicopter fleet, Rolls-Royce has successively sub-contracted more of that repair and overhaul work to Turbomeca.

That situation left us with a difficult decision. Plainly, to hold an immediate competition for the requirement would be fraught with difficulties. Competitors would have to meet Turbomeca's standards as well as ours: if Turbomeca wished to compete, how could a level playing field be maintained; and how could we ensure that Turbomeca would grant a licence to the winning contractor?

The easy option would have been to award a non-competitive contract to a company which we knew well and with which we felt comfortable. But that would have been a monopolistic practice, it would have been bad for defence, bad for the industry and, worse still, bad for the taxpayer, apart from the fact that there was only one company, apart from Rolls-Royce, with the qualifications necessary to take it on now. That was Turbomeca. So the House will not be surprised to learn that we wished to avoid that option.

We shall have a competition, and I shall give the details. It will be apparent to the House that a competition that is to surmount the obstacles that I have described will be a complicated affair, but the arrangements for it are being put in hand.

We intend to advertise our requirement in the contracts bulletin to ensure that every company that feels that it has the necessary capacity and capability to undertake the work has an opportunity to bid, whether for prime contractorship or as a sub-contractor. A number of companies will rightly expect that opportunity. Many suitable qualified companies are hungry for business. We shall select a short list of suitably qualified bidders, from among those companies.

It will be for the bidders to enter into negotiations with Turbomeca for a suitable licensing agreement, and Turbomeca has given us satisfactory assurances that it will co-operate fully in that.

We intend to seek competitive tenders as quickly as we can, but, given the amount of work involved in that critical flight safety area, it is likely to be towards the end of 1993, with contracts placed by the end of the following year. That will allow a minimum of 15 months for a new contractor to begin to tackle the tasks concerned while Turbomeca starts to relinquish its responsibilities.

It is vital, for both operational and safety reasons, that there be no break in the repair chain. Therefore, in the meantime, to ensure continued support beyond the end of the year when our contract with Rolls-Royce expires, we have little choice—indeed we have no choice—but to turn to the manufacturer for an interim arrangement. That is why we have placed a contract for the repair and overhaul of the engines with Turbomeca. It will commence on 1 January next year and will last for up to three years.

We intend to ensure that the interim contracts with Turbomeca contain the flexibility to allow the contractor that we eventually select to take on the work as soon as possible. That may well be within the three-year deadline that we have set ourselves. It may be before that three-year time limit expires, but we could not realistically have set the time limit at less and, for the time being, there is simply no company other than Turbomeca capable of taking on the work.

My hon. Friend's principal complaint was that Strongfield International should have been awarded the interim contract. That is not a realistic opportunity for us.

Mr. Page: I am sorry to interrupt my hon. Friend, but I should hate him to go away with that thought. Turbomeca must obviously charge for the work that it will undertake. My simple request was that we should also allow Strongfield International to quote for the work. If it is more expensive, it should not get the job. I was not seeking a one-off contract for Strongfield alone on that basis.

Mr. Aitken: Strongfield will have an opportunity to bid in a full and fair competition, but at present it cannot qualify or bid for the reasons that I shall explain.

Our paramount concern is the need to maintain front-line support to our troops. It is my and my Department's duty to assure the safety and airworthiness of the helicopter fleet.

If we are to be confident of achieving that, the successful bidder must give us firm assurance on his existing capabilities in a number of areas. First, he must have the expertise and facilities to undertake the work; secondly, he must have the necessary quality and process controls to assure us that the work is being professionally managed; and, thirdly, he must assure us that he is financially strong enough to take on that substantial commitment. Fourthly, and most importantly, the successful contractor will need to negotiate a licence with Turbomeca. Strongfield does not yet appear to be in a position to offer us or Turbomeca those assurances. Although my Department has been advising the company on the steps that it will need to take to gain such approval, it does not appear that any such steps have been taken.

It is not a question of bureaucratic delay. It is not a question of the Ministry of Defence being insensitive, as my hon. Friend suggested. The House would not expect me to award contracts on the taxpayers' behalf without checking thoroughly that a company could do the job.

Nothing that I have said is intended in any way to criticise Strongfield. I welcome the involvement of new companies in the business of defence, provided they meet the criteria that I have outlined. I should be delighted if Strongfield entered the competition. It knows the procedures, and it will have time to go through them before it bids. I am sure that the House would agree that we should not award a contract to a company that has not met such important requirements. However, that is what we would have had to do if we had not decided to make our interim arrangement with Turbomeca.

I emphasise for the House an important point about quality assurances and airworthiness. The criteria for safety and airworthiness dictate that those companies that seek to repair and overhaul any engines must have the requisite corporate quality controls for, and experience with, engine overhaul in the appropriate engine power range. Aero engines are qualified to meet stringent controls aimed at safe operation of the aircraft within the declared flight envelope, and the integrity of vital rotating components necessitates the observance of strictly controlled procedures during the overhaul process. Therefore, to meet the Ministry of Defence's minimum requirements, tenderers need to be registered with the Department as complying with the quality control and inspection requirements—AQAP/4 or ISD 9002—which would guarantee the control of processes, maintenance schedules and so on, and assure airworthiness.

I hope that I have shown the House that the whole saga, which my hon. Friend calls a sad affair, was more

[Mr. Aitken]

complicated. The Ministry of Defence had to take more precautions and move more cautiously than we would have wanted.

As for the human concerns mentioned by my hon. Friend, naturally, we are all anxious about the plight of the work force that is being shed by Rolls-Royce. I also come from a constituency in which there are serious unemployment problems. I wish that I could find some way to assist those 70 employees of Rolls-Royce to avoid unemployment, but there simply is no responsible way in which my Department can help at present. I am sorry that I have to tell Strongfield to come back, perhaps not in three years' time but in a few months' time. That is all I can say at present.

I emphasise that the decision to withdraw the work was taken not by my Department but by Rolls-Royce. Rolls-Royce is the prime mover and creator of the problem that we are discussing.

As I have said, it is our intention to hold a full and fair competition for the engine repair requirement in accordance with our declared competition policy. We are in the process of setting up the arrangements with the engine manufacturers. By those means we will ensure that industry is treated fairly and that all companies that want to bid for the contract are treated fairly. We will also ensure that the taxpayer is well served and that our defences are well maintained. The policy also helps to keep the British defence industry efficient, which underpins its superb export performance—now at record-breaking levels—in bringing jobs and wealth to this country.

I understand the consternation and distress that job loses can cause in a local area. My hon. Friend has been right to raise the subject tin the House this afternoon. I am sure that it will be given proper attention by the newspapers in his district. However, I hope that they will understand that my Department cannot take risks with safety and that we cannot intervene to stop industry restructuring, much as we sympathise with the plight of individuals and companies. We support industry and we need it. I hope that this has been a useful opportunity to explain how our policies for procurement translate into action and why it is to the benefit of industry, our forces and the taxpayer. I am only sorry that my words cannot extend any real comfort to the 70 employees whose plight we have been discussing this afternoon.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at two minutes to Three o'clock.

House of Commons

Monday 7 December 1992

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Local Monuments

1. **Mr. French:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what representations he has received about the transfer of management responsibilities for local monuments from English Heritage to local authorities.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for National Heritage (Mr. Robert Key): I have received numerous letters expressing concern, some of it ill-founded, about English Heritage's strategy. In fact, the document stressed that all its sites and monuments fully merit continued protection.

Mr. French: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his answer. He will be aware of the importance that is attached to this subject in my constituency of Gloucester. Will he give the House an absolute assurance that in no circumstances will monuments be sold off to third parties? Will he also confirm that, whoever is responsible for their maintenance, they will be maintained to nationally agreed standards?

Mr. Key: Yes, I can confirm those points. There is no question of a sell-off of English Heritage assets. As my hon. Friend says, his constituency contains many examples of properties—for instance, Blackfriars—that might come into the category of consideration for local management; but every case would be considered on its merits, and any case that might be acknowledged to be suitable for more local management than Savile row would, of course, be subject to the same standards of care as any other English Heritage monument.

Mr. Battle: I welcome the Minister's response. May I ask him, however, to examine carefully what his Department could do to secure a future for Kirkstall abbey, a 13th century Cistercian foundation, in my constituency?

Will the Minister support the efforts of Friends of Kirkstall abbey, who have turned to the local authority and to private sector interests to try to secure support but who know that, without Government intervention and backing, the abbey will be doomed to decay and disappear within our lifetime?

Mr. Key: I know how strongly local people feel about such monuments. Of course I undertake to examine the specific case of Kirkstall abbey.

Mr. Robert Banks: Does my hon. Friend agree that a number of monuments could be enhanced as visitor attractions—for instance, Spofforth castle in my constituency? Will he ensure that local authorities have sufficient funds not only for the maintenance of such monuments but for the launching of projects to improve them—bearing in mind the fact that tourists from our country spend some £14·3 billion a year and that we have an obligation to provide them with visitor attractions?

Mr. Key: It must, of course, be for local authorities to prioritise their spending. There are many ways in which funds can be found to look after monuments: many local authorities and many bodies responsible for monuments now undertake plural funding.

My hon. Friend is right to suggest that an integral part of my Department's work involves the very important tourist industry, to which all areas of our responsibility contribute—notably, the heritage aspect. He is right also to point out that many of our monuments are not achieving their full potential, either in terms of education within their local communities or in terms of attractiveness to visiting tourists. That issue could be addressed more keenly if we could get the debate on the importance of local management off the ground.

British Broadcasting Corporation

2. **Mr. Mandelson:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make a statement on the future funding of the BBC.

The Secretary of State for National Heritage (Mr. Peter Brooke): This is one of the issues to be considered in the debate about the future of the BBC.

Mr. Mandelson: Will the Secretary of State comment on the strong opposition to his idea for a public service broadcasting council? Will he acknowledge that not only the BBC but the ITV companies and Channel 4 believe that syphoning off money from the BBC in that way would undermine programme quality in the long term and that the only support for the idea—apart from that of Mr. Melvyn Bragg—comes from elements within the Murdoch empire, No. 10's policy unit and the Tory Members of Parliament who want to do in the BBC?

Mr. Brooke: We have launched a consultation period which will last five months and have just completed the first week. I have already received a significant number of comments and I shall analyse the reactions given in answer to the question about that subject. It is good that the question has been asked and that we are getting answers.

Mr. Simon Coombs: Will my right hon. Friend give due cognisance to the view that no matter how the BBC is to be funded in the future, it makes very little sense for the resources that are available to it to be used to fuel a bidding war for feature films when they are available through so many other sources?

Mr. Brooke: The content of BBC broadcasts is one of the matters about which we have asked in the consultation document, but the decisions are essentially for the BBC itself to take.

Mr. Maginnis: Does the Secretary agree that the use of public funding demands an obligation to the public? Will he therefore review and enhance the present ineffective

measures to preclude from the airways Sinn Fein and other apologists for terrorism? Does the right hon. Gentleman agree also that the use of actors' voices or the interviewing of a person such as Sinn Fein Councillor Joe Austin on the pretext that he is bystander contravenes the spirit of the legislation and is offensive to the public? Will the right hon. Gentleman ensure that the legislation is tightened?

Mr. Brooke: The interpretation of the notices, of which the hon. Gentleman is aware, is a matter for the broadcasters themselves. They must decide whether a person is speaking on behalf of an organisation named in the notices or is speaking in a different capacity. The notices are kept under general review. I currently have no plans to make any changes to them, although I receive representations that I should consider relaxing them.

Mr. John Marshall: Will my right hon. Friend consider widening the BBC's sources or revenue? Would he be willing to consider advertising as a source of revenue, as it has managed to give us a thriving independent television service?

Mr. Brooke: That is just one of the questions that were raised in the Green Paper last week and to which we are already receiving replies.

Mrs. Clwyd: Why is it that the BBC can be riddled with accountants yet allow an overspend of £58 million? Why was such a huge overspend, involving millions of taxpayers' money, not made clear in the BBC's report presented to Parliament? Where is the Coopers and Lybrand report—why has it not been published? Why have the BBC's board of governors and board of management failed to ensure that financial management systems are in place?

Mr. Brooke: In the BBC's last accounting year, it balanced its books in terms of its expenditure.

With regard to the most recent revelation, the hon. Lady and the House will be aware that the audit committee of the BBC has published its view and that corrective action is being taken. The BBC recognised that there were faults in its systems and has moved to correct them as quickly as possible.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith: When the great debate is over and a plan of what the BBC should or should not be doing in the future has been suggested for serious consideration by the House, will my right hon. Friend ensure there there is a proper, independent financial appraisal of the consequences of what is proposed?

Mr. Brooke: The consultation period on the Green Paper will be concluded on 30 April next year. After that, the Government will of course be engaged in reviewing the responses that have been received and will no doubt consider them from different perspectives.

National Lottery

3. **Mr. William O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what representations he has received from local charitable organisations expressing concern over the possible loss of income with the introduction of the national lottery scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: My right hon. Friend and I have received a number of representations from charitable organisations about the introduction of a national lottery. We are considering how we might be able to help small lotteries maintain their position following the introduction of the national lottery.

Mr. O'Brien: I am satisfied that the Minister accepts as a fact that there will be problems for the small charitable organisations if a national lottery is introduced without proper safeguards for them. I refer especially to the hospice movement, which relies on many charities raising money for it, and to the churches and village halls, which need the protection to which the Minister refers. Will he assure the House and the country that, with the introduction of a national lottery, which will raise billions of pounds through national advertising and through the pressure on people to buy tickets, proper provision will be made to protect the charities and organisations that rely on local lotteries and on local raffles to maintain the services that they have to provide to communities?

Mr. Key: I am pleased to give the hon. Gentleman that undertaking. We have already had constructive talks with charities and their representative organisations, and we shall continue to do so. It is important to get the problem into perspective. The charities have an annual turnover of £15 billion a year, so the effect in those terms will be marginal—although I acknowledge that the small charities to which the hon. Gentleman refers are concerned. We are addressing those problems. It is important also to recognise that we are doing what we can to discuss with colleagues in the Home Office ways in which we can improve the local lotteries, so that they are more acceptable and more able to compete.

Mr. Harry Greenway: Does my hon. Friend accept that there is strong national support for the national lottery? However, people do not want existing football pools to be undermined. What studies has my hon. Friend commissioned to discover how new money can be brought into the national lottery? That must be the successful basis on which it will operate.

Mr. Key: My hon. Friend is absolutely right; he has put his finger on the matter. The national lottery research which we have commissioned has shown that we are looking for a completely new market. I expect that those who wish to do the football pools and those who want to bet on greyhounds will continue to do so. We are looking at a new market, the principal competition for which is more likely to be magazines, soft drinks and ice creams than hard gambling.

Mr. Pendry: Is the Minister aware that there is a great deal of disquiet, not only in the House but outside, about the way in which his Department is handling the national lottery? Not only the small charities and large charities, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) referred, but many voluntary organisations and thousands of football pools employees in Liverpool, Cardiff, east London and elsewhere are concerned about the impact of the national lottery on jobs. Why does not the Minister shake off his coat of secrecy and publish the GAH Group report, to which he referred, to ensure that we all have an informed debate on this important issue?

Mr. Key: There are two reasons: first, because it is an internally commissioned document; and, secondly, because it contains a good deal of commercially sensitive information. It would be wrong for the Government or anyone else to commission research and then to publish all the results from companies, organisations and individuals.

I do not accept the hon. Gentleman's proposition that there is widespread concern. There is enormous interest and there is a huge will to ensure that the national lottery succeeds, which is the most important point. We shall, of course, continue to talk to the pools industry and to hon. Members. My right hon. Friend and I will meet leaders of the pools industry later this week. We shall continue to do our best to ensure that the strong support for the national lottery, which has been very evident for many months, is recognised as soon as practicable by the publication of the Bill.

Mr. Braudreth: As the chairman of a national charity, the National Playing Fields Association, may I assure my hon. Friend that national charities and local charities welcome the advent of the lottery, although there is concern that the level playing field between the pools industry and the national lottery is maintained? The hope is that the whole cake will become larger. Will my hon. Friend assure us that consultation will continue with the pools industry to establish that level playing field?

Mr. Key: Of course I can give my hon. Friend that undertaking; we will continue to consult. I acknowledge my hon. Friend's work over many years for the National Playing Fields Association, whose annual conference I visited a couple of weeks ago. We shall continue to ensure that consultation takes place. The most important thing is that the national lottery is seen to be a huge success which adds a new seam of money which would not otherwise be available for a whole range of good causes.

Windsor Castle (Fire)

4. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage whether he has now made an accurate assessment of the cost of the fire at Windsor castle; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: No estimate can be made of the cost of restoring Windsor castle until the damaged areas have been fully surveyed and a decision has been taken on the form that the restoration will take. However, I can tell the House that I am setting up an inquiry to assess the adequacy of fire protection measures at all royal palaces for which I have a financial responsibility.

Mr. Skinner: Is there not something brutally unfair about the fact that it is estimated that at least £60 million will be paid out by taxpayers to the richest woman in Britain to repair one of her homes without any contribution from herself, when only 400 yards away from another of her homes, Buckingham palace, people have to live in cardboard boxes and pensioners will die this winter from hypothermia? Is not the truth of the matter that the Queen should pay the lot herself and not call upon impoverished taxpayers to foot the bill?

Mr. Brooke: The figure of £60 million which the hon. Gentleman quotes has been generated by the media. That figure has not emanated in any way from the Government. In respect of the second part of the hon. Gentleman's question, I remind the House that the apartments that burnt in the great fire at Windsor were essentially state apartments, either those open to the public or those in which great state occasions occur. They were not apartments in which Her Majesty lives.

Sir John Wheeler: When my right hon. Friend carries out his estimate of the cost of restoring the state apartments at Windsor castle, will he bear in mind that the castle has been in public ownership since 1831? Will he also calculate the advantage to the public interest of the hundreds of thousands of visitors throughout the year who spend money to go to Windsor castle? Will he take that equation into account as well?

Mr. Brooke: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's points, which are clearly part of the debate. They will not necessarily specifically affect the estimate, which will be a rather more nicely judged calculation.

Mr. Maclennan: When considering what form the replacement should take, will the Secretary of State bear in mind that Windsor castle displays the needs, tastes and artistic talents of nearly 1,000 years of English history? Will he consider the appropriateness of replacing the buildings that have been damaged and destroyed with something that is truly representative of the best of Britain today and which meets public needs, which have changed somewhat since the last part of the building was constructed?

Mr. Brooke: The hon. Gentleman has identified a question which has already provoked a healthy debate, as I am sure that he would acknowledge. I hope that out of the fire, and the scar that it leaves, will emerge a reconstruction that commands widespread admiration and a sense of national achievement; however, the debate about the precise form that that should take is still going on.

Mr. Cormack: In this season of goodwill, will my right hon. Friend ignore the rather bilious and malicious rhetoric of the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), who must surely be the Queen's favourite beast? Will my right hon. Friend miss no opportunity to point out that we are dealing with the official home of our head of state? Will he produce comparative figures to show that we do rather better than many nations with presidencies? Will he also point out to those who talk about the works of art in Windsor castle that they are not available to be sold and that they are not Her Majesty's possessions to do with as she will? They are ours and we see most of them for much of the year.

Mr. Brooke: My hon. Friend is right to draw the attention of the House to those highly relevant facts.

Mrs. Clwyd: On Friday, the Minister claimed to have placed in the Library a report on the cause of the fire at Windsor castle. The report consisted of one and a half pages. Does the Secretary of State not realise that the public believe that that report has been doctored and that the real report lies elsewhere? Why does not the Secretary of State publish the truth about the fire, and not simply expect the public to foot a bill of up to £60 million without having their questions answered? Why has he not answered the questions that he promised to answer on 23 November? When can I expect an answer to those questions?

Mr. Brooke: The hon. Lady is casting doubt on the Royal Berkshire fire service and the report that it rendered. She knows from the report who comprised the investigating team, whose members were unanimous in their agreement on the conclusions.

If the hon. Lady refers to my statement on 23 November, she will see that in the first instance there was to be a report on the origins of the fire, to which Friday's announcement applied. I have announced today that there will be a further inquiry into issues relating to fire precautions and fire prevention and aspects surrounding the fire, and that will of course take several months.

On the matters on which the hon. Lady was subsequently kind enough to write me a letter, I have written a letter in reply.

Mr. Gallie: Does my right hon. Friend recognise the impassioned pleas of the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner)? Does he recognise also the pressures on the public purse? Will he think about what the hon. Member for Bolsover has said and consider privatisation?

Mr. Brooke: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for having introduced yet another element into the debate, which has already ranged widely.

Arts Council

5. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what representations he has received on the amount to be made available to the Arts Council in the coming year.

Mr. Brooke: I have received one letter expressing concern about the settlement for the arts in 1993-94. I have noted some more general comments in the press. In a difficult year, a 2 per cent. increase in the Arts Council's grant in aid is by no means a bad outcome.

Mr. Banks: I realise that the right hon. Gentleman is an amiable old cricket buff with tastes that are somewhat less exotic than those of his predecessor, but is he not ashamed that, unlike the right hon. and learned Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor), he does not have such a good deal for the arts this year? Why has he conceded the principle of the three-year funding regime which was established in 1989? Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman should have a word with his immediate predecessor to find out how he was able to stand up firmly for the arts.

Mr. Brooke: The issue of three-year funding goes rather more widely than my Department, although I am flattered that the hon. Gentleman should think that I should be able to change the Government's total policy from within my Department. Funding for 1993-94 will be 17·5 per cent. above the funding that was available in 1989-90.

Mr. Spring: What progress is being made in diversifying art funding, in view of the great success in spreading interest in the arts, both in the business community and in the community at large?

Mr. Brooke: I am delighted to say that good progress has been made. At the end of last month, I announced that the business sponsorship incentive scheme, which was set up in 1984, has raised more than £50 million of new sponsorship for the arts. The Association for Business Sponsorship of the Arts said last week that, despite the recession, sponsorship for the arts rose by 28 per cent. last year.

Mr. Sheldon: The hon. Gentleman's responsibility for the funding of the arts and for the Arts Council is probably his greatest responsibility. Will he bear in mind the important way in which the development of the funding arrangements, which have been fairly satisfactory, has proceeded over the past few years? It is up to the right hon. Gentleman to bring to bear the great pressure that the House brought in reaching the terms that were finally acceptable to the House.

Mr. Brooke: I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman will share my pleasure that the arts funding in 1995-96, despite the current difficult circumstances, will in real terms be in excess of the funding that was available in 1991-92.

Youth Orchestras and Bands

6. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what support he gives to youth orchestras and bands.

Mr. Key: In financial terms the Arts Council intends to spend £239,000 this year in support of youth activities, an increase of 200 per cent. on 1991-92. In addition, we acknowledge and encourage the many thousands of youth orchestras and bands up and down the country, whether they perform pop music, jazz, classical or other styles of music.

Mr. Bowis: I thank my hon. Friend for that response. As he will know, our right hon. Friend the Secretary of State was present the other day at the Royal Albert hall to hear the superlative performances by county and borough youth orchestras, choirs and bands at the school prom. Does he accept that that was a great tribute to the young musicians, their teachers and those who initiate and support county and borough-based groupings—in many cases the local education authority? Will he talk to his colleagues at the Department for Education to ensure that, with the changing nature of LEAs in the future, such quality is not allowed to wither and that we can enhance the standards of musicianship?

Mr. Key: Yes, that is extremely important. My hon. Friend has put his finger on a problem which has been faced. The Arts Council of Great Britain has produced a recent report stating that, although about a third of local education authorities have cut music service budgets since 1989, the majority have experienced no change and a few have expanded and improved provision.

My right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Education and for Wales propose in the Education Bill that there should be a two-year transitional period during which LEAs will be able to sell designated services to grant-maintained schools, which will offer sufficient time for private suppliers to move in.

Mr. Michael: Does the Minister not recognise that that is a disgraceful response to a serious crisis that faces many excellent orchestras and bands around the country such as the South Glamorgan youth orchestra and the many junior orchestras and choirs which involve hundreds of young people in high-quality music? Those young people

will not have that opportunity if the legislation goes through, if education is organised in the way in which the Minister and his colleagues seem to want, and if we have such a low settlement for local authorities. There will not be such a thing for the Minister to be proud of in the future unless he acts now.

Mr. Key: I have rarely heard such arrant nonsense from any hon. Member of the House. The hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) is saying that he wishes to substitute his judgment for the judgment of the individual schools involved. Those schools will ensure that there is excellent musical provision for their pupils and that provision will continue to be made.

Broadcasting Green Paper

7. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what representations he has received about the Green Paper on broadcasting; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: I had received more than 2,000 replies by noon today. There are another five months for people to write giving their views.

Mr. Thurnham: Will my right hon. Friend carefully consider the wishes of those people who do not want to pay a compulsory levy to a state broadcasting company? Is he aware that among the most difficult fines for Her Majesty to enforce are those for single parents who cannot easily afford the licence fee but who are quite happy for their children to watch commercial television?

Mr. Brooke: Those are exactly the sort of issues that we want to be considered as part of the debate on the future of the BBC, which, as I have said, has elicited a significant number of replies.

Dr. Kim Howells: Will the Secretary of State consider carefully the submissions suggesting that funding for the regional broadcasting companies of the BBC, such as BBC Wales, should be cut? Such companies are easy targets for cuts. Does he recognise that those companies are very important to Wales, Scotland and the English regions, and that he must do everything in his power to protect and nourish them?

Mr. Brooke: Without wishing to burden my official, Mr. Lister, who is in receipt of those letters, one of the effective ways in which people in Wales, or Scotland—I see another hon. Member nodding—would be to communicate about the consultation document. In the end, the allocation of resources is a matter for the BBC.

Mr. Nigel Evans: Is my right hon. Friend aware that I am in receipt of many letters from senior citizens in my constituency who find it extremely difficult to find the £80 to pay the licence fee but that many senior citizens who live in sheltered accommodation receive their broadcasts via a £5 licence? Will he consider that matter carefully? Perhaps the best solution would be that which has been suggested in the past—to release everyone from the compulsory licence fee and allow people to choose what they view. Funding could be either by subscription or by advertising.

Mr. Brooke: The concessionary fee to which my hon. Friend refers was examined in the review in 1988. He is perfectly right that it is also part of the process in which we are now engaged.

Mr. Dafis: The Secretary of State will be aware that the BBC provides 10 hours a week of programmes for S4C, the Welsh medium television channel—about a third of its programme output. Those 10 hours are funded with a portion of the licence fee. Will he give an assurance that the provision from the licence fee will be maintained and that that crucially important component in the Welsh medium programmes, including the news, will be maintained?

Mr. Brooke: The hon. Gentleman may be reassured that, of course, the financing of S4C also falls within my Department.

Scientific Heritage

8. **Mr. Alan Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what plans he has to secure the retention in the United Kingdom of items in the United Kingdom's scientific heritage.

Mr. Key: In addition to scientific items retained following decisions of the reviewing committee on the export of works of art, I have accepted that natural history objects, including fossils, should be brought within our export controls.

Mr. Howarth: I thank my hon. Friend for his recognition of the significance of the issue. But will he examine carefully the system for safeguarding important items of our scientific heritage and ensure that it is made more robust? Will he look at the Waverley criteria? He may agree with me that the requirement that an object must be of outstanding aesthetic importance misses the point for scientific items. Does he also agree that the requirement that an object should be more than 50 years old could mean that items from the outstandingly creative phase of British science since the war could be lost?

Mr. Key: I acknowledge my hon. Friend's expertise on the matter. He is right that we have taken a fresh look at it both on our own initiative and as a result of changes within the European Community. The Waverley criteria have stood the test of time, but also look set to stand the test of the future. The criteria—each one of which may apply—have yielded positive results. There is a growing list of items that have been safeguarded for the nation in that way.

Media Ownership

9. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what steps he is taking to reduce the concentration of media ownership.

Mr. Key: None, at present.

Mr. Mullin: Does the Minister recall that the Government used to say that no newspaper proprietor would be permitted more than a 20 per cent. share of any satellite television company? Mr. Murdoch now has 50 per cent. of BSkyB and 35 per cent of all national newspaper circulation. So we must take it that, as they used to say in the Nixon White House, "The previous promise is

inoperative." What level of ownership by a newspaper proprietor of a satellite television company will be necessary before the Minister faces up to the issues posed by Mr. Murdoch's grip on the market?

Mr. Key: It is all very well for the hon. Gentleman to talk in those terms, but it is important to recognise that BSkyB does not have a monopoly. It is subscriber based. Indeed, it has created a ready-made market for other broadcasters to enter. Satellite television subscribers represent only about 13 per cent. of households in Britain. Those who watch satellite television on cable systems are unaffected. Ownership restrictions were thoroughly debated during the passage of the Broadcasting Bill and subsequent legislation. The Government will consider the need to change the legislation if a sound case can be proved.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: May I put it to my hon. Friend—I do not necessarily wish him to come to a conclusion today—that the coming together of satellite dominance with major print ownership was not the intention of the Government or of the House. Even leaving satellite on one side, will my hon. Friend consider whether it is desirable that one proprietor should own 35 per cent. of national newspaper or whether it is a suitable case for reference to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission?

Mr. Key: The Monopolies and Mergers Commission is required to take into account all matters that appear to be relevant, especially the need for accurate news presentation. It is for my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade to decide whether to give consent to a newspaper transfer, but, as my hon. Friend knows, the Fair Trading Act 1973 contains special provisions to deal with such transfers. We keep that issue under review as it is important. One of the most important things to remember, especially with regard to satellite television, is that increasingly we are operating in an international market and we shall keep under review the interplay between that market in broadcasting and the national market in newspapers.

Mr. Soley: Does the Minister understand that one small part of the reason that there is so much public anger about journalistic standards is that the concentration of monopolistic ownership leads to circulation wars, in which people come second to proper journalistic standards and accuracy in news reporting? Is it not right that we should consider cross-ownership and the concentration of ownership—as the hon. Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) rightly pointed out—to prevent monopolistic control from destroying a free press and a free media in the United Kingdom?

Mr. Key: I recognise the hon. Gentleman's concern. We look forward to finding out what Calcutt has to say on the matter. I recognise that there is concern, although there seems to be less concern in my mail bag than there perhaps is in his, but the matter is serious and we shall keep it under review.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Prosecutions (Non-custodial Sentences)

28. **Mr. Bennett:** To ask the Attorney-General if he will make a statement about prosecutions in cases not leading to a custodial sentence.

The Attorney-General (Sir Nicholas Lyell): Prosecuting authorities apply the principles set out in the code for Crown prosecutors. Sentencing is essentially a matter for the courts.

Mr. Bennett: What discussions has the Attorney-General had with his colleagues about the question of withdrawing legal aid in cases where someone probably does not face a custodial sentence? Does he not realise that everyone has the right to maintain their good name? Ought he not to ensure that legal aid is either available in all cases or, if it is to be withdrawn, at least to consider ways in which the Crown prosecution service can be selective in the cases brought? Might it not be a better approach to saving legal aid to deny the fat fees that some Queen's counsels receive in legal aid cases, rather than to deny such aid to poor people?

The Attorney-General: On the last part of the hon. Gentleman's question, representations that have been made to me do not show that that applies in the great run of legal aid cases, although it might be said to apply in some long and detailed cases. The hon. Gentleman will appreciate that questions of legal aid are for my right hon. Friend the Lord Chancellor. The Crown prosecution service, when deciding on any case, considers carefully not only the sufficiency of evidence but whether it is in the public interest to prosecute.

Mr. John Greenway: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that it is not merely a case of using public funds to defend those accused of crimes, but often a case of using them to help the victims of crime? Has he been made aware of the evidence given to the Home Affairs Select Committee during its current inquiry into domestic violence, which shows that many such cases can be resolved without a custodial sentence, but that that requires the Crown prosecution service to bring a prosecution first?

The Attorney-General: I recognise that there is force in the considerations that my hon. Friend has just mentioned. When the Crown prosecution service considers cases of domestic violence, it does not consider sentencing but is looking to a sensible solution, including the justice of the matter, which it will take into account when considering whether it is necessary to prosecute.

Mr. Bermingham: Does the Attorney-General agree that the number of cases discontinued by the Crown prosecution service is on the increase? Does he welcome such an increase, especially when we bear in mind that that stops the prosecution of many petty and minor matters which have hitherto clogged up the courts?

The Attorney-General: The hon. Gentleman makes a good point. One of the principal functions of the Crown prosecution service is to review each case and, where appropriate, to keep it under review at every relevant stage. At present, it discontinues about 12·5 per cent. of cases and there is a sign that this figure is slightly on the

increase, but it is not out of hand and it shows that it correctly keeps the question of reviewing cases very much in mind.

Mr. Hawkins: Can my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that, in cases where a non-custodial sentence is passed by a court when it is strongly felt by many people that a custodial one would have been more appropriate, he now has the power to refer the matter to the Court of Appeal for it to consider whether a more serious custodial sentence is more appropriate?

The Attorney-General: My hon. Friend draws attention to an important new power, which was introduced in 1989, which may be exerted in cases that can be tried only at the Crown court—we are therefore talking about the most serious type of case. That power is designed to maintain and improve public confidence by enabling the Court of Appeal not only to reduce over-severe sentences, but, when it appears to me or to my right hon. and learned Friend that the sentence is unduly lenient, it can be referred for reconsideration of a possibly more serious sentence.

British National Party (Literature)

29. **Mr. Austin-Walker:** To ask the Attorney-General what representations he has received regarding the literature distributed from the headquarters of the British National party.

The Solicitor-General (Sir Derek Spencer): In 1992, in addition to questions raised by the hon. Gentleman himself, representations have been received from two local community organisations. The Crown prosecution service, has reported to the Law Officers its decision following a police inquiry into this matter.

Mr. Austin-Walker: Does the Solicitor-General accept that there is an air of disbelief in my constituency of Woolwich over the lack of action taken by the Government in this matter? Does he accept that that is in stark contrast to the positive action taken by the Government of Germany following the tragic murder of three Turkish residents? Is the hon. and learned Gentleman aware that two of my constituents, Rohit Duggal and Rolan Adams, have been brutally murdered? How many more black youths must be slaughtered on our streets before the Government take some action against the Nazi menace in our presence?

The Solicitor-General: It is not the Government of this country who institute proceedings for criminal offences, although the Government have the power to reform the law if it is found to be inadequate. That is a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary. We wholeheartedly condemn racial attacks wherever and whenever they appear, and the hon. Gentleman will remember that in the case of Rolan Adams, to which he just referred, his attacker was identified and prosecuted speedily and his murderer received a sentence of life imprisonment. A large armoury of offences in the law, including murder, manslaughter and assault covered by the Offences Against the Person Act 1861 and the Public Order Act 1986 provide effective sanctions against such attacks.

Mr. John Marshall: Will my hon. and learned Friend confirm that the Public Order Act 1986 makes it easier to deal with those offensive nut cases?

The Solicitor-General: My hon. Friend is right. When we passed the 1986 Act we significantly extended and modernised the existing law. We extended it to cases where there was an intention to stir up racial hatred and circumstances where hatred was likely to be stirred up. In section 23 we introduced the new offence of possessing racially inflammatory material with a view to distributing it. In section 21 we introduced a new offence of

> Distributing, showing or playing a recording . . . of visual images or sounds which are threatening"

In section 22 we criminalised incitement to racial hatred in cable programmes. That demonstrates that we have been active, sometimes at the suit of requests from Opposition Members and elsewhere, to make sure that the law is kept up to date.

Mr. Fraser: Does the Solicitor-General agree that what starts off as the racist platform for organisations such as the British National party, leads in Germany and in this country to racist murders? Will he discuss with the Home Secretary whether we should now legislate for the crime of racially motivated attacks, in order to underline our repugnance at the racist crimes that are probably generated by the type of literature referred to in the question tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Woolwich (Mr. Austin-Walker)?

The Solicitor-General: I listen to any arguments that hon. Members can put forward. If we are to have a specific offence of racial harassment it will just add another ingredient that the prosecution must prove before it can succeed in obtaining a conviction. I doubt whether that is the right way to proceed. I discovered the typical reaction of the British people in Leicester, South in 1983, when the candidate from the so-called British National party, who stood against me, managed to secure only 280 votes out of a total of 53,000.

May Inquiry

30. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Attorney-General when he expects Sir John May to complete his inquiry into the Guildford and Woolwich pub bombings.

The Attorney-General: Sir John has now completed the phase relating to the Maguires and his report on that aspect was published on Thursday 3 December. As to the Guildford and Woolwich aspects, I refer the hon. Member to my answer to him on 26 October 1992.

Mr. Mullin: In the Guildford case, unlike in the Birmingham one, everyone concerned up to a high level knew almost from the outset that they had the wrong people and rigged the evidence accordingly. Is not that the real reason why Sir John May will never be permitted to carry out his inquiry as originally intended?

The Attorney-General: I have no reason to believe that the hon. Gentleman's prejudices are accurate. The purpose of Sir John May's inquiry is to find that out. Although Sir John must balance the interests of justice in bringing to justice those alleged to have done wrong, he is continuing with his inquiry in an effective way so that it can inform the royal commission before it reports towards the middle of next year.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Bosnia

36. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next intends to visit Bosnia to discuss aid matters.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd): The Secretary of State has no plans at present to visit Bosnia.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Do not the Government realise that unless the United Nations goes beyond its existing aid mandate and authorises action to stop ethnic cleansing in Bosnia, the Islamic nations will go in and do the job for us? How do the Government view the prospect of what might be a holy war in the centre of Europe?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Quite apart from the enormous dangers that would face our troops by any escalation of the situation caused by United Nations forces, to which my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister referred so eloquently last Thursday, the hon. Gentleman should also remember that if counter action prevented United Nations forces from delivering aid to those who are starving, 1·6 million people in Bosnia who are now receiving humanitarian support would suffer. It is important to recognise that the Jeddah meeting concluded that action should be taken forward by means of the United Nations Security Council. It was not a unilateral statement.

Mr. Garnier: How much money are we sending in emergency aid to Bosnia? Will my hon. Friend assure the House that we are doing all that we can to keep the convoy routes open to humanitarian aid?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Yes. This nation is one of the largest contributors to humanitarian aid in former Yugoslavia. We have contributed more than £70 million so far this year. We have 2,400 troops in the United Nations protection force, UNPROFOR, and some 260 in the ambulance unit in Croatia.

Mr. Meacher: When will the Government learn that a great deal more can be done to aid Bosnia without putting a huge army into the field? When will the air exclusion zone be enforced? When will the so-called United Nations protected areas be properly protected against continuing murder, rape and pillage, let alone new safe havens be created? Why will not the Government declare that the areas stolen by ethnic cleansing will not be internationally recognised and that there will be no let-up of sanctions until those areas are demilitarised and a majority of the refugees permitted to return home in safety? Why will not the Government use their failing EC presidency to get EC monitors or United Nations troops stationed in Kosova or Macedonia to deter a Serb military move? Are the Government simply resigned to theirs being the worst EC presidency on record?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The question is about aid, not political solutions in that very troubled land. We all agree about the outrages and objectives, but the methods of solving those objectives are difficult. The hon. Gentleman would do well to consider the advice of Lord Owen and other such people who are on the spot and know exactly what is going on.

Lady Olga Maitland: May I give a warm welcome to the brave British convoys that are going into Bosnia and ask my hon. Friend to ensure that the aid that they are bringing to these stricken people includes medicines, so that we do not get a repeat of what happened last year at Serebenica, where an entire convoy arrived and it was found that it was not carrying one aspirin?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I have mentioned the ambulance unit in Croatia. Of the £70 million to which I referred, £3 million-worth of medical supplies and support has been given to the World Health Organisation.

Aid Target

37. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the time it will take to achieve the United Nations' target of 0·7 per cent. of gross national product of developed countries being spent as aid to under-developed countries.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We shall reach the target as soon as possible.

Mr. Griffiths: I invite the Minister to be more specific. Will he dare to say that the target will be reached by the end of the Government's term of office? Does he agree that if the target is not met it would be a disgrace to a developing and prosperous country such as ours?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I shall certainly give no such indication. When the Labour party was in government no such indication was given. It is impossible to bind a future Chancellor of the Exchequer. It is amazing that the hon. Gentleman is not prepared to accept how important it is that this year our spending on aid increased by 3 per cent. in real terms over last year's. Next year, there having been a tremendously stringent round this year, there will be a 1 per cent. real-terms increase on this year's spending.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Does my hon. Friend agree that the best way in which we can help developing nations is, first, to encourage them to stop killing one another and, secondly, to encourage them to make the best use of their own resources?

My hon. Friend will know of my particular interest in the Cahora Bassa dam. Now that the people of Mozambique are at peace, will he make every effort to assist in the repairing of the power lines from the dam? The work is due to start in April 1993 if finance can be found.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I am happy to give my hon. Friend further information about what is happening in that area, in correspondence as I am not briefed today on the precise position. It is the Government's intention to help people to help themselves, and we have a substantial aid programme. We should bear in mind the great importance of a successful GATT round. That will increase world trade and help the third world.

Sir David Steel: However long it was going to take the Government to reach the United Nations aid target, will the Minister confirm that it will now take longer following the financial settlement for 1995-96?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I cannot possibly say how long it would have taken if we had not had the financial settlement for 1995-96, so I cannot possibly answer the question.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: Does my hon. Friend agree that if we were to add our net contribution to the European Community budget, which goes largely to the under-developed countries in the southern part of Europe, our spending on aid would far exceed the United Nations target of 0·7 per cent?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I know that my hon. Friend feels strongly about the matter. The United Nations target of 0·7 per cent. is directed towards the section of the world which, when defined in terms of gross domestic product, would not include the southern states of the European Community.

Africa (Agricultural Aid)

38. **Mr. Fisher:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the level of expenditure by Her Majesty's Government in the last financial year on agricultural aid to countries in Africa.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: In 1991-92 bilateral expenditure on agriculture-related activities was £44 million. In addition, the United Kingdom contributed over £11 million to multilateral organisations working specifically in the agricultural sector.

Mr. Fisher: Does the Minister accept that as the autumn statement made it clear that after 1993 the aid budget would be cut in real terms, to the great disgrace of the Government and to Britain, and as at the same time humanitarian aid in Europe and elsewhere is likely to have to continue to rise, the inevitable consequence of the two factors will be the further squeezing of agricultural aid? Does not the Minister understand that unless we invest, and help developing countries invest, in the agricultural infrastructure of training, seed technology and water irrigation, we shall never be helping developing countries in the way in which they need to be helped?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The point about helping developing countries to plant seeds and grow food is well taken—of course that is true. In October this year more than £500,000 was provided for seeds and tools for Somalia. When referring to the general point of the 0·7 per cent. target, however, the hon. Gentleman should recognise the great achievements over the years and the fact that, within a reasonable period, there has been a significant improvement. In five years our contribution has risen by 8 per cent.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Does my hon. Friend accept that those of us who were concerned about the rumours of a cut in the aid budget and agricultural aid for Africa and elsewhere should write to say that we are grateful that there were no such cuts and that we are grateful for the increase announced for the next year or two? If more of us applauded in that way the Government might be able to say that they will go on making progress towards the 0·7 per cent. target.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My hon. Friend is right: the Government should get a round of applause for having protected and enhanced the aid budget. Just before the autumn statement a few weeks ago the Opposition were saying that there would be a 15 per cent. or £25 million cut, which is outrageous.

Southern Africa (Drought)

39. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what new initiatives are proposed to ensure speedier distribution of aid from Her Majesty's Government in drought-affected areas in southern Africa.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We are continuing to work hard with international agencies and non-governmental organisations to ensure that our assistance for the drought-affected countries of southern Africa is delivered both quickly and to the intended beneficiaries.

Mr. Pike: Although we may be encouraged that that is the right approach, the simple fact is that aid is still taking far too long to get the point where it is needed. May we have every assurance that the Government will do all in their power to ensure that aid given by the British Government reaches these points with the minimum delay —whatever the reasons for such delay?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I am not sure what the hon. Gentleman is referring to; I should be grateful for further details if I am to comment further. The facts that I have do not bear out what he suggests. Of the £51 million of bilateral aid that we have committed to the drought-affected areas of southern Africa this financial year, £45 million worth has already been disbursed. That represents more than three quarters of what we have committed.

Points of Order

5.31 pm

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. The report by the royal commission on standards of conduct in public life published in 1976 referred to the membership of Parliament as a great honour carrying with it a special duty to maintain the highest standards—a duty which applies no less to Ministers. Can you give us a ruling on the need to separate the daily workings of Departments of State from purely party matters? I shall not refer to special cases, including the one involving the Home Office searching for records relating to President-elect Clinton, but could you make it clear—arising out of Lord Salmon's report, much discussed at the time inside and outside this House—that there must be such a separation? If there is not, Departments of State such as the Home Office and the Treasury will be seen as no more than extensions of Conservative Central Office. No matter whether we think of recent events surrounding the Chancellor or of the problem of who authorised the inquiries into President-elect Clinton's past, would it be possible for you to make it clear that there must be a separation between Departments of State and purely Conservative party matters?

Madam Speaker: This is a matter on which the House itself must debate and arrive at conclusions. Rulings on a subject as wide ranging as that which the hon. Gentleman has raised cannot come from the Chair. It is for the House itself to come to conclusions on these matters.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): On a different point of order, Madam Speaker, concerning an area on which I would very much like your advice and quite possibly your help.

You will be aware that the BBC has conducted a massive survey of public opinion. We all know that public opinion surveys are quite often inaccurate, but this one was so large that there must have been an element of accuracy about it. You will know that 75 per cent. of the people interviewed believe that this House should allow them a referendum on the Maastricht treaty. We had one on joining the Common Market. This is about joining a European union—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. I am trying to listen to the hon. Gentleman's point of order.

Mr. Marlow: Having seen what has happened in France, Denmark and Ireland where there have been referendums, your constituents and mine, Madam Speaker, would be miffed, to put it mildly, if the House was not able to debate such an issue. Can you say how you can help us to get something in order so that the House may debate this issue, which is important for your constituents and mine?

Madam Speaker: In short, no. The hon. Gentleman knows that that is not a matter for the Chair and he should not try such back-door methods to suggest that I should make other pronouncements. The answer from the Chair is a firm no.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Further to the point of order raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) about the question of the register, you will have noticed, Madam Speaker, that, during business questions, since the election some of my hon. Friends have made requests about publication of the register. It seems to be taking a long time. We would like to see the entries. Could it be that publication is being held up because of the Chancellor of the Exchequer's entry and so on? May I draw your attention to the fact that it may also be because the President of the Board of Trade, as he calls himself, has a problem since his last entry in the register was different from his entry about Haymarket Press——

Madam Speaker: Order. I doubt that it is any of those reasons. I am sure that the Register of Members' Interests will be produced as soon as possible. The hon. Gentleman's ideas do not hold very much water.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Further to the point of order raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick), I appreciate your ruling, Madam Speaker. You seemed to intimate that the issue would have to be debated. May I have your assurance that not just the fact of the investigation of Bill Clinton's records within the Home Office but the fact of the existence of those records will be legitimate subjects for debate in the House?

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman should look at what I said. I said that it was not a matter on which I could give advice, but that it was a matter for the House to debate should it wish to do so.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. As you are aware, the Metropolitan police have been conducting a number of stop-and-search exercises in connection with cowardly acts of terrorism perpetrated in London. Have you been consulted by the Metropolitan police on such searches taking place well within the one-mile radius of the House of Commons and about the fact that a number of hon. Members have been stopped? There is no reason why they should not be stopped——

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): Quite right.

Mr. Banks: They were Conservative Members. Have you been consulted, Madam Speaker?

Madam Speaker: As the hon. Gentleman will understand, and as I am sure the entire House will appreciate, I have no intention whatever of discussing security matters across the Floor of the House.

Orders of the Day

Social Security Bill

Considered in Committee.

[MR. GEOFFREY LOFTHOUSE *in the Chair*]

Clause 1

PENSION SCHEMES: PAYMENTS BY SECRETARY OF STATE UNDER PART I OF SOCIAL SECURITY ACT 1986

3.37 pm

Mrs. Llin Golding (Newcastle-under-Lyme): I beg to move amendment No. 2, in page 1, line 14, at end insert

'(aaa) notwithstanding the terms of subsection (aa) above, no account shall be taken in making the minimum calculation of one per cent. of earnings, referred to in the said subsection unless the earners' chosen scheme—

(1) guarantees a minimum pension as defined by regulations;

(2) fully discloses all commission and management charges to be paid in connection with the scheme; and

(3) incorporates the terms of any statutory Code of Practice that may be in force.'.

This is a probing amendment. We are aware of existing regulations but we are not convinced that the Government are being sufficiently diligent. Our amendment provides that the only schemes covered by the legislation will be those which, first, guarantee a minimum pension as defined by regulation. That is to ensure that it provides a pension that is at least equal to SERPs. Secondly, the schemes must fully disclose all commission and management charges to be paid in connection with the scheme. That is a self-evident right for anyone entrusting his money to others. Thirdly, the schemes will incorporate the terms of any statutory code of practice that may be in force. That code would be all-embracing and would include all measures thought necessary to protect the individual investor.

As you will know from Second Reading, Mr. Lofthouse, we do not like the payment of these incentives. We think that it would be preferable not to spend so much money in an attempt to undermine SERPS. We believe that SERPS is safer and more reliable than personal pension schemes. It does not need the small-print warning that benefits can go down as well as up. It is not sold to individuals by salesmen whose standard of living depends upon their ability to talk people into signing up. The rules by which SERPS operates are subject to scrutiny in the public interest. However, if the Government are, however misguidedly, going to spend so much money on encouraging people to take out personal pensions, they have a responsibility to ensure that the schemes are of a high standard.

On Second Reading, the Under-Secretary of State conceded that viability, reliability and safeguards are necessary to protect people taking out personal pensions. She read out to us the usual official jargon about continual contact between the Department and the regulators, with the regulators constantly reviewing the monitoring process, but she had to admit that it was necessary for the Government to produce regulations to command the confidence of those who wished to take out personal pensions.

I hesitate to describe the Under-Secretary of State as timid, but, unfortunately, the reluctance with which she conceded the need to take action was matched by the timidity with which she is approaching the problem. As she said, she is consulting the regulators, but, rather than an entirely new system, all that she wants to see is a tightening up of the procedures, or possibly an enlargement of them, and more detailed monitoring than is currently possible.

It would be useful if the hon. Lady would share her thoughts with us. On Second Reading, she took issue with my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) over those selling personal insurance. She compared them to lawyers who sometimes give advice not to go to court. I am sure that my hon. Friend will forgive me when I say that I was more frightened than reassured by her comparison of lawyers with what we used to know as insurance agents. To most people, they are still agents and not financial advisers. 'Salesman" is the operative word. They are like shop assistants who try to sell us the dress that suits us best, but it is from their shops that they wish to sell, not from the shops next door.

The Minister was right to say that, provided that the profession is properly regulated and honourably conducted, there is nothing unique about insurance salesmen having to distinguish between best advice and their own financial interests. If there were strict regulations to enforce high standards, all would be well, but there are no such regulations, and she has acknowledged that. I should like her to expand on that statement. The Committee could do with hearing a little more of her thoughts than we heard on Second Reading.

What are the complaints being made to the Government? Apart from misleading information, they no doubt include high commission and other charges imposed in the first year. May we be told more about the steps that the Government are considering taking? We feel that the Government are being far too timid, and that they need to be far more positive. I am sure that the hon. Lady does not like being called timid, and I am certain that she will respond to my queries. We want the Government to ensure that this money is given only in respect of laid-down guaranteed minimum pensions, we want the full disclosure of commission and management charges, and we want the Government to institute a statutory code of practice that is constantly reviewed and updated.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Many members of the Select Committee are deeply alarmed about both the management of private pension schemes and the security of personal schemes. We are concerned about the amounts that are paid into them, and about the amounts that will eventually be paid out. Will the Minister give us some idea of the point at which she proposes to investigate the vast number of personal pension schemes that have been set up over the past five or six years, and also of the degree of investigation that she proposes?

The Bill seems designed, in effect, to assist such schemes in the future, and to provide them with more funds. Many of us are concerned about the methods that will be employed in the investment and control of these funds, and fear that in the future many people will be as disappointed by the pensions paid to them as are current victims of the Maxwell pension fund fraud—whose problems, as we speak, are still unresolved.

3.45 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Miss Ann Widdecombe): I assure the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mrs. Golding) that I have no intention of being provoked by allegations of timidity into adopting temerity. It would indeed be rash to rush into an entirely new regime without first establishing the extent of the problem—which I do not dismiss, and which the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) is right to identify—establishing its nature, and establishing whether existing regimes of control would result in a sufficient tightening of the rules. That applies to the fact-finding that must be carried out, the advice that must be given, training, the extent and frequency of monitoring and, perhaps, other issues.

To say that we are consulting the regulators is not merely to indulge in official jargon. I recently met the Life Assurance and Unit Trust Regulatory Organisation, the Investment Management Regulatory Organisation, the Securities and Investments Board and the Financial Intermediaries, Managers and Brokers Regulatory Organisation to discuss what may or may not be going wrong.

The hon. Lady asked me what complaints the Government had received. I certainly do not want to give the impression that we have been inundated by a vast number of such complaints, indicating either widespread malpractice or inefficiency; we have not. However, personal pensions have now had some time in which to take effect. There are now 5 million pension holders, and a sufficient history has been established for us not only to examine the undoubted success of the scheme, but to ask ourselves how we can improve it.

That was the reason for my rather cautious statements on Second Reading. It was not that I did not want to address problems if they were there; I did not want to rush into examining imaginary problems.

I do not think that the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme really addressed the amendment. I understand her embarrassment: the amendment is a bit of a muddle. She was right to describe it as a probing amendment, for there is no way in which it could be translated into law.

Let me remind the House of the purpose of the 1 per cent. additional rebate for personal pension holders over the age of 30. Personal pensions have been an enormous success. As I have said, there are now 5 million holders of them, and public demand for the choice and flexibility of provision that such pensions offer has been about 10 times greater than expected. That tremendous growth has not been at the expense of occupational schemes; the 5 million personal pension holders are largely in addition to the 11 million occupation scheme members.

The 1 per cent. additional rebate is designed to ensure that it is worth while in the short term for the majority of those people to maintain their pensions. It will apply to personal pension schemes set up for a group, as well as to individual arrangements, but it is a temporary measure. In the context of this and other amendments, that must not be overlooked.

We shall shortly be undertaking a review of the rebate structure for personal pensions and shall consider proposals for an age-related system. That review will also include occupational schemes—money purchase and salary related—and, if the hon. Lady will forgive the expression as she does not appear to like consultation, we intend to consult interested parties in the first half of next year.

I deal now with the detail of the amendment. Amendment No. 2 seeks to make payment of the 1 per cent. additional rebate conditional on the personal pension scheme satisfying very restrictive new conditions. These conditions are the guarantee of a minimum pension, full disclosure of all commission and management charges and incorporating the terms of any statutory code of practice.

The amendment would lead to an extraordinary muddle. It would apply only to schemes to which the 1 per cent. additional rebate was paid. No personal pension optant aged under 30 would benefit from the amendment.

To explain that more fully, it may help to remind hon. Members how payments are made to appropriate personal pension holders. The Department pays a minimum contribution based on the person's annual earnings between the lower and upper earnings limits. These annual earnings are known as band earnings. The minimum contribution is paid after the end of the tax year direct to the personal pension provider. At present the minimum contribution is made up of the contracted-out rebate amount which is 5·8 per cent. of band earnings; the 2 per cent. incentive; and basic rate tax relief calculated on the employee's share of the contracted-out rebate amount, which is currently 2 per cent.

From April the minimum contribution will consist of the new contracted-out rebate amount which is 4·8 per cent. of band earnings, basic rate tax relief calculated on the employee's share of the rebate, which will be 1·8 per cent., and, subject to the will of Parliament, the 1 per cent. addition that we are now discussing for personal pension holders aged 30 and over. The amendment does not propose that these restrictive criteria should apply to the 4·8 per cent. rebate. It therefore seems somewhat contradictory to propose them in respect of the 1 per cent. addition.

I should now like to take each of the restrictions specified in turn. The first is a guarantee of a minimum pension as defined in regulations. I think that we should be clear that, although personal pensions do not provide a guaranteed minimum pension, they do provide protected rights. Personal pensions are a form of money purchase arrangement. The level of pension that is payable depends on the investment that is made, the return on that investment, and the costs. Personal pension providers have to guarantee that the minimum contribution has been invested, and the return on that investment can be considerable—so much so that, over the lifetime, personal pension holders can be in the fortunate position of receiving more than simply guaranteed minimum pension rights. It is not clear from the amendment—or from the hon. Lady's support of it—what type or level of guaranteed pension the Secretary of State is being asked to specify in regulations. Would it be a fixed amount or would it be related to an individual's salary?

There would be a substantial cost in adopting the amendment. Just how great the cost would be is difficult to quantify because it would probably have to be borne through reduced pensions to the personal pension holder at the point of retirement. That is because some contributions would have to be diverted to cover the cost of insuring against the risk that the return on the investment would not fully cover the minimum pension.

Mr. Corbyn: I understand the Minister's point, but can she give some idea of the number of money purchase personal pension schemes where the companies involved have thus far been unable to pay the guarantee offered to the participants when they joined the scheme?

Miss Widdecombe: The hon. Gentleman will be aware that personal pensions have yet to come to fruition. When we say that we have millions of holders of personal pensions, we mean, not that there are 5 million drawers of those pensions, but that 5 million people have taken out personal pensions. Therefore, the data that the hon. Gentleman seeks would not help the course of the debate.

I said that the amendment would reduce choice. Some current personal pension providers would be prevented from continuing to provide personal pensions. Banks and building societies are prevented by legislation from accepting such a risk. Only life insurance companies and their salesmen would be able to do so. This would limit the market and reduce competition.

The issue of providing some kind of guaranteed minimum pension for money purchase and personal schemes was discussed at considerable length during the passage of the Social Security Act 1986. The Government's view was that the difference between the two methods of providing for retirement was at the heart of the new pension opportunities provided by that Act, making guaranteed minimum payments inappropriate for personal pensions and for contracted-out money purchase schemes.

I turn now to the second restriction that is proposed. The regulatory organisations lay down requirements for the disclosure of relevant information to investors—the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme acknowledged that there were already some regulations—including charges and commission. These are subject to review at present. In the circumstances, it would not be appropriate for the Government to introduce further disclosure requirements before the result of the review is known.

The Securities and Investments Board has proposed new rules which will require life insurance companies to disclose the effect of charges and expenses as a penny-in-the-pound deduction from the premium. The Director General of Fair Trading is considering this proposal at present, and a report to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer is expected shortly.

I admit that I am unclear of the purpose of the third restriction that the Opposition seek to place. The Financial Services Act provides the statutory framework for investor protection, and the marketing of investment products is subject to rules made under the Act. The restriction therefore has no practical effect over and above existing law.

I cannot recommend the amendment to the Committee. The effect of accepting it would be to reduce the level of pension and the level of competition. I do not think that the Opposition intended such a muddle when they tabled the amendment.

Mr. Terry Rooney (Bradford, North): I listened to the Minister's speech with interest. I wonder how much of the speech was her own words and how much was written for her. Does she recognise that the state earnings-related pension scheme and opting out apply largely to people at the lower end of the income scale and that people higher up the income scale are more likely to have some kind of occupational pension?

Is the Minister aware that Legal and General, which is the largest pensions insurer in Britain, recommends that men and women on an income of less than £9,000 a year should not opt out of SERPS? Much of the Minister's speech appears to contradict that. With the best will in the world, I would rather have the word of Legal and General when it comes to pension investment.

It must be recognised that certain fixed costs and charges always attach to life insurance policies. The lower the income and the lower the premium payment, the higher will be the percentage that goes on commission and management fees. The Minister may be interested to know —I will not name names, but I will send her details afterwards—that last year a member of the Financial Intermediaries, Managers and Brokers Regulatory Association who operated in my home town was gaoled for submitting fraudulent applications. He made applications for personal pensions for non-existent people for which the commission was such that, for more than 18 months, he was able to pay the premiums on the applications and to net himself £68,000 in commission. Such a commission structure may at least dilute the professional opinion of the person involved in selling a pension plan.

The beauty of SERPS is that it offers a guaranteed pension. In some ways, that may also be its drawback. People receive glossy brochures which promise fairly spectacular returns. I accept that they are based on statutorily limited projections. The difference between a 3·5 per cent. return and 10·5 per cent. return is substantial. Companies very rarely advise potential policyholders of the actual returns gained over the years and they very rarely seek to advertise their position in league tables. It is significant that Equity and Law, a company which consistently appears close to the top of the league of historical returns, pays no commission and has no interest in dealing with third parties or intermediaries. There may be a message there for us all.

In the same vein, many private schemes provide for a payment to a widow, but seldom provide for a payment to a widower if the premium payer is female. In this day and age, and in the light of legislation from the European Court, that point should be a matter for the Department of Social Security. In the private pension scheme world, one can have a named beneficiary. However, under SERPS, if a couple are not married, the widow receives no payment. That is a major deficiency in SERPS regulations and application in this day and age when, rightly or wrongly, so many couples live together for decades without marrying.

4 pm

As the Under-Secretary did last week, she again referred today to there being 5 million personal pension holders. I am sure that we all hope that that means that 5 million people will be very happy when they retire. Potentially, that is 5 million people who will know far too late that they have been ripped off.

In respect of regulations, it is interesting that there is one set of responses from the Department of Social Security and another set from the Treasury. The

Department of Social Security would do well to slow things down a little until the Securities and Investments Board investigation of self-regulation has been published.

Miss Widdecombe: I wish that I had responded to that matter before I made my earlier general response. One Opposition Member is urging me to slow things down while another is urging me not to be so timid and to hurry things up. It is impossible to please both of them.

I rather prefer the approach of the hon. Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Rooney), who believes that it would be better to try to get things right and to proceed at the best pace. However, I believe that he was wrong in respect of Equity and Law. I am informed that Equity and Law pays commission. The hon. Gentleman must have the wrong company. I take the point about commission charges made by the hon. Member for Bradford, North and his point about the advice on actual returns. Both points could be addressed under the present regime; they do not require new legislation. My colleagues at the Treasury and I are consulting the regulators precisely to see whether those matters can be controlled. As the hon. Member for Bradford, North seems to believe that we are talking with two tongues, I must point out that one of my Treasury colleagues was at our last meeting with the regulators. It was not noticeable that we had a different approach to the issue. The hon. Member for Bradford, North has not done enough homework.

While I absolutely take on board the need to review the way in which personal pensions are working, I do not accept that there are 5 million potential disasters in the system. The amendment will not help to devise better regulations.

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): We all accept that discussions are taking place, and we welcome that. However, presumably discussions take place within a time scale. When will we know the results of those efforts?

Miss Widdecombe: We shall bring our conclusions to fruition as soon as is practicable.

Mrs. Golding: I was deeply hurt and upset when the Minister said that I was not in favour of consultation—and I immediately consulted my colleagues. We have decided that I should beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Mrs. Golding: I beg to move amendment No. 3, in page 1, line 16, at end insert

"(1A) After subsection (3) of that section there shall be inserted—

"(4) In relation to money purchase contracted out schemes to which Schedule 2 to this Act applies, 1 per cent. of earnings as defined in subsection (aa) above shall be included in the calculation of the minimum contribution.".'.

The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): With this we may take amendment No. 1, in page 1, line 21, at beginning insert—

'(3) In section 7(1) of the Act of 1986, the words in lines 8 and 9 "within the period beginning on 6th April 1988 and ending on 5th April 1993" shall be replaced by the words "beginning on or after 5th April 1988".

(4) In section 7(4) of that Act, in line 2, after the words "in respect of a tax week" shall be inserted the words "falling within the period beginning on 6th April 1988 and ending on 5th April 1993" and after paragraph (b) the words,

"The amount of payment in respect of a tax week beginning on or after 6th April 1993 is

where

(i) the tax year in which the tax week falls ends before such date as may be prescribed, and

(ii) the earner was over the age of 30 on the 6th April with which the tax year began,

1 per cent. of any such earnings.".'.

Mrs. Golding: The amendment deals with the exclusion of occupational schemes. It attempts to prove further the reason the figure of 1 per cent. is confined to personal pension schemes. The members of the occupational pension schemes joint working group, which brings together the Association of British Insurers, the Association of Consulting Actuaries, the National Association of Pension Funds and the Society of Pension Consultants, put their case for the inclusion of all types of contracted-out pension schemes in a letter to the Secretary of State on 9 September 1992. Unlike us, they do not challenge the purpose of the additional 1 per cent. rebate, which is to dissuade individuals from leaving personal pensions and contracting back into the state earnings-related pension scheme. Indeed, they say that it is welcome because

"some degree of stability is needed, and it is in no party's interest for there to be frequent switching between different types of pension provision."

That is not the pure doctrine of competition, but there we are and so be it. However, the group expressed two concerns. One was that giving the additional 1 per cent. of personal pensions alone might lead some individuals to leave contracted-out money purchase schemes, and, possibly, even final salary schemes, to take out personal pensions. The second concern was there could be a greater danger that employers would consider that contracted-out money purchase schemes were not worth their continued support, leading to COMPS members drifting back into SERPS. They emphasised the unfairness of that by pointing out that employers who responded in 1988 to the Government's desire for personal pensions by introducing group personal pension schemes would see their employees covered by the additional 1 per cent., whereas those who, with Government encouragement, introduced contracted-out money purchase schemes would not.

Let me emphasise that it was with Government encouragement that those employers introduced and committed themselves to COMPS, installing the necessary procedures. They believed that COMPS and GPPS should receive the same protection because they were so similar that it was unfair for contracted-out salary-related schemes to be treated less favourably, and they urged the Government to establish a level playing field. Why have the Government refused to provide them with their level playing field, or at least a playing ground on which they would play downhill alongside personal pensions against SERPS?

The Secretary of State, in his reply to the group's letter, pointed out that his predecessor had made it clear that the 1 per cent. additional rebate was a temporary measure pending a review, which is what the Minister said today. I am not sure whether the Secretary of State regards that as an argument against the extension of the 1 per cent. to COMPS—surely not. It cannot be that they are arguing against an extension of the 1 per cent. It is a bit like somebody standing on the river bank and telling a drowning man, or at least one who thinks he is drowning, that he will not throw in the lifebuoy that he is holding but

that the drowning man need not worry because there will be a review of the availability of lifebuoys and the required standards.

The Secretary of State went on to point out the differences between personal pensions and contracted-out money purchase schemes which included

"the nature of the contract, the contributions for PPs, the ages at which the benefits may be taken and portability on changing jobs."

He added that he would be surprised if some employers felt that they could no longer support COMPS. That would be an unnecessarily short-term view.

On Second Reading, the Under-Secretary of State expanded further on the reason for not including contracted-out money purchase schemes. First, she told us that there were economies of scale. I wonder what that argument actually means. What economies of scale justify such discrimination? Are we to believe that the man from the Pru is a small business man? I have no doubt that the Under-Secretary has a good explanation that will satisfy the occupational pensions schemes joint working group. We should like to hear it. We should like to know what the Under-Secretary has in mind.

Secondly, and reiterating the argument of the Secretary of State, there is inflexibility in the age at which benefits may be taken. This is a good point at which to ask a question which has bothered me ever since I listened to the Under-Secretary on Second Reading. Did not such schemes qualify for the initial 2 per cent? If such schemes did not qualify, I can see the logic, if not the justice, of the Government's position. If they did, why on earth were the present objections of the Government not barriers then? What has changed? What is different?

Thirdly, and most importantly, the Under-Secretary said that there was a difference in the method of payment. COMPS are generally paid monthly, but personal pension contributions are made after the end of the year. That reduces the burden on the employer and throws into question whether it is appropriate at this juncture to extend to COMPS the same arrangement as that which applies to personal pensions.

If the 1 per cent. were purely a subsidy to the personal pension providers, I could understand the argument and the reasons why a similar subsidy should not be paid to employers. However, I understand that the 1 per cent. is an incentive to the individual employee. Perhaps the Under-Secretary could clarify the matter. Is the 1 per cent. a subsidy to the body providing the pension, or is it an incentive to the individual? Considering the reference to expenses by the Secretary of State in his letter and the arguments of the Under-Secretary on Second Reading, it seems that the Government see it as a handout—as a way of offsetting the higher costs of the personal pension providers.

It is difficult to agree with the conclusion of the Under-Secretary on Second Reading that, because of the differences between the operation of corporate schemes and personal pensions, the same arrangement should not be extended to corporate schemes. Perhaps, even at this late stage, the Under-Secretary will think again.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): I shall say some words in support of the amendment moved by the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mrs. Golding). I concede that her amendment is much more transparently obvious than mine. I drafted my amendment in a moment of haste after Second Reading when I was still quite roused, to use a Scots term, by the rather inadequate explanation given by the Under-Secretary.

I cannot for the life of me understand this. I have read the report of the Second Reading debate, and I have re-read it. I simply do not understand why the Government "set their face" against contracted-out money purchase schemes. It is obvious and blatant discrimination. It does not amount to an awfully big row of political beans—or pension beans, if it comes to that—in terms of making a change because the necessary administrative changes and the amounts of money would not be great.

I do not have the same problem as the hon. Lady about the principle of an incentive. Back in the 1986 Committee, I said that we were relaxed about the matter. I think that the Government may, in retrospect, have overdone it in terms of the amount of money that was spent. However, I well understand the long-term aim, and I support it. The Government were right to examine the long-term implications for the SERPS expenditure, and they proposed the scheme. In the 1986 Committee, I was certainly prepared to go along with the scheme. However, when we have details such as those contained in the Bill, I cannot understand what the Government are trying to do and why there should be such discrimination. It has worrying long-term implications for the review. We are told that the problem is temporary and that we are all bothering about nothing. We are given to understand that if we are a wee bit more patient, everything will suddenly become clear. I am old enough and long enough in the tooth——

Miss Widdecombe: The hon. Gentleman does not look it.

Mr. Kirkwood: I am older than I look.

I have heard such assurances before. They do not inspire me with any great confidence. Indeed, if I had been tempted to be confident, the Minister's sweeping dismissal a moment ago when she said that the review would be concluded "as soon as possible"—or whatever ministerial cliche she used—would have removed the temptation. The Minister was responding to a perfectly pertinent and important question from the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar). The Government must know roughly how long the process will take. Will it take months or years? Will the matter be dealt with by the end of the parliamentary year? This is an important question because folk have to make plans. It is necessary to be careful and get the details right, otherwise people's long-term pensions could be prejudiced.

There is a great deal at stake. The amendments are important. My amendment was intended to be a probing amendment. I hope that the Minister will take the opportunity to allay some of our fears. As you can see, Mr. Lofthouse, the issues worry the whole Committee.

4.15 pm

Miss Widdecombe: I should like to respond to the issues which worry the whole Committee. I can see that the matter has at least united the Opposition—at least such hon. Members as are present. I am overwhelmed by the turnout on the Liberal Benches in support of amendment No. 1.

The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) was slightly confused in his request to clarify

[Miss Widdecombe]

the timetables. He confused the timetable for the review of the rebate structure and age-related rebates with the regulation of personal pensions. In reply to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) on Second Reading, I said that we were committed to having the rebate structure in place by 1996, that we would have to work to that timetable and that for the time being we saw no reason to depart from that. I cannot go further than to reiterate that for the moment. The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire confused that reply with the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mrs. Golding) about the regulation of personal pensions. Those are two entirely different issues.

I shall now speak to the two amendments. I am sorry if I repeat some of my remarks on Second Reading, but the arguments that I used then on why the 1 per cent. rebate is not extended to COMPS are the same as those which I shall use today. I hope to put them in a clearer form. The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire will recall that in my reply on Second Reading I did not read out a prepared answer but responded to the extreme brevity of the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme with quite a marathon.

Amendment No. 1 seeks to extend the 1 per cent. additional rebate to all members aged 30 and over of occupational schemes who qualify for the current 2 per cent. incentive. This will include both contracted-out salary-related and money purchase schemes. Amendment No. 3 appears to seek to extend the 1 per cent. addition to members aged 30 and over of all contracted-out money purchase schemes, regardless of whether they are currently entitled to the 2 per cent. incentive.

I cannot accept either of the amendments for several reasons. That will be no surprise to hon. Members. Firstly, there is absolutely no purpose in extending the rebate to salary-related occupational schemes. The Government Actuary took full account of the cost to such schemes of providing the guaranteed minimum pension when recommending the new level of the contracted-out rebate appropriate from April 1993. He advised that 4·77 per cent. was the appropriate level. The then Secretary of State my right hon. Friend the Member for Braintree (Mr. Newton), who was in the Chamber a moment ago, accepted that advice, subject only to rounding it up to 4·8 per cent.

Secondly, although I accept that there are some similarities between contracted-out money purchase schemes and personal pensions, there are also many significant differences. Those have been detailed a number of times during debates on the Bill, but I shall restate them. Contracted-out money purchase schemes are set up voluntarily by an employer to meet the needs of his work force. Personal pensions are a private arrangement between an individual and a pension provider. The employer is liable for the payment of minimum contributions into a contracted-out money purchase scheme but has no such liability with a personal pension.

Contracted-out money purchase scheme members receive payments into their pension account on a regular monthly basis. Personal pension holders receive the minimum contribution from the Department after the end of the tax year, when their employer submits his annual return. That clearly affects the speed at which the investment builds up. The occupational scheme member has an advantage in that respect. The level of charges is generally lower for contracted-out money purchase schemes than for personal pensions—hence the economies of scale—and the employer will often help to meet them.

Lastly, the additional cost of £60 million and £25 million that would arise from accepting amendments Nos. 1 and 3 respectively cannot be justified in the current climate. I cannot commend the amendments to the Committee, but I hope that hon. Members will be able to accept my reassurances that the 1 per cent. addition is a temporary arrangement and that we will undertake a full review of the contracted-out rebate structure. The review will also consider proposals for an age-related system for personal schemes, occupational pension schemes and for contracted-out money purchase schemes and will involve full consultation with all the interested parties.

Mr. Dewar: Perhaps the Minister will turn her attention to the pertinent question put by my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mrs. Golding). As I understand it, COMPS benefited from the 2 per cent. incentive which will end in 1993. If that is so, presumably all the Minister's present arguments for opting them out of the 1 per cent. would have applied when the 2 per cent. incentive was introduced. Is she saying that that was an error then; if not, why not?

Miss Widdecombe: I suspect that the hon. Gentleman is not confused but is deliberately trying to confuse the issue. The 2 per cent. was an incentive to set up personal pensions and its success has been immense. As I have said many time, there are 5 million holders. It was an incentive to individuals and to companies to consider personal pensions rather than final salary-related schemes which, as the hon. Gentleman pointed out, are not available to many modest wage earners whose employment patterns do not suit them.

The 1 per cent. additional rebate is age related and is designed to deal with a problem. We should not oblige people who have opted for personal pensions to come back into SERPS merely because there would be a financial incentive for them to do so, when they might prefer the choice and flexibility of remaining in a personal pension plan. That is an advanced measure against our review of age-related benefits. We had to do that immediately in the interim, and it is related not to the incentive but to our review.

Mr. Dewar: Am I to understand from what the hon. Lady has said that she is strongly opposed to people opting back into SERPS from private pension plans—hence the 1 per cent.—but she sees no danger of discouraging people in COMPS?

Miss Widdecombe: I am not opposed to people returning to SERPS if they want to do so, but I am opposed to creating the conditions which more or less oblige them to do so when they would prefer the choice and flexibility of something else. For the reasons that I explained—the build up, the differences and the economies of scale—I do not believe that employers would be subject to the same disincentive. On that note, I ask the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme to consider withdrawing her amendment.

Mrs. Golding: I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Question proposed, That the clause stand part of the Bill.

Mr. Dewar: We have had some interesting exchanges, and it would be fair to say that the amendments and the exchanges on Second Reading largely dealt with the implications of the Government's intentions and how the system is working rather than demonstrating root-and-branch opposition to the Bill. It is very much in that spirit that we shall continue the proceedings today.

It may come as a relief to the Under-Secretary to hear that I shall never accuse her of being timid; that is not the word that sprung immediately to my mind as I contemplated her highly personal style. However, we have managed to reduce the number of Parliamentary Private Secretaries in attendance from three to one.

Miss Widdecombe: My hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, South (Mr. Bruce) is mine.

Mr. Dewar: Well, that explains all. Loyalty beyond the call of duty has made the hon. Gentleman stay with us and, as the only Conservative Member here apart from those on the Government Front Bench, his presence should be recognised.

I should like to refer briefly to a passage of arms on Second Reading when the Under-Secretary accused Opposition Members of being "glum as owls". I must confess that owls have always seemed to me, at least in myth, wise birds and I have no great objection to being accused of being owl-like in that sense.

On Second Reading there was a dispute about whether the Opposition were cheerful during the course of the uprating statement. At one point we had the slightly comic spectacle of both the Secretary of State and the Under-Secretary standing shoulder to shoulder at the Dispatch Box trying to respond to a point of information from myself.

It is perhaps a minor matter, but it should be put on record that I had suggested that some of the briefing that had led to expectations of an unfortunate outcome from the uprating statement came from the Department. I referred to press reports of a speech that I understood had been made to the 1922 Committee. The Secretary of State jumped to the Dispatch Box and ultimately interrupted his own Under-Secretary to say that no such speech had been made and that he had never addressed the 1922 Committee. On the basis of that, some arguments were made on the validity of my arguments.

I shall not spend any more time on this issue except to say that I was in error and I therefore offer a qualified apology to the Secretary of State. On 10 November an article appeared on the front page of *The Times* under the byline of Nicholas Wood and Jill Sherman, which stated:

"Peter Lilley, the social security secretary, last night warned Conservative MPs of tight curbs on state benefits as he sought to lower expectations in advance of the Chancellor's Autumn Statement. . . . Last night's meeting with a group of senior backbenchers was the social security secretary's way of starting a damage limitation exercise. In a sign of the sensitivity of the package, he will meet 120 MPs over the three days before he unveils the outcome of months of hard bargaining with the Treasury."

That all turned out to be nonsense and there was no formal speech to the 1922 Committee, but that suggestion was not nonsense in terms of what I said. Obviously, a lot of the disinformation came from the Secretary of State for his own purposes. Certainly there was a meeting with a group of Back Benchers on which the press had been briefed. I make that point because I rather object to the way in which the Secretary of State was anxious to deny a detail and to avoid dealing with the substance of the point raised. I do not think that that reflects great credit upon him.

I could cite other examples of similar press notices, but I hope that I have made my point. However, I am sure that the Under-Secretary will remember that, on Second Reading, during that same intervention I referred to Conservative plans to tax invalidity benefit. She replied:

"We may judge the accuracy of the second observation by the hon. Member for Garscadden by the accuracy of that one."—[*Official Report*, 30 November 1992; Vol. 215, c. 110.]

—my observation about the meeting.

All I can say to the Under-Secretary, again, is that unless she wishes to rise to deny that, my clear understanding from the Secretary of State is that the Government intend to tax invalidity benefit as soon as they can overcome the practical problems that made it impossible to do so this year, clearly to the regret of the Secretary of State. On Second Reading, the Under-Secretary seemed to shelter behind a barrack-room lawyer's point about where speeches had been made in order to avoid the point that she found embarrassing.

4.30 pm

My hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mrs. Golding) did us a service in moving the amendments to clause 1. Although the Under-Secretary may sail into battle and point out that the drafting is defective and that there would be unintended consequences—it would be extraordinary if there were not because Opposition Members must often deal with complicated subjects—the amendments make a point of principle. On those, the Under-Secretary was nowhere near as persuasive or effective as she wanted to be. There was some badinage about the fact that the concern was shared by an empty Committee, but the Under-Secretary will remember that it was expressed on Second Reading by the hon. Member for Havant (Mr. Willetts), who described the Government's decision as "odd". Although that is a mild term, it suggests a spirit of scepticism.

I have something in common with the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) because I, too, took the trouble to re-read the arguments. I confess that I found them extremely unconvincing. Moreover, having listened to the Under-Secretary for the past 20 minutes, none of my doubts has been resolved, nor have I been swept away by the warm solidarity of her argument. Her arguments are set out in *Hansard* at columns 111-12 of the Second Reading debate. One of those arguments was about economies of scale. I understand that management charges liable on an occupational pension scheme—a COMP scheme—are likely to be spread more thinly and perhaps less damagingly than management charges liable on a personal pension scheme tailored for an individual and managed for him or her. However, it is not a significant factor, given the fact that those schemes benefited from the earlier 2 per cent. arrangement.

I do not regard inflexibility about age as a major factor. Indeed, I do not see its significance at all. Clearly, someone on a COMP scheme will benefit at a set age, and that cannot be varied, but it does not impact on the financial argument which the Minister was advancing. The only argument that seemed to have any force concerned how

the money came in. I understand that there is a difference because an approved private pension lump sum comes at the end of the year, whereas a COMP scheme makes payments throughout the year and that money can therefore be used as it builds up over a 12-month period.

I am therefore not totally indifferent to the arguments which the Under-Secretary advanced, but I find it odd that the Government have decided to exclude COMP schemes, a decision that has caused irritation and disappointment to many in the industry.

Another odd concept advanced by the Under-Secretary was that people should have a choice about whether they wish to opt back into SERPS but that it should not be a choice in which there is a clear balance of advantage in favour of SERPS. In a sense, choice is almost meaningless here because it will be entirely dictated by financial advantage. I doubt whether many people will say, "My adviser has told me that there is a clear advantage in returning to SERPS but, for reasons of principle and commitment, I shall carry the financial penalty of not taking that advice".

To some extent, the market is being rigged against SERPS but also against COMP schemes. That is an unfortunate game for the Minister to be playing. Although that is no justification for urging my hon. Friends to vote against the clause, it remains an unsatisfactory feature of this provision. I accept that it is only temporary, but it is important that we see as soon as possible the arrangements which the Government intend to introduce for age-related contracting-out principles in 1996.

The Minister said—I am sure that it is true—that if we are to have these arrangements in April 1996, there will be a timetable from which we must work back. As I am not sufficiently conversant with the mechanics, perhaps the Minister will say when it would have to be clear what the intentions were so that there could be legislation to introduce the new scheme. It would be helpful to work back from 1996 on the assumption that the Government will adopt these arrangements.

The Minister must recognise that there are genuine anxieties about the way in which personal pension plans are sold and the way in which they are managed. I do not assume that potentially there are 5 million tragedies in the sense that everyone will be dissatisfied at the end of the day. I do not think that my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Rooney) suggested that that would be the position. Undoubtedly, however, there will be some disappointments and some anxieties that perhaps could be avoided.

I was interested in an article that appeared yesterday in the *Independent on Sunday* under the byline of Maria Scott. It dealt with some figures that had been produced by the National Provident Institution, which is one of the well-known providers. I am told that it is responsible for 340,000 personal pension holders. Clearly the NPI has a significant holding in the market, if that is the right way of putting it. It is concerned—this is the journalist's gloss, but I am sure that it is accurate—that

"most people with personal pensions will be sorely disappointed by the income that they receive in retirement unless they increase their contributions, according to NPI, one of the country's largest pension providers."

The company has found

"that the average contribution is £78 a month and that fewer than 20 per cent. of policyholders are increasing their contributions on a regular basis."

The Minister may take the view that those policyholders are merely reaping the whirlwind—in other words, if they are improvident they cannot complain at the end of the day. It is interesting, however, that NPI is saying that something is going wrong—possibly with people's expectations and perhaps with people's awareness of how personal pension schemes operate, or possibly with the continuing advice that they receive from those who initially sell them the policies.

The figures are not entirely clear to me, but NPI suggests that a 40-year-old man

"planning to retire at 60 and contributing £100 a month to a personal pension could expect to receive a monthly pension of £104 (after allowing for 5·5 per cent. inflation)".

I presume that NPI anticipates that during the build-up of the pension plan there will be 5·5 per cent. inflation. It appears that the company assumes that the growth rate of the fund will be about 3 per cent., which seems to be a reasonably generous estimate. Many plans will fall short of that. The Committee will understand that with an expectation of £104 a month there will be a small increase in real terms at the end of the 20 years. I should say that there is a lump-sum calculation of £4,540 in addition—[HON. MEMBERS: "Ah".] I am not trying to mislead the Committee. I accept that it is important to make it clear that there is a lump sum.

The position remains, however, that one of the most significant pension providers is saying that there will be widespread disappointment. I am sure that it does not conduct its business irresponsibly, and I do not suggest otherwise. The company points to a general malaise, which is perhaps a useful counterbalance to the rather bullish statements that we sometimes hear. The hon. Member for Havant on Second Reading made an unashamedly ideological case for the virtues of private pension provision as against those of SERPS and about the need to weight the financial package in that direction.

The point is, how good will a private pension scheme be? The Minister will say that there is no answer to that and that it depends entirely on how successfully the funds are managed. But people do not realise that; for many it is a blind buy—they do not know what they are buying and they go ahead in a spirit of optimism but with little detailed knowledge of the likely outcome.

There are uncertainties in SERPS, too, as we saw in 1986 when the Government, for reasons that we challenge but can at least understand, concluded that the SERPS package had to be radically restructured, to the disadvantage of those who were to get their top-up pension from the SERPS scheme. There are also uncertainties in the private pension sector, and the Committee should not ignore them. In this respect, I agreed with my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, North. I saw the same figure in an article in *The Guardian* on 28 November. It referred to the fact that no one earning less than £9,000 should be advised to opt out of SERPS or go into a personal pension plan. That point is made by Legal and General—I suspect, by Mr. Ron Spill, a respected figure.

Almost everyone in the industry to whom I have talked has expressed grave doubts about putting people into personal pension plans if their incomes are less than £10,000 a year. The Minister may remember her remarks on Second Reading, when she said that

"The average wage of a person taking out a personal pension is £9,750."—[*Official Report*, 30 November 1992; Vol. 215, c. 111.]

There may be occasions when it is sensible to take out a plan at that level of income, but many people would be worried about whether those on that income would find plans a good buy. I confess that I was surprised by how low the hon. Lady's figure was, and I was somewhat alarmed by what she had to say. It seemed to me to highlight the need for the sort of regulation which, perhaps clumsily and ineffectually, we were trying to achieve today in our amendment.

It is worth making these points, even though they may irritate the Minister. On Second Reading, she spoke of viability, reliability and safeguards, and the need for all three. Of course I agree. They are certainly important and no one would argue about them. I am, however, a little concerned about the pace of progress on what seems to me the Minister's approach to these matters.

On Second Reading there was some talk about occupational pensions and the release of the Goode committee's report in mid-1993. I do not intend to go into that here, but I shall mention what the Minister said so as to argue by analogy:

"The Government are fully seized of that issue"

—that is, the importance of not tying up occupational regulations too tightly.

"When the Goode Committee reports we shall take account of what it says and seek to achieve a balance between keeping the confidence of the pensions industries and the confidence in pensions, however provided, of people who take them out, and ensuring that employers do not find that they are so over-regulated that it proves a disincentive to them to set up schemes."—[*Official Report*, 30 November 1992; Vol. 215, c. 114.]

Of course there must be a balance between all these considerations, but I am alarmed by the Minister's phraseology, given what has happened recently to occupational pensions—but that is a subject for another debate on another occasion. When we come to debate the balance that must be struck between the interests of those who sell pensions and the interests of those who buy them —with all their disadvantages of not knowing about the uncertainties involved—I hope that the Minister will then agree that there is a strong argument in favour of regulation and of building in as many effective safeguards as possible.

4.45 pm

This whole problem must be dealt with urgently. I recognise that the Investment Management Regulatory Organisation, the Life Assurance and Unit Trust Regulatory Organisation and the other regulatory bodies have a role to play—doubtless their recommendations and advice will be valuable—but I also hope that when the Government finally make up their mind following representations from the industry there will be a strong prejudice in favour of protecting those who pay their contributions and who will have to rely on the pensions that they are buying, which may turn out to be rather more modest than they had expected or hoped.

When the Under-Secretary finally emerges from the conference room and the consultation process, I hope that we will be satisfied. Her response—I thought it florid and had a touch of pomposity—when I asked about the timetable did not greatly encourage me. We shall be watching developments carefully, but for the moment I shall not recommend opposing the clause.

Mr. Corbyn: I am one of only three Members present who are veterans of the 1986 Social Security Bill Committee—and a pretty miserable affair it was too, as I think that the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) will confirm. In that Committee the Government turned their back on a great deal of social security legislation going back 40 years; it marked the beginning of the end of many aspects of the welfare state. The hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Bates) need not look too puzzled. This Prime Minister ended single payments and the death grant and introduced the social fund and a great many other horrific developments. *[Interruption.]* Yes, this does not have much to do with the Bill—except that there is a link in the form of pension provision. The 1986 Act was designed to encourage the promotion of personal private pension schemes at the expense of the state earnings-related pension scheme. The linking factor is the Government's general approach, which is to reduce the real value of the state old-age pension.

I am unhappy about clause 1 for several reasons. They have to do with the value and security of pensions, and our fears about them. My hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) mentioned the portrayal of the Secretary of State during the run-up to the annual uprating statement. I thought that the right hon. Gentleman played a blinder. He is not here for me to congratulate him today—he was in such a bad mood last week that I am glad about that—but I should be grateful if the Under-Secretary passed on my congratulations to him. He led everyone up the garden path and into believing that there would be a massive cut in benefits, knowing full well that there would not be. At the same time, he got away with yet another year of defrauding old-age pensioners, by refusing to restore the link with earnings which was broken in 1980.

Because the Secretary of State was in such a bad mood last week, he did not bother to listen to me when I said that the Labour Government's method of dealing with state old-age pensions was to link them either to the retail prices index increase or to the increase in average earnings, whichever was the higher. So, when the Minister sees the Secretary of State later to report to him on her performance today, I should be pleased if she would pass on my remarks. She should also ask him to come to the House in a better mood next time. We do not want him to bring his bad temper to the Select Committee on Social Security, where we will question him on Wednesday morning.

I note that you are fidgeting, Mr. Lofthouse, so I shall return to the Bill. I have some questions about portable pension schemes and private personal schemes because there is a serious question mark over their security. The Minister made a fair point when she said that at this stage it is impossible to judge how many schemes are unlikely to be able to pay out in full what they have guaranteed or contracted to pay to the contributor at retirement age. However, she should be able to tell us the extent of monitoring and sampling by her Department on the performance of the schemes.

A serious problem seems to be developing. In theory, many individual schemes have been developed, although there are patterns, and the system to monitor their performance or income from investments is totally inadequate. What sort of problems will arise in future? I ask that question because I sat through many months of investigations of company pension schemes on the Select Committee which is still examining the problems of such

[Mr. Corbyn]

schemes. Those investigations revealed the inability of the public regulatory bodies and contributors to know what was happening. There was also evidence of insufficient training to enable people to understand the technicalities. That can be remedied to some extent in occupational or company schemes through a better system of election or the appointment of experts, but that does not necessarily apply to personal schemes and it is difficult to see how it could. Perhaps the Minister will deal with that in her winding-up speech.

We must examine the hidden costs. The Conservative party is obsessed with developing and increasing aspects of the private welfare state for those who contribute. There is a philosophical difference between us on that. We believe in community provision with guarantees and Conservatives believe in a market economy—which has many losers, because in a competition some people win but the majority lose. The Conservatives are into removing safety nets in a big way. The Government have not told us the hidden costs to the rest of the community of these private pension schemes. Those costs are in lost national insurance contributions and lost income tax.

Today's "Enterprise Money Mail" in the *Daily Mail* states that tax relief on pension schemes is currently running at £9 billion a year. I would not normally quote the *Daily Mail* either in the House or elsewhere, but I do so on this occasion partly because the newspaper was given to me by my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Rooney) and also because that was one of the few newspapers that was prepared to publish earlier than others what was going on in the Maxwell pension fund. That article shows that tax relief on pension schemes costs the rest of the community a great deal of money. That ranges wider than the tax relief on the schemes contained in the Bill, but it is a high cost.

I should like to ask about the running of the schemes and investment. A person who enters a pension scheme presumably signs a contract. One hopes that he will deal with a reputable person and the scheme will work out properly. There are insufficient guarantees about that and I understand that there is no requirement for the person to be told the contents of the investment portfolio and that information is difficult to obtain. In a company or occupational scheme, which would have an investment committee, it should be possible to find out where the money has gone; although in the case of the Maxwell and Mirror Group pension funds it was almost impossible to find out where the money had gone—much of it has probably gone for good. A person who has ethical concerns about investment in the past or present in South Africa or in the arms industry will find it difficult to determine where his money has gone if the money has been invested in some other financial institution or trust.

The state earnings-related pension scheme was introduced by a Labour Government as a way to improve the lot of people in retirement. It was a good step and a progressive idea. However, it was badly shortchanged by the Government in 1986 when they decided to accept actuarial advice. Instead of reflecting on how they could improve the scheme, they diminished it as part of their grand plan to increase the influence of the private pensions industry. I deeply regret that. I should like to see a pension regime that gave a much higher basic state old-age pension, real democracy in the running of occupational schemes and information for those who put their money into private personal schemes, which I do not think are necessarily secure in the long run.

Mr. Kirkwood: I should like to ask some detailed questions. The clause introduces new provisions to the 1986 Act, and some of them provide a regulation-making power to prescribe how an earner's age is to be verified. How can that be done other than by asking for a birth certificate? Why do we need a regulation-making power to stipulate that? Will the regulation-making procedure be affirmative or negative?

What are the financial effects of the clause? The rubric to the Bill says that clause 1 will cost the national insurance fund about £165 million annually from 1994-95. Past estimates have been slightly lower than the actual cost. Will the Minister tell us generally how that figure is arrived at? More puzzling is the fact that clause 5 (3) states:

"Section 1 (3) of this Act shall be deemed always to have had effect."

That smells of retrospection and perhaps the Minister will tell us about it.

The administrative cost for the provision of clause 1 is £6 million, which seems to be a great deal. I do not know the percentage currently used to administer some of these benefits, but it must be about 3 per cent. My arithmetic is not up to it and I do not have a calculator, but £6 million sounds rather high for deploying an annual amount of £165 million. I may have that wrong but I ask the question innocently, as is my wont. If the answer cannot be given now, I should be quite happy——

Mr. Dewar *rose*——

Mr. Kirkwood: It appears that I should not be happy to receive a letter about the matter; the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) is about to tell me why I need answers to those questions now.

Mr. Dewar: I was speculating, and I thought that I might put my speculation to the hon. Gentleman. Is it not the case that the £6 million is a cumulative total, referring to previous years when the payments should have been made but were not, and that is why it is retrospective in effect? What we are seeing here is the Minister in debt and looking for authority to pay her debts.

Mr. Kirkwood: The hon. Gentleman is much more suspicious about such matters than I am. I would not dream of presuming any such thing until I was told differently by the Minister, so I await with eager anticipation the answer to the question, which I hope is arriving. The piece of paper that is arriving for the Minister looks more like a bus pass.

A time scale for the review would be helpful, so I make this third plea for one. I understand that, when we debated earlier amendments, I may have given the impression that I had confused the two reviews that are under way. The temporary nature of this clause should be known to the Government. Therefore, it should be vouchsafed to the Committee so that we can make proper and successful progress in the Committee stage.

5 pm

Mr. Rooney: I must correct an earlier remark. I meant to refer to the Equitable Life Assurance Society.

Does the Minister recognise that many personal pension schemes are unit linked and where persons are in employment with a fixed retirement date, they are in the hands of fate, because they are badly affected by how the unit market stands on that day? Thank goodness, black Monday does not arrive every week, but anybody who was unlucky enough to retire on that day with such a scheme would have found himself under a considerable disadvantage compared with what would have been the position if he had retired on the previous Friday.

Given the myriad of statistics that are produced on the performance of pensions, is it not incumbent on the Department to realise that it would make sense to have a standardised form of performance, to be produced by the Department on an annual basis? That would be better than people being subjected to empty promises, many from companies that have been in existence for less than five years.

I have another question in a similar vein. How much will what we are talking about today—particularly with this magic date of 1996—be held back until decisions on the equalisation of retirement ages are arrived at? What advice is being given, particularly to women under the age of 30 today, on which options to go for and what sort of purchase schemes they should be looking at with a view to the retirement age in their company, which could be anything from 55 to 70?

Miss Widdecombe: Many points have been raised and I shall endeavour to address all of them, including those raised by the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood)—my brain had caught up with me by the time that he sat down.

The debate was opened by the hon. Member for Glasgow Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) who said that neither he nor his colleagues had any objection to being compared to owls because owls were wise creatures. The most significant characteristic of an owl, and one that is well attested, is that it does not see terribly well in daylight. Owls are renowned for spending their time whizzing around in the dark hooting mournfully. That sums up the activities of the Opposition in respect of this and other Government Bills. I note their willingness to be compared to owls and I shall make sure that this comparison is widely known.

The hon. Gentleman then attacked my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. He conceded that my right hon. Friend had not addressed the 1922 Committee, but in support of his contention that my right hon. Friend had addressed a group of Tory Back Benchers, he quoted from *The Times*. The hon. Gentleman spoke about age earlier, and we know that he has been around this place for a long time. I cannot believe that he has not yet learnt that not everything that appears in the newspapers is 100 per cent. accurate. All those scare stories that came out before the autumn statement originated either from the Opposition or from the press, for their own ends, not from my right hon. Friend.

The hon. Gentleman also spoke about our intention to tax invalidity benefit, although I have no idea what the subject has to do with the Bill. On Second Reading, my right hon. Friend and I made it clear, as we and others have done on innumerable occasions, that the taxation of invalidity benefit is essentially a matter for the Chancellor of the Exchequer, as are all taxation matters. To quote direct from my right hon. Friend on another occasion, and we all speak with one voice,

"The hon. Gentleman knows that in the literature that recipients of this benefit receive there is a statement that it has been our long-standing intention to bring that benefit into tax, but only when the difficulties of doing so can be overcome." —[*Official Report*, 12 November 1992; Vol. 213, c. 1020.]

There is nothing new about that. All that was new was that the Opposition and the press decided that it would be fun to start a rumour that we were to tax the benefit this year.

Mr. Dewar *rose*——

Miss Widdecombe: The hon. Gentleman is dying to intervene, but I hope that his intervention will show some of the wisdom of the bird with which he does not object to being compared.

Mr. Dewar: I am not dying—I hope that that news is not too disappointing for the hon. Lady. She and I should perhaps call a truce on animal parallels because we are wandering into dangerous territory.

Miss Widdecombe: What kind of animal am I?

Mr. Dewar: That is exactly what the hon. Lady should not tempt me to say.

Does the hon. Lady recognise that an interesting point about the exchange on invalidity benefit in the Second Reading debate was that she refused to deal with the point, and avoided it, using the technicality of the 1922 Committee as a reason for doing so? I know that the hon. Lady will tell me that she does not discuss leaked documents, but she must be aware of the fact that there is substantial evidence about detailed preparation for the taxation of invalidity benefit. Within what time scale is this manifesto promise of the Conservative party likely to be implemented?

The Second Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. Before the Minister replies, let me point out that I cannot see what that issue has to do with the Committee stage of the Bill. I suggest that it is not further pursued by hon. Members.

Miss Widdecombe: In deference to your ruling, Dame Janet, I shall not refer to any leaked documents, or indeed to any other form of stolen property. I shall, as you rightly urge us, move on to the detailed points raised in the debate.

The hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) and, as the hon. Member for Garscadden rightly reminded us, Conservative Members have expressed concern, both on Second Reading and today, that personal pensions should be properly regulated. I made it clear on Second Reading that I recognised that that concern was shared and that I did not underestimate the importance of getting the regulations right. Nor do I underestimate the importance of addressing all the points that were raised by Labour Members about the validity of personal pension schemes, about the amount of information that is given at the time of sale of such schemes, and its accuracy. However, like occupational schemes, personal pension schemes depend on investment.

In response to the point made by the hon. Member for Islington, North, I can say that the Occupational Pensions Board has not had to revoke a certificate from a personal

[Miss Widdecombe]

pension scheme because the scheme could not give it an assurance that it could cover the guaranteed minimum that it stated that it would produce and that it was obliged to produce; there is that monitoring.

I also fully understand the point that if one starts calculations on various bases, one can produce a scenario that might show that a pension will not be worth what it was originally thought that it would be worth. All pensions, however, are dependent on investment. It is impossible to judge what will be the case in 20 years' time on the basis of a short-term trend or on information immediately available. We are certainly not going to go into the business of trying to guarantee or underwrite given levels of investment, but that is not unique to personal pensions. I do not want our 5 million personal pension holders to assume from today's debate that all is not well.

Mr. Corbyn: As the Minister presumably knows, examination of occupational pension schemes by the Occupational Pensions Board normally relates to 20 per cent. of the capital. The board verifies whether that is in order, which is not the same as verifying the whole scheme. To what extent does verification go into personal schemes?

Does the Minister agree that one way of enhancing the security of both company and personal pension schemes would be to introduce a guaranteed level of gilt-edged investments within them?

Miss Widdecombe: Certain minima operate for both occupational and personal pension schemes. In neither case is there a maximum or a guarantee at the end: there cannot be, simply because of the way in which investment works. I take the hon. Gentleman's point that it might be possible to produce a better sort of investment by insisting that it contained a gilt element of X per cent., and I hope that investments would be prudentially handled in that way. Nevertheless, I do not yet see a case for insisting that any investment organisation follow a particular path that could be laid down and curtailed.

Having said that, I shall consider what the hon. Gentleman has said. As I stated earlier, we are reviewing the whole position. I shall find out whether there is any practical way of implementing the hon. Gentleman's suggestion and let him know the outcome of my deliberations. I hope that that is acceptable to him.

The hon. Member for Garscadden raised the question of income levels. He said that it probably did not pay people to take out personal pensions if they were earning less than £9,000 a year; he then upped the figure to £10,000, on the basis of discussions in which he had engaged. The essence of his argument, and that of the hon. Member for Islington, North, was that there was an income level below which it did not pay people to opt into personal pensions, and it was implied that people on incomes below that level were doing so because they had been badly advised.

The technical annex to the 1986 White Paper made it clear that people with very low earnings might not be better off with personal pensions. However, the level of income is crucially dependent on the level of the return on their investments. As all pensions are a long-term investment, decisions should not be made on the basis of an isolated year or other short period. The warning is there; on the other hand, if there seems to be an investment pattern that will produce returns——

Mr. Dewar: I am sorry to interrupt, but I am genuinely interested in this point. I entirely accept that there are many individual exceptions, and that people must examine their personal circumstances and take advice. Let me remind the Minister, however, of the quotation from Legal and General which I gave earlier. I think that it is a fairly broad rule of thumb that those in the £9,000 or £10,000 income category should consider the balance of advantage carefully before opting into a private pension scheme. In the light of that, is the Minister not surprised by the figure of £9,750, which is given as the average earnings of people with private pension plans?

5.15 pm

Miss Widdecombe: As the hon. Gentleman has himself pointed out, individual circumstances will vary from the norm. I am not wholly surprised, given that it was always clear that, in introducing personal pensions, we were endeavouring to benefit people on fairly modest wages. The technical annex makes clear the need to be more careful at that point, but being more careful is not the same as assuming that in no circumstances should a personal pension be taken on.

I am sure that it will not please the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire very much to learn that the regulations are negative procedures.

As the hon. Member for Garscadden said—I almost used the word "rumbled"—the £6 million is spread over six years, from 1988-89 to 1993-94, providing an average of £1 million a year. It is just above 0·5 per cent., not just above 3 per cent.

It is right that the administrative expenses associated with payments from the fund should be met from the fund; the clause simply writes in a perfectly normal provision for the meeting of such expenses. The annual cost of £165 million was based on the payment of an additional 1 per cent. to 2 million personal pension holders.

The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire also mentioned the need for a regulation-making power to verify dates of birth. In the vast majority of cases, inquiries about dates of birth should produce no difficulties; the information will already be held by the Department. It is possible that, in a few cases, the Department will not hold those details and the individual will be unable to provide a birth certificate or other verification. In those few cases, the adjudication officer will have to make a determination on the basis of the best evidence available.

Mr. Corbyn: I asked the Minister earlier about the disclosure of information to the holders of personal schemes: I asked her how they could find out what was happening to their investments and where the money was invested. The money is often put into other trusts, which makes it very difficult for the individual to follow the normal rules governing disclosure, which are implicit in all the regulations concerning occupational and company pension schemes.

Miss Widdecombe: The Government—and, I am sure, the regulators—certainly want people to have access to regular information about what is happening to their schemes, as and when they require it. That already applies to those who invest in occupational pensions. There

should be no difficulty about providing information about the state of their particular pot of gold—*[Interruption.]* Let me tell hon. Members who have poured scorn on personal pensions—at one point, they almost seemed to pour scorn on occupational pensions as well—that, following the measures that we have introduced, nearly 70 per cent. of people retire with occupational pensions. Moreover, the average value of their pensions is now nearly as great as that of the state pension. We are vastly increasing pensioner incomes. A certain number of people have always been excluded because occupational pensions were not suitable for them. The Bill is designed to ensure that they have exactly the same advantages as people with occupational pensions.

I am amazed at the scorn that is continually poured on the provision of greater choice, greater flexibility and greater incomes in retirement for ever more people.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 1 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 2

PAYMENTS INTO NATIONAL INSURANCE FUND OUT OF MONEY PROVIDED BY PARLIAMENT

Mrs. Golding: I beg to move amendment No. 4, in page 2, line 14, leave out from 'determine' to end of line 16.

The Second Deputy Chairman: With this we may take amendment No. 5, in page 2, line 17 leave out subsection (3).

Mrs. Golding: Clause 2 provides for Treasury grants to the national insurance fund. As the Government Actuary puts it,

"The amount of such payments will have regard to the expenditure of the Fund in future and will be limited to a specified maximum percentage of estimated benefit expenditure in the relevant financial year. For 1993-94 this maximum is set at 20 per cent. For 1994-95 and later financial years, the prescribed percentage may be amended by the Secretary of State with the consent of the Treasury but will not exceed 17 per cent."

The amendment attempts to probe the thinking, assumptions and calculations behind the figures. One difficulty we face is that of having no firm actuarial statement for 1994-95 and, because of that, we are limited to approaching the matter through the 1993-94 figures. For 1993-94, the maximum Treasury grant to the national insurance fund is set at 20 per cent. of the estimated benefit expenditure. Will that be sufficient to achieve the Government's objective of ensuring that the estimated balance in the fund at the end of the year equals one-sixth of benefit expenditure?

The Government Actuary has reported that, on certain assumptions, the figure needed will be 19·6 per cent. The assumptions are extremely important in assessing the whole operation, but what are they? I quote from paragraph 10 of the Government Actuary's report, Cm. 2097, which states:

"The income from contributions and the expenditure on benefits in the remainder of 1992/93 and 1993/94 will depend inter alia on the level of unemployment and the rate of increase of earnings. In accordance with the normal practice, working assumptions have been given to me by the Government in regard to these factors. The assumptions I have been instructed to use"—

not merely given but "instructed"—

"for the purpose of the above estimates were set out in the following terms in the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Autumn statement:

[1] the number of the unemployed [Great Britain] averages 2·74 million in 1992/93 and 2·8 million in 1993/94;

[2] the increase in average earnings on a year earlier is 5¼ per cent. in 1992/93 and 5 per cent. in 1993/94."

Those figures form the basis of the Government Actuary's assumptions. They are interesting and very revealing—it is no wonder that the junior Minister ducked, dived, dodged and weaved and resorted to abuse when my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), who is very sensitive, shy, retiring and easily hurt, asked her whether she was confident that the forecast of 2·8 million in 1993-94 would be held. Instead of coming clean and admitting that she was stuck with the figures because they were part of the autumn statement, she said:

"Our job is not to second-guess the Government Actuary but to respond to him."—[*Official Report*, 30 November 1992; Vol. 215, c. 107.]

Fancy blaming the Government Actuary for the Chancellor of the Exchequer's actions! What a nerve! No wonder she did not want to answer my hon. Friend the Member for Garscadden.

Mr. Corbyn: My hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mrs. Golding) makes an extremely valuable point. The Bill hides an attempt to control the independence of the Government Actuary when he makes rational assessments of the future. The Government have never forgiven him for the way in which he exposed their spending projections and proved the unviability of some of their proposals.

Mrs. Golding: That is a valid point. The Actuary is not merely given information but instructed to make his assessments on the basis of Government figures.

However, it is possible that the estimates may prove to be correct—by the laws of chance the Chancellor of the Exchequer must get something right sooner or later. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) will concede that.

Very few people have confidence in the Government's estimate of unemployment, which has been forced on the Actuary. If unemployment is higher than estimated, the cost of benefits will go up accordingly. If the estimates of the increase in earnings do not rise as much as predicted, the contribution income will be so much lower. Do the Government believe that, despite the public sector wage freeze, there will be a 5 per cent. increase in earnings in 1994, which is the figure that the Government have forced on the Actuary? Will the Minister remind us how the figure has been calculated?

If unemployment is above 2·8 million and the increase in earnings is below 5 per cent., the Treasury grant required would be greater than 19·6 per cent. The Actuary himself refers to the uncertainty about the future level of unemployment and increases in earnings. If the Treasury grant were greater than 20 per cent., what action would the Government take? The figure is questionable but it is at least based on published figures.

What of the reduced figure of 17 per cent. for 1994-95 and subsequent years? How was that figure reached? What are the estimates for unemployment and earnings? We need to know such figures before we proceed. Surely the figures were not produced out of a hat in the Treasury. If

[Mrs. Golding]

they were, the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People should admit it. If they were not, he should tell us how they were arrived at.

The Minister for Social Security and Disabled People (Mr. Nicholas Scott): We are discussing two amendments and if they were accepted, I think that hon. Members would accept that they would mean that from 1994-95 no maximum would apply to the grant which my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer could determine to draw from the money provided by Parliament and into the national insurance fund. I believe that the issue would be better discussed when we debate the next group of amendments dealing with the rules that apply to the Government Actuary or his deputy and the assumption that he is allowed to make.

I have done some research and, as far as I can ascertain, the establishment of the rule about the assumptions which the Government Actuary and his department—let us put them together in this case—go back to 1945 and have been pursued by successive Governments since then. That means that there is a sensible rule that standard assumptions across Government are practical and understandable by the public and the specialists involved.

In this case, the Government Actuary uses the same assumptions as the Treasury about future policy. I hasten to say that the assumptions are not forecasts—they are, in essence, working assumptions which are essential. It would be a receipt for chaos if different arms of Government were to make different working assumptions, and the most sensible——

Mr. Dewar *rose——*

Mr. Scott: If I may finish the sentence I shall of course give way—perhaps I shall even anticipate the hon. Gentleman.

All types of assumptions are made, not all of which turn out to be correct and many vary in one direction or another, but it would make sense to have a common set of assumptions for the purposes that we are discussing.

Mr. Dewar: I accept that, but perhaps the Minister will say a word or two on behalf of the Chancellor—I know that the Government speak with one voice so I can invite the Minister to deal with this issue. A 5 per cent. increase in earnings between 1992-93 and 1993-94 is a rather puzzling figure in view of the Government's public sector pay policy. Surely that should have been taken into account and an adjustment made.

Mr. Scott: I do not accept that. The assumptions are made a number of years ahead but they are reviewed annually and new assumptions made. It is most important that there is a common set of figures on which all those involved can work. We are sometimes wrong and sometimes right and there will of course be variations. I repeat the point, which is broadly accepted by Opposition Front-Bench Members, that the value of having a set of common assumptions outweighs any shortcomings of the system.

5.30 pm

Mr. Malcolm Wicks (Croydon, North-West): Was the 5 per cent. assumption made before or after the public sector pay policy was devised? May I tease out a little more the Minister's idea of the difference between an assumption and an estimate? Have I understood correctly that one is false and one is true?

Mr. Scott: I am not going to be drawn into becoming a Treasury Minister at the Dispatch Box. I am talking not about estimates or assumptions generally, but about assumptions that are read in across the board of public expenditure assumptions for the years ahead as against firm forecasts, which are wholly different. We all know how many different forecasts are made from different areas, not only in Government, but outside.

Mr. Corbyn *rose——*

Mr. Scott: I will return to the main thrust of what I was saying rather than get bogged down on this point as I am sure that the Committee wants to come to a decision on the amendment and on the clause. The main thrust of the amendment was not assumptions, which we shall discuss when dealing with another amendment, but the Opposition's concern, which I well understand and which was expressed on Second Reading, that if the outturn is different from the planning assumptions underlying the decision to set the maximum for the grant at 17 per cent. for successive years, it will not be possible to keep the fund in balance. I welcome the concern of Opposition Front-Bench Members and I understand their wish to press that concern by means of the amendment. I hope that I can ensure that I set their minds at rest.

On Second Reading, the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) drew attention to the high level of grant assumed for 1993-94 by the Government Actuary which, at 19·6 per cent., is very close to the maximum of 20 per cent. for that year, as we all recognise. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State pointed out in that debate that the level is high in 1993-94 because of the need to make up ground lost by the fund in 1992-93.

The Committee will be aware that the Government Actuary recommends a prudential minimum balance for the national insurance fund of around two months' of benefit expenditure. A Treasury grant of up to 20 per cent. aims to ensure that the prudential minimum is maintained throughout 1993-94, but in the event that the outturn is different from the assumptions, the figure of £6·5 billion, for which we have planned as the end year balance for that year, provides in my view and in the view of most people an entirely adequate safety margin which will prevent the fund from exhausting its resources. That is the purpose of setting the figure as we have. I believe that it protects the fund and provides an ample cushion against any exigencies.

Looking beyond 1993-94, it is obviously more difficult to see where we will be. The potential shortfall in the fund should be considerably less than the amount that we need to make up next year—well below 17 per cent. of annual benefit expenditure. The purpose of the grant in future years is to provide some flexibility in the management of the fund and not to guarantee its solvency under all conceivable circumstances.

It must be recognised that Parliament does not provide a bottomless pit of money on which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State can draw. We believe in the principle that an overall limit should be set on the Treasury grant, just as it was set in the days of the old Treasury supplement, which is sensible and prudent.

I hope that I have been able to assure Opposition Members that the ceiling that we propose for the amount of grant for the immediately following year and for successive years is sensible and prudent. It can, of course, be adjusted if needed. I do not believe that we shall have to return to it.

Mrs. Golding: I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Mr. Dewar: I beg to move amendment No. 6, in page 2, line 22, leave out

'or the Deputy Government Actuary'.

The Second Deputy Chairman: With this, it will be convenient to take the following amendments: No. 7, in page 2, line 22, after 'Actuary' insert

'on the basis of such assumptions as seem appropriate to him'.

No. 8, in page 2, line 23, leave out from first 'be' to second 'the'.

Mr. Dewar: We have already had a preliminary canter round part of this course in the past few minutes. The amendment is inevitably connected with the previous group. The amendment goes back to the vexed question about the duties of the Government Actuary and the assumptions on which he works. The key amendment is amendment No. 7. Clause 2 suggests that "'estimated benefit expenditure'" means

"the amount estimated by the Government Actuary".

We seek to add the words:

"on the basis of such assumptions as seem appropriate to him."

We seek to charge the Government Actuary with taking on board the proper basis on which to make forecasts rather than taking instructions from the Treasury. I understand that the Minister is likely to say that Government Departments must work on the same basis and must speak with one voice, and that that applies to the Government Actuary as certainly as it applies to the Under-Secretary of State.

The Minister's argument may be superficially plausible. However, there is a public interest, which I pray in aid, in having forecasts that are plausible and which can be taken at face value as genuine attempts to predict what will happen. I realise that the Government are bound to insist that the projection is 2·8 million for the seasonally adjusted unemployment figure in the coming year because that was the figure in the autumn statement. However, it is not unfair to say that if I and the Minister were sitting over a cup of coffee in the Smoking Room—an unlikely scene—*[Laughter.]* I did not say which aspect of the scene was unlikely. I leave it at that. In those circumstances, the Minister and I would agree that there is no reasonable prospect of the seasonally adjusted unemployment figure for next year being down at 2·8 million. Most forecasters are looking at a seasonally adjusted figure of about 3·2 million and some have suggested more alarming scenarios. I am not in the business of spreading dissension and dismay in Government ranks. I am prepared to assume that the figure may be around 3·2 million.

If the figure is 3·2 million, the whole arithmetic of the national insurance fund will be affected. To that argument can be added the other point made in the past few minutes—the assumption that earnings between 1992-93 and 1993-94 will rise by 5 per cent. If that happens, it will be a considerable defeat for the Chancellor of the Exchequer and for the Government as a whole as they are clearly looking for a very low round of wage settlements and are taking energetic steps to ensure that that occurs, at least in the public sector over which, as employer and paymaster, they have some control.

I protest mildly to the Minister that there is a certain unreality about his defence. Although he shows admirable loyalty to the Chancellor, he does no great service to the compilations on which we have to consider policy and to the projections of what is likely to happen in the national insurance fund.

I accept that the Minister is anxious to be helpful. He does not believe in the form of timidity practised by his colleague the Under-Secretary of State in her exchanges. The hon. Lady sometimes does herself an injustice because there is some evidence that she has a romantic side of her temperament——

Miss Widdecombe: What evidence?

Mr. Dewar: There is some evidence. I cannot go into that. I am spluttering—*[Laughter.]* I am spluttering with the excitement of it all. I have been following with great interest the hon. Lady's dealings with the present crisis in the Church of England. In her style and stance, she has taken a rather romantic approach of High Church principle. In some of the reference books that we occasionally look at to while away our time, I notice that she lists as her principal interest research into the escape of Charles II after the battle of Worcester. That certainly suggests a romantic turn of mind. Sometimes the hon. Lady does herself little good by adopting the somewhat confrontational style that she affects—and I use the word affects——

The Second Deputy Chairman: Order. The hon. Gentleman will not do himself much good if he does not come to the point.

Mr. Dewar: The material that I was dealing with was probably considerably more interesting than the arithmetic of the national insurance fund.

The Second Deputy Chairman: That is not the Chair's view.

Mr. Dewar: I understand your stern duty, Dame Janet, to drive us back to the national insurance fund.

I hope that the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People will deal with my point because there was a certain reluctance to do that on Second Reading. The Under-Secretary of State complained—and I can use that term fairly—that I raised the point no fewer than three times. Indeed I did and I did that because I strongly suspected that I was not going to get a satisfactory answer. That turned out to be the case. I would like a better response today.

When I first raised the point, I was told, in short order, that I would

"get an answer, but it will be in my good time and not at his request."

That was a little peremptory. The hon. Lady occasionally sounds like an old-fashioned school teacher of the kind who used to imagine that if the children enjoyed their lessons, one lost half the disciplinary profit. I do not like to be scolded in that way. However, I tried again on Second Reading, as those who follow the minutiae of our exchanges will recall. In a most inadequate reply, the hon. Lady said:

[Mr. Dewar]

"I have already taken care of that point. One of the reasons that those on the Opposition Front Bench get so muddled sometimes is that they do not listen to what is said."—[*Official Report*, 30 November 1992; Vol. 215, cc. 106 and 108.]

I have reread what was said because I am always willing to be corrected if that is justified. However, I can find absolutely no evidence that the hon. Lady had produced an explanation.

It is significant that the Under-Secretary of State was not prepared to express a personal or ministerial opinion that the 2·8 million or 5 per cent. earnings figure was likely to hold during the next year. She was prepared to tell us where the figure came from and to point at the guilty party. However, she was not prepared to say that she believed a word of it and I do not blame her. She is not foolish. She recognised that it is extremely unlikely that those figures will survive to the end of the year.

I hope that the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People will accept and concede that. Once we have that concession, I hope we can consider the interesting debate that would follow about what we should do about it and how we can place the earnings figure and unemployment projection on a more realistic basis.

I am sure that you, Dame Janet, appreciate that this is an important point. Clearly if unemployment rises, contribution incomes inevitably fall and the pay-out demands on the national insurance fund increase. That is like the displacement theory when, in the fourth form, one puts things into a bath and watches the water overflow. The impact can be quite serious. I hope that the Minister will be prepared to consider those points.

The other two amendments do not require great examination. They were tabled simply to allow a slightly broader platform to allow us to make one or two points. However, perhaps the Minister will deal with one or two little matters. The Minister will recall that there is an instruction in respect of the Government Actuary's report to the House. Does "instruction" have a specialist and technical meaning? Or does it mean that the poor man was told, "However squiffy this may make your calculations, this is your starting point and you had better not complain."?

I want also to refer to the inclusion in subsection (4) of the reference to Deputy Government Actuary. I have no objection to the Deputy Government Actuary having his moment of glory and appearing in statute. I know who the Government Actuary is, but I do not know who his deputy is. If the Minister tells me, his name will appear in *Hansard* and that might be some consolation.

5.45 pm

Although I do not want to detain the Committee or the Minister, I have a serious point. Why is the reference to the Deputy Government Actuary necessary? I would have presumed that all the work was carried out by the Government Actuary. However, there is of course a power to delegate to others, as there is in every Department. If the Government Actuary says to the Deputy Government Actuary, "Would you like to go and do these calculations because I really cannot bring myself to do that, given the false nature of the starting point", he is entitled to do that. If the poor man has a cold and the work must be carried out in his absence surely the Deputy Governor Actuary becomes the Government Actuary. The specific reference to Deputy Government Actuary seemed a little odd.

That was the kind of point that, in my younger days in Standing Committee, might have run for a very long time. However, perhaps I should leave it at that. In respect of the other amendment that I have decided to duck, the reference to the aggregate of the amounts seemed otiose and unnecessary. No doubt that refers to the fact that the fund is an aggregation from a variety of different sources. While I doubt whether the words are necessary, I do not believe that even I could elevate that into a matter of principle.

Mr. Wicks: I want to contribute to the debate about the assumptions and to the subsidiary debate about the association between the Government and the role of the Government Actuary because that raises important points.

Like my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), I question the unemployment assumptions. I understand the Minister's point that we need to make assumptions and that they must presumably be common assumptions across Government Departments if social planning is to be effective. However, assumptions should bear a close association to reality. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Garscadden, I have examined the figures in detail and I want to question the assumption that in 1993-94 unemployment will be 2·8 million in Great Britain and compare that with independent forecasts for the United Kingdom. In order to make the comparison, I assume that the Government's assumption is 2·9 million for the United Kingdom as I am advised that unemployment in Northern Ireland is 100,000.

While the Government's assumption is 2·9 million unemployed for 1993-94, Phillips and Drew estimates the figure at 3·3 million; County NatWest estimates it at 3·2 million; the National Institute of Economic and Social Research estimates a lower figure of just over 3 million; the London Business School estimates a figure of 3·2 million; Liverpool university—the Government's favourite university at one stage—estimates the figure to be 3·2 million; and the ITEM Club—with which I am not too familiar—estimates the figure to be 3·3 million.

Although the estimates vary, as one would expect, between the Government and the independent forecasters, the differences, of 200,000 to 300,000, are often very substantial. The significance of those differences is spelt out in great detail by the much-quoted Government Actuary in his report when, I suspect, questioning the Government's assumption, he stated:

"if the average number unemployed were to be 100,000 higher . . . the contribution income in 1993-94 would be £150 million lower and expenditure would rise by £100 million."

Obviously contributions will decline if people become unemployed and need national insurance benefits. For every 100,000 unemployed, we are talking about a public expenditure cost—or a cost, anyway—of £250 million.

The debate may seem rather technical or even pernickety—the Minister is certainly finding it amusing—but it is important in terms of public expenditure. For every 100,000 unemployed by which the Government make a wrong assumption, the cost to the public, one way or another, is £250 million. Therefore, if some of the independent forecasters at the extreme are right in saying that unemployment next year could be 3·3 million, the difference between that and the Government's costs will be £1 billion. The costs are very important. It is therefore appropriate for one to detain the Committee again to question the Government about the nature of their

assumptions. If the Government's assumptions were out by 50,000 or 60,000, although the human cost of that would be large, we might forgive them statistically; but to be wrong by such a large figure—perhaps 200,000, 300,000 or more, who knows—would undermine the Government's assumptions that they gave the Actuary.

I join my hon. Friends in challenging the wage assumptions that have been made. The Minister was not able to answer my question because he dealt with another part of my intervention, but again it is not unfair to ask whether the wage assumptions were built into the analysis before the Government announced the public sector pay policy or after that. It must make a difference to the calculations. What was the difference? If I am assured by Ministers that they fully allowed for the public sector pay policy, what were the working assumptions before that policy came in? Given what we know about public sector pay, what assumptions are the Government therefore making about private sector pay? It is presumably quite a bit higher than 5 per cent.

If it is right for the Government to assume a 5 per cent. norm, would it be right for trade union shop stewards and workers to assume that figure when bargaining? If the Treasury can make that assumption, why cannot wage and salary earners make that assumption? It would seem to be fair to do so.

I now refer to the association between the role of the Government Actuary and that of Her Majesty's Government. There is some difficulty about that, because I notice that in the Bill the Government are happy to talk about the amount estimated by the Government Actuary or by the Deputy Government Actuary. There is an assumption in the Bill that they are the Actuary's figures, whereas the poor old Actuary himself, in words already quoted by my hon. Friend the Member for Garscadden, says:

"working assumptions have been given to me by the Government in regard to these factors. The assumptions I have been instructed to use for the purpose of the above estimates were set out"

by the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Given that the amounts of money are so vast, even with a variation of 1 per cent. or 2 per cent. in wages or unemployment, thus affecting Government arithmetic on public expenditure and the Committee's understanding of the Bill, in future it would not be unreasonable if the Government Actuary were able to make his or her own assumptions about those important matters. To put the matter delicately, there is always the possibility that Government assumptions about unemployment owe less to projections and more to propaganda. If the Committee is to have presented to it figures for the national insurance fund which are basically propagandist, the Committee is being misled to the tune of millions and millions of pounds, and possibly £0·75 billion.

Those are serious matters in terms of public expenditure and our understanding of the national insurance fund. I again urge Ministers to cut out the nonsense about assumptions and the differences between estimates. Why cannot the assumptions be based on truth and on what, sadly, independent forecasters in their hearts know will be the likely rates of unemployment next financial year?

Mr. Scott: I understand the imperative of the Opposition to talk at length about economic forecasting at the moment. I hope that, in my few remarks in drawing the debate to a conclusion, I can prove that the Opposition's comments are largely irrelevant to this matter.

I should like to refer to the Deputy Government Actuary's department and the question whether he is instructed. "Instructed" has no force whatsoever in law. He could be asked the same thing and would no doubt deliver his duty against the same background as having been instructed. In essence, one contribution outlined the considerable variation of the forecasts or assumptions, or whatever one cares to call them, from a number of independent forecasting bodies, how they vary across the range and how important it is, if we are to have a single approach to Government assumptions, that there is a single assumption by those who are playing their part.

The Treasury assumptions are the ones that should be taken across the range of Government, otherwise, as I tried to show before, there would be a considerable opportunity for misunderstanding by those who look at Government assumptions as a whole. Perhaps there is that variation in outside forecasting, but, since 1945, Governments have always taken the view that there should be a single assumption.

I have to confess that it comes as a surprise to me that there is not one but several Deputy Government Actuaries. That provides fairly sensible cover in case the Government Actuary is unable to perform his duties because he is indisposed or actively engaged in other tasks. Indeed, we have the same system in Government. There is a Minister, but there are three Under-Secretaries of State who fulfil that role within the Department of Social Security. A collective approach—the language at least might appeal to the Opposition—by the Deputy Government Actuary may not be entirely unacceptable to the Opposition.

I now refer to the assumptions. I understand the political imperative for the Opposition to concentrate overwhelmingly on unemployment and perhaps on earnings. In terms of the overall balance of the national insurance fund, the assumptions are marginal to the calculations that are being made. The overwhelming factor when we consider the balance in the national insurance fund year on year is the payment of retirement pensions. That is the largest single factor. For example, were calculations on unemployment to be, say, 200,000 too low and earnings to be, say, 1 per cent. awry, the balance in the fund might turn out to be 14 per cent. as opposed to 17 per cent.

We are not talking about the fundamental undermining of the state of the national insurance fund. I repeat that the basic calculations about a prudent approach and a comfortable cushion against the fund, protected by the grant, going into crisis are very much overstated. Certainly, the grant levels that we will apply will allow for variations in the assumption year on year.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) intimated that he would not press amendment No. 8, but I rest on the central argument that the assumptions would be very unlikely to alter the estimate of benefit expenditure to any significant degree. In the circumstances, I hope that the amendments will not be pressed.

Mr. Dewar: I can give the Minister that assurance. However, I am intrigued by the thought that the three Ministers who are gathered are so similar in personality and approach that they are interchangeable in every sense.

[Mr. Dewar]

[Interruption.] I am sorry. The hon. Member is not a Whip; he just happens to be sitting there. Before I get into trouble, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Question proposed, That the clause stand part of the Bill.

6 pm

Mr. Dewar: This will probably be the last substantive debate, but one or two matters are worth raising. Clause 2 deals with the whole problem of the fund and the Treasury contribution which the legislation authorises. There is no doubt that the Labour party accepts the need for a subvention to balance the books. As I said on Second Reading, it would be unacceptable for any benefits to be substantially cut to balance the accounts. Given the deterioration in the economy and the troubles that have attended the Government's efforts in the past few months, it would not be sensible to advocate a major increase in national insurance contributions. There is nothing between the Conservative party and the Labour party on that matter.

We broadly support the thrust of the clause. The sums are substantial—£7,500 million is not to be sniffed at. I am aware that there will be play in the figures, as we have been discussing. We might find that the 17 per cent. or, certainly, the 20 per cent. ceiling in 1993-94 will be under considerable pressure if our scepticism about the starting point of the forecast is justified. We will simply have to wait and see. Undoubtedly, we can return to the matter if the result confirms my suspicion.

I should like to ask the Minister about one or two much more general matters connected with the clause and how he sees the national insurance fund. I have not re-read the Minister's speech, but I have re-read the speech of the hon. Member for Havant (Mr. Willetts), which I found interesting. I did not hear the hon. Gentleman's speech because I was absent from the Chamber at that time; however, I have taken the trouble to re-examine it. The speech raised some substantial issues which I should like the Minister to examine.

There was an exchange, and hon. Members will remember that there has been continuing controversy, about the cost to the national insurance fund and the public purse of the contract-out principle and the incentive which was introduced in 1988 and which runs until 1993. I quoted in my speech the figures produced by the National Audit Office, and was taken to task by the hon. Member for Havant for relying on them. He took a poor view of that. I understand from the other remarks that have been made that it is the conventional wisdom on the Conservative Back Benches—I suspect, encouraged by those on the Front Benches—that the National Audit Office calculations were badly flawed.

I invite the Minister to say a few words about that matter because I genuinely disagree with the hon. Member for Havant, whom I welcome to the Chamber, about the National Audit Office. I am not silly enough to deny that I may have misunderstood the basis of his objection, in which case I have no doubt that the Minister will be able to put me right.

As I understand it, the hon. Gentleman was saying that the difficulty with the calculations was that they were a calculation of the cost of revenue forgone in the pay-as-you-go pension and benefit equation because of the money that was passed to private providers for occupational and personal pensions in the form of the contracting-out payments and the initial incentive over and above them. The hon. Gentleman gave the impression that the incentive stopped in 1993, although it could have continued. There was a slight implication that the National Audit Office was using something almost akin to sharp practice because it should have projected beyond 1993. If the NAO had projected beyond 1993, it would have come up with a different picture.

The hon. Gentleman also complained that the calculation was based on the assumption that everyone would come back into SERPS in 1993, which he said was a ludicrous proposition. I agree that that is not likely to happen, and I make no complaint about that. The computation that was carried out was legitimate within the limits in which it was done. The National Audit Office took the cost of the APP rebates for the period to 1993. It did not go beyond 1993 for the simple reason that it did not have an announced contracting-out percentage figure —we now know that the figure is 4·8 per cent.—and it did not have any information about what would happen to the incentive. It might have assumed that the incentive would disappear altogether. If it had made that assumption, it would have been wrong. That underlines the difficulty of projecting beyond 1993.

The National Audit Office took the cost of the APP rebates for the 1988-93 period and the current value of the futures of SERPS pensions which would not have to be paid because of the rebates, the opting out and the purchase. It came up with the figures which showed a deficit of close to £6 billion in the public purse. That seems to be a respectable enterprise, and is not undermined or invalidated by any argument about what might happen after 1993 if the information had been available. The calculation tells us what happened in those five years. Therefore, it is valid in those terms, and that is what it was represented to be.

Mr. David Willetts (Havant): I entirely agree with the hon. Gentleman's account of how the National Audit Office set about its calculations. If I gave the impression in my speech a week ago that I thought sharp practice was involved in the calculations, I welcome the opportunity to correct that impression. I do not think that there was any sharp practice. However, it is unfortunate that the assumptions on which the calculations were based were not clearly stated. I am sure that the National Audit Office took those assumptions for the reason that the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) has just set out—because it was the clearest basis on which to do the calculation, effectively assuming that everyone would be back in the scheme in 1993. Any other assumptions would inevitably have been speculative. To have carried out the calculations on a different basis, assuming, for example, that many people who left SERPS——

The Second Deputy Chairman: Order. This is becoming a speech, not an intervention. The hon. Member may seek to catch my eye at a later stage if he wishes.

Mr. Dewar: The hon. Gentleman may want to catch your eye, Dame Janet, because I am about to say a few words about some of his other thoughts on the national insurance fund. Before he came into the Chamber, I said

that I found his speech interesting. I do not know whether he would claim to be a representative Conservative Member, but he is credited, if that is the right word to use —I use the word in a technical sense—with having some influence.

Mr. Wicks: He can read.

Mr. Dewar: The hon. Gentleman can do more than that. I was interested in what he said. We can continue the argument about the NAO report on another occasion, and I have no doubt we will.

I think that we are near agreement. My point is that the figures are valid, although they are limited in the sense that they are for a specific time slot. My real objection is directed not perhaps at the hon. Member for Havant but at some of his colleagues who gave the impression that, because the calculations do not continue beyond 1993, they are invalid and are not justified. The calculations are not valid in terms of the figures that were known at the time. My point is that, in any event, as we use revenue to pay pensions, invalidity benefits and unemployment benefits and if we forgo £9 billion over a five-year period, a considerable strain is placed not necessarily on national insurance contributions—we can hold them—but on general taxation revenue, which is perhaps the reason that we have the startling figures in the clause.

Perhaps the Minister will comment on the National Audit Office report. It is important that proper weight is given to it. It should not be rubbished because it tells us an important part of the story so far. It may not give us the history or the future, but it brings us significantly up to date.

What is the Government's view on the national insurance principle? The hon. Member for Havant expressed strong opinions about it. Those of us who were present on Second Reading will remember that he started by reminding us that under the Beveridge scheme a substantial part of the funding of the benefits came from a Treasury subvention. There was a somewhat technical argument about whether the subvention was 50 per cent. or 67 per cent. Those figures were offered to the hon. Gentleman by my hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) in a bidding match. However, the subvention was clearly substantial. None of us objects to returning to a stage at which that level of help is necessary.

The hon. Member for Havant asked some important questions about the national insurance principle. He went on to say that SERPS was a quid pro quo for getting away from the principle of flat rate contributions. He said that it was introduced merely to give some reward to those who would have to contribute more heavily according to income when previously there was a flat rate contribution.

The hon. Member for Havant also said that the Government had held national insurance contributions steady, thereby putting the fund under the present strain. I give him credit for a phrase which I shall probably use at some future date about other aspects of Government policy. He said that the Government were following a policy of "purposeful immobilism". That phrase is worth preserving. I see evidence of purposeful immobilism in bodies other than the Conservative party, but it will do for a start. Such a policy has interesting consequences.

The hon. Member for Havant put what he described as an unashamedly ideological view. He said that private pension provision was better. He went on from there to argue a fairly hostile case for the continuation of SERPS. He also seemed to make a hostile commentary on the national insurance contributions system. If one assumes that SERPS was introduced because it was the only way of justifying a progressive tax element, one may come close to arguing that contributions are not necessary and pensions should be entirely funded out of general taxation. My analysis may be unfair but it is an interesting line of thought.

I wonder whether the Minister—I put this innocently to him—has any thoughts about the future of the national insurance principle. The hon. Member for Havant said that we were driven to a second contributory top-up pension, making it clear that he did not like such a system. I know that the Government share his dislike of that aspect of the matter, but I wonder whether they have any thoughts about the national insurance principle—or is this a matter on which no consultations are taking place and no change is expected?

The Minister will be familiar with the interesting speech which Sir Peter Barclay made at a conference at York university a few months ago. I do not need to rehearse it in detail, but he put on the agenda the future of the national insurance principle. For example, he suggested that the contributions record had become a barrier for many people, especially women. Although they were entitled in every sense to a benefit, they might not have the contributions record to open the door to the benefit.

I do not suggest that there are any plans afoot to abolish contributions but I thought that the matter was worth raising. That train of thought was started by reading the speech of the hon. Member for Havant. I should be glad to have the Minister's thoughts on the matter. I hope that he can oblige.

6.15 pm

Mr. Kirkwood: I welcome the suggestion of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) that the future of the contributory principle should be put on the agenda for discussion. My party has always advocated an integrated tax and benefits system. That would entail abolishing the contributory principle. However, we are not necessarily thirled to that. If there is scope for discussions at any level, we should be interested in taking part. I agree with the hon. Member for Garscadden that if the Government are examining the background to the national insurance scheme, it would be valuable for Opposition Members to know whether the Government have commissioned any research. I also noticed what Sir Peter Barclay said. It was a valuable contribution to the debate. It would be helpful to know whether the Government have any thoughts on the matter.

I wonder whether the Minister could help me. In my usual daft laddy way—referring to the Treasury research note—may I ask how it came about that in 1980-81 the Treasury supplement was 18 per cent. of the fund but a few short years later, in 1988, Lord—[HON. MEMBERS: "Lord Moore."] The hon. Member for Garscadden said that old age made one forget names, but it is dealing with social security that does it; it causes amnesia. It happens to us all sooner or later.

In 1988, Lord Moore announced the abolition of the Treasury supplement. In 1988 the supplement had collapsed to 5 per cent. In the Social Security Act 1990 we took industrial injury benefit, statutory sick pay and

[Mr. Kirkwood]

statutory maternity pay out of the fund and made it a charge on the Consolidated Fund. Large sums were taken out of the national insurance fund. Only two years later we are suddenly putting another large tranche of up to 20 per cent., representing £7,500 million, into the fund by way of grant.

The Minister must explain why, if it was right to abolish the supplement in 1988, there has been a huge turnaround in the way in which the Government deal with the fund. It has happened in a relatively short time in relation to the development of social security policy. The Government owe us an explanation of the rationale and thinking behind the sequence of events that has produced these circumstances.

It is not inappropriate in a "clause stand part" debate to ask the Minister how the Government expect the grant proposed in the clause to operate and how it will differ from the previous supplement. One relates to levels of contributions and the other relates to levels of benefit. What are the differences in effect compared with the old supplement?

My next question should perhaps be more properly addressed to Treasury Ministers. What significance will the grant have on the public sector borrowing requirement? The grant can be drawn upon after consultations with the Treasury. I shall ask a question about that in a moment. Does not the £8,000 million feature as an increase in the PSBR? Is it hidden because it is not used unless it is called upon? Does it not affect the total PSBR for that reason? It is a big sum of money and if it does not show up as an explicit addition to PSBR totals, we should be told about it.

Clause 2 talks rather glibly about the Secretary of State consulting the Treasury before exercising his powers, and two cheers for the fact that the orders introduced under clause 2(8) will be subject to the affirmative procedure. Can the Secretary of State say a few words on what consultation will amount to? Is it merely a question of referring to changes of the sort that we have been discussing which concern the Government Actuary? Or, for example, could the Secretary of State decide that if he had a wee bit of extra money he could [illegible]ise the Christmas bonus, which is only £10 this year, and double it? Could he consult the Treasury about the possibility of using the grant to increase the bonus? That seems a seasonal enough suggestion.

If we have £7,500 million floating around, why do we not use some of it for retirement pensions, invalidity benefits, widows' pensions, sickness pay and all the other wonderful goodies that are available to the Government via the national insurance fund? What will constitute the consultation? Can the Treasury refuse a request by the Secretary of State? If so, on what grounds? Those are important issues.

I also hope that the Minister will explain why, in such a short time, there have been such momentous changes in the amounts of money—in the form of supplements or grants—flowing in and out of the national insurance fund.

Mr. Scott: I shall be delighted if I can bring this short debate to an even quicker conclusion. Although I shall refer to the issue of the national insurance fund in my concluding remarks, I believe that that question contains substance for a debate which would occupy more time than we are likely to have this evening—[HON. MEMBERS: "Take as long as you like."]—and in which other Ministers might wish to play a part.

The debate about the Government grant is set against the background of the announcement by my right hon. Friends the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Secretary of State that there would be no increase in national insurance contributions this year, and that there would be a full uprating of benefits. Clearly, in those circumstances, resources had to be found to balance the two items.

The grant from the Treasury is simply a transfer of resources that are already within the Government. A sum of money from within the Consolidated Fund can easily be transferred from the Treasury to ourselves without any increase in Government borrowing or any alteration in public finances.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) drew attention to the distinguished and important speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Havant (Mr. Willetts). In no sense would I wish to rubbish the National Audit Office report, not least because the distinguished Comptroller and Auditor General was a senior civil servant in the Northern Ireland Office when I was privileged to serve there and I have personal as well as professional respect for his judgment.

The calculations commissioned by the National Audit Office were based on assumptions which will not necessarily prove to be valid in the longer term. The report took into account only the first six years and it did not take into account the contribution that personal pensions will make to a strong pensions industry in the next century, and the element of choice to which the personal pensions initiative has contributed. The office was hampered by the assumption that it was a short-term phenomenon and that a substantial number of people who had taken out personal pensions would contract back into SERPS.

Personal pensions provide people with influence over their contributions, and I believe that my hon. Friend the Member for Havant said that we were working with the grain of society by providing that choice. I think that that philosophy will endure and will be important in the next century.

Mr. Dewar: I accept that the Government are anxious to encourage personal pensions, which may or may not be a good thing, but that is a different issue. I want to know whether the Minister accepts the validity of the National Audit Office figures for 1988-93 in terms of their impact on the profit and loss account of the public purse—if I may put it that simply. Having taken some advice, I am led to believe that the calculation is perfectly valid, as one would expect given the source. It would be helpful if the Minister could confirm that that is his view. If it is not, presumably the Government can produce a counter set of figures, which we would look at with interest.

Mr. Scott: I am not quarrelling with the short-term judgment of the National Audit Office. It is right that Parliament, when looking ahead to the pattern of pension provision for future years, should take a broader judgment. Therefore, short-term calculations about profit and loss in that short time span should not determine our judgments on whether we should continue the personal pensions initiative.

Mr. Dewar: If I put it to the Minister another way, we can, I hope, reach agreement. Is it the case that he does not

dispute that there will be a loss to the public purse or a gap of getting on for £6 billion during the period concerned? The Minister is arguing that that is a price worth paying —as he is entitled to do.

Mr. Scott: I would not choose those words. It is an investment in the future and in a pattern of pension provision which is likely to work with the grain of personal choice. As my hon. Friend the Member for Havant said, increasingly people wish to make pesonal choices about their pension provisions for the next century.

It is all very well for those of us with a clear entitlement to occupational pensions, who may not sufficiently take into account the position of manual workers and those who sometimes work irregularly. We must remind ourselves that one of the main results of the personal pensions initiative is that they have been able to make proper provision for their retirement, outside the basic state scheme, for the first time. That is much to be applauded and is well worth whatever investment we have made in launching the scheme.

I said that I would mention the principle of national insurance. I believe that on Second Reading the hon. Member for Croydon, North-West (Mr. Wicks) mentioned the Gallup survey about national insurance costs prior to the 1985 reforms, in which 59 per cent. of those asked about national insurance contributions thought that they were a good thing.

The Government have no plans to drop the concept of the national insurance scheme. A philosophical question is involved. We must consider whether the taxpayer alone should pay or whether there should be a system of contributions which could be adjusted to reflect changing patterns in the workplace and in society. Having grown up in the days of stamps on cards—I know that the system is more sophisticated these days—I think that many people feel that they are contributing towards their short-term benefits, health care and so on, which are based on the national insurance principle.

Mr. Kirkwood: I am following carefully what the Minister is saying. The vast majority of people to whom I speak think that the scheme is a funded one, but we all know that it is not.

6.30 pm

Mr. Scott: That is true. Many people may not even understand the concept of a funded scheme, but they believe that it represents value for money. They pay a certain amount each week or month and for that they get the guarantee of certain benefits when they need them. That concept is firmly embedded in the psychology of the country and to drop it would be a grave mistake, unless we were absolutely certain that we had something a great deal better to put in its place.

I understand that there will be a debate about this issue. I, too, have had moments of agnosticism about it in my time at the Department. However, I have tried to think it through and I believe that it would be a great folly to abandon the scheme unless we were absolutely certain that we had something better to put in its place. I have read Sir Peter Barclay's speech and a number of other contributions on the matter and no doubt we shall return to it from time to time.

I hope that the Committee will now be prepared to give the clause a fair wind.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 2 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 3 to 5 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Schedule agreed to.

Bill reported, without amendment; read the Third time, and passed.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.),

CHILD SUPPORT

That the draft Child Support Fees Regulations 1992, which were laid before this House on 11th November, be approved.—*[Mr. David Davis.]*

Question agreed to.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.),

COMPANIES (DISCLOSURE)

That the draft Companies Act 1985 (Disclosure of Branches and Bank Accounts) Regulations 1992, which were laid before this House on 17th November, be approved.—*[Mr. David Davis.]*

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.),

COMPANIES (FEES)

That the Companies (Fees) (Amendment) Regulations 1992 S.I., 1992, No. 2876), dated 17th November 1992, a copy of which was laid before this House on 19th November, be approved.—*[Mr. David Davis.]*

Question agreed to.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.),

COMPANIES (BRANCH DISCLOSURE)

That the draft Oversea Companies and Credit and Financial Institutions (Branch Disclosure) Regulations 1992, which were laid before this House on 26th November, be approved.—*[Mr. David Davis.]*

Question agreed to.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 102(9) (European Standing Committees.),

VALUE ADDED TAX

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 4204/89 and the Supplementary Explanatory Memorandum submitted to Her Majesty's Customs and Excise on 28th October 1992, relating to value-added tax and special arrangements for second-hand goods, works of art, antiques and collectors' items; notes that the proposed margin schemes for second-hand goods are similar to the existing United Kingdom schemes but with broader coverage; and welcomes the Government's aim to protect the essential interests of British traders.—*[Mr. David Davis.]*

Question agreed to.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 102(9) (European Standing Committees.).

COSMETIC PRODUCTS

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 8586/92, relating to cosmetic products; and

supports the agreed common position secured by the Government on the draft Directive at the 3rd November Consumer Affairs Council of Ministers.—*[Mr. David Davis.]*

Question agreed to.

TRANSPORT

Ordered,

That Mr. Terry Dicks be discharged from the Transport Committee and Mr. Nick Hawkins be added to the Committee. *[Sir Fergus Montgomery, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

Clarke Foods, Knowsley

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. David Davis.]*

6.32 pm

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North): On Friday 16 November, 67 employees of the Lyons Maid operation in Kirkby in my constituency were made redundant. They have not yet received any severance pay. Until today, however, there was still hope that they would be re-employed by Nestlé, which has since acquired the parent company, Clarke Foods, which was put into receivership by the National Westminster bank on 13 October.

Within the past hour it has been drawn to my attention that Nestlé has no intention of retaining the Kirkby plant. It argues that that plant has some technical problems which make its retention impossible. I do not wish to comment on that in detail until I have had an opportunity to discuss it with the employees at that plant; I can then consider the points that Nestlé has raised.

Today's announcement will be a body blow to the people of Kirkby from which they will find it difficult to recover. We may be talking about only 67 jobs, but in a town that has one of the highest rates of unemployment in the country, those 67 jobs were precious and there were high hopes that they would be retained. We shall have to consider what steps we can take to see whether there is anything that can be retrieved in the next few weeks.

My purpose in seeking a debate on the Adjournment is to highlight serious and potentially alarming concerns about the events that led up to Clarke Foods going into administrative receivership. Clarke Foods was Britain's second largest ice cream manufacturer. It was set up and controlled by Mr. Henry D. Clarke junior, a United States citizen.

In March 1992, Mr. Clarke's company acquired the Lyons Maid operation from Allied-Lyons for just over £13 million. At that time, Lyons Maid had two factories, one in Greenford in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Southall (Mr. Khabra), and the other in Kirkby. I know that my hon. Friend had hoped to be here for this debate. Unfortunately, the fact that it has started earlier than expected has, I believe, caught him at his constituency surgery. I know that he will be bitterly disappointed to have missed the debate.

Prior to acquiring Lyons Maid, Clarke Foods had also acquired factories in Telford, Stourbridge and Stoke-on-Trent from Hillsdown Holdings, the latter of which was closed down some six months earlier. Clarke Foods left debts reported to be between £25 million and £40 million. I understand that among the substantial creditors are the National Westminster bank, Allied-Lyons, Hillsdown Holdings and Alfa-Laval, which is apparently owed money for machinery that was purchased and delivered, but not paid for.

It is also worth pointing out that part of the purchase agreement between Allied-Lyons and Clarke Foods involved a discount of £1·4 million in a fund allocated for severance payments, including pension funds at the Greenford factory, which, as had already been agreed, would close. There are persistent rumours that all the money cannot be accounted for. However, no doubt that will be covered in the receivers' report to the Secretary of

State to which reference was made in the letter to me of 12 November from the Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs.

Clarke Foods had a working relationship with Guinness Mahon and Co. and Henderson Crosthwaite Corporate Finance Ltd. Both firms were reported in the *Financial Times* of 11 March as sponsoring Clarke Foods' entry into the unlisted securities market. I have spoken to representatives of Guinness Mahon and they say that their relationship with Clarke Foods was that of financial adviser and that its associate company, Henderson Crosthwaite, acted as stockbroker to Clarke Foods.

One common denominator between those associated firms and Clarke Foods is Mr. Martin Riley. Mr. Riley is described by Guinness Mahon as having been a non-executive director of Clarke Foods and a director of Henderson Crosthwaite.

I recognise the responsibilities that go with parliamentary privilege and I made a determined effort to contact Mr. Riley on Friday last week, through Henderson Crosthwaite and Guinness Mahon. It became clear to me, however, that I would be given no opportunity to speak to him, even though it was my stated and honest intention to give him the chance to put his side of the argument before the debate. I understand that Mr. Henry D. Clarke is currently in the United States and unavailable for comment, although at least one of his sons is still in the United Kingdom.

According to the *Liverpool Echo*, which has thoroughly investigated this matter, it was obvious that, during the summer, Clarke Foods made serious errors of judgment and some bad management decisions. In July, by which time it must have been clear to both Mr. Clarke and Mr. Riley that Clarke Foods was in serious trouble, those men both sold their shareholdings, which, I understand, were substantial. According to Paul Foot in the *Daily Mirror* of 4 December 1992, that sale amounted to 310,102 shares at their peak price of £1·60 each. By the time the company went into receivership in October, share prices had fallen to 8p each.

Last Friday, I spoke to a spokesman for Guinness Mahon, Mr. Duncan Campbell. He told me that Guinness Mahon did not know that there were financial problems with Clarke Foods until September this year.

Courtesy of the Library, I have an article from *The Sunday Times*, dated 14 June 1992, headed

"Clarke Foods. Directors' Share Deals"

It includes an informative graph describing how share deals had taken place between Mr. Riley and Mr. Clarke and describes at length the problems that the company was experiencing as early as June. It says:

"The approach of summer heralds ice-cream time and marks a good season for Clarke Foods, Britain's number two producer since it bought Lyons Maid from Allied-Lyons in January.

Three years ago the company, then Yelverton Investments, had its core business in properties and securities.

The transformation was due to Henry Clarke, the chairman, who had made a fortune from the frozen confection in America. In January 1991 he bought three loss-making ice-cream companies from Hillsdown Holdings.

Clarke invested heavily in new equipment and cut the workforce, pushing the three firms into the black in their first full year after the takeover. Then came the £12 million Lyons Maid coup. The company was stagnant, making heavy losses and was the perfect challenge for him. One ageing and unionised Lyons Maid factory is to close, with production shifting to the renovated factories at Stourbridge and Telford.

Last year Clarke's pre-tax profits were up to £1·14 million and are predicted to be £3·4 million this time. Friday's price was 160p, up from 50p since its £6·8 million rights issue to buy Lyons Maid. The difficult task ahead is to improve the product range and increase sales in an increasingly competitive market. And investors will not be encouraged that late last month two directors, Henry D. Clarke Jr and Martin Riley, sold a total of 310,102 shares at 160-161p, signalling that the price may fall, although both say they are selling to buy pension plans."

At that stage, there was clearly some knowledge of share dealings and the fact that, although the company was still predicting profits, there were things going on in the organisation which would have raised alarm bells with Guinness Mahon. I am not therefore convinced that I was told the full position when I spoke to Mr. Duncan Campbell on Friday.

On 30 October, I wrote to the Secretary of State in support of Lyons Maid workers and their trade union, the Transport and General Workers Union, seeking an inquiry into the affair. I repeat that call tonight. The first issue that an inquiry must cover is whether Mr. Clarke and Mr. Riley were guilty of insider dealing. They must have known that Clarke Foods was in serious financial difficulty at that stage and that to dump a large shareholding on to the market would precipitate a slump in the value of the shares, thereby accelerating the firm's difficulties. An inquiry must also look into what will happen to the £1·4 million pension and severance fund. Has it been used fraudulently; if so, by whom and on what authority?

A further issue for an inquiry relates to Mr. Henry D. Clarke's fitness to run a company anywhere, given his track record in the United States. In the 1960s, Mr. Clarke ran a company called the National Environmental Corporation, which was involved in house building and nursing homes. Mr. Clarke was ousted as president of that company in 1970 and was subsequently bankrupted. During the 1970s, through various companies—Clabir, Klondyke Ice Cream and the General Defense Corporation—Mr. Clarke built up yet another conglomerate with diverse interests in ice-cream and chocolate manufacture and armaments manufacturing. He was ousted as president of that group of companies in 1989 after Clabir defaulted on debentures.

Given the irregular mix of products in which Mr. Clarke was involved, anybody who subsequently examined his involvement in that group of companies would have raised questions, particularly in the light of the Iran contra scandal.

The following year, Mr. Clarke came to the United Kingdom and began to re-establish himself, together with his sons, in the ice-cream business. On the basis of his record in the United States, sufficient evidence should have been available to suggest that Mr. Clarke was not a fit and proper person to run a company. However, Guinness Mahon and its associate company, Henderson Crosthwaite, seem to have warmly welcomed him, despite the fragile financial basis of his operations and his track record.

All that is bad enough, but last Friday I was given a copy of a letter from Mr. Ray Scannell, director of research with the Bakery, Confectionary and Tobacco Workers International Union, dated 3 December 1992. In the letter, Mr. Scannell says:

"Rumours . . . picked up in Tampa and PA had it that Clarke, Clabir and General Defense Corporation were part of a network of CIA front companies involved in supplying the Nicaraguan contras. This is plausible. Numerous news

[Mr. George Howarth]

reports have revealed that the CIA often brought in businessmen to 'own' front companies and those fronts often invested in legitimate businesses to maintain the legitimate facade for the agency. (They also sometimes were engaged in drug running)".

Mr. Scannell concludes:

"These allegations are obviously unproven, and probably unprovable. But they warrant taking an even closer look at the Clarkes. For example, what were the specific circumstances of Clabir's default? Under what terms did Clarke leave the US? Does he continue to have legal and financial obligations and/or problems here? Whose money is behind Clarke? If he had connections with the CIA, do they continue?"

That letter clearly raises further questions. That admittedly inconclusive evidence has been obtained by my trade union colleagues with comparative ease. It seems odd that, before entering a business relationship with Mr. Clarke, an organisation like Guinness Mahon did not make similar inquiries.

There have been weeks of anxiety for the workers and their families about their future and today any hope has been dashed by Nestle's announcement that those jobs have no chance of being saved. The matter is so serious and the implications so vast that the Department of Trade and Industry must now agree to an inquiry, or possibly several inquiries, under the provisions vested in it under the Companies Act 1989.

Will the Minister instruct the receivers, Robson Rhodes, to produce an interim report on Clarke Foods, including any preliminary evidence of fraud and insider dealing? Will he initiate a preliminary inquiry through the stock exchange on what checks or inquiries, if any, were made through Guinness Mahon or stock exchange procedures into Henry D. Clarke's fitness as a director prior to Clarke Foods being listed? I give the Minister notice that I fully intend to raise that aspect of the affair until it is fully investigated and brought out into the open. Will he consider at this stage setting up a team of inspectors to look into the share dealing issue urgently?

I wish to acknowledge the *Liverpool Echo* and the Transport and General Workers Union for their work in investigating those disturbing issues and events. The allegations that I have made tonight cannot be attributed directly to them.

There seems to have been an effort in some high and influential quarters to keep the issue quiet. On the basis of the evidence that I have collected, it would be scandalous if the issue were not looked into fully. Many people are entitled to know what went on, not least those whose employment, pensions and redundancy payments have been shattered. Employees may even have been swindled. Surely it is right that the DTI should take its responsibilities seriously and get to the bottom of what has happened.

The jobs that have been lost in my constituency and that of the hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) raise serious issues about the values in our society. It seems that people can operate on any basis that they choose in our economy and that jobs, redundancy payments, pension funds and people's prospects in life do not count.

I know that in my constituency, and especially in Kirkby, people will be alarmed and despondent that there now seems no prospect of Nestle saving these jobs. For several weeks, they have been hoping that that would prove possible. The values that seem to have been applied throughout the sorry saga which I have recounted—especially by Mr. Clarke, but certainly by others—bring no credit on individuals and place serious responsibilities on the Government to investigate exactly what has been going on and, even at this late stage, to make efforts to save the jobs that are at stake in Kirkby and sort out the pension fund problems in Greenford. Events of the sort that I have described should not be allowed to take place without the Government accepting some responsibility to try to clear up the mess that they leave in their wake. Not least among the mess are many of my constituents, people who can ill afford to lose their jobs. They will wake up tomorrow morning in the knowledge that their last hope—that offered by Nestle—has gone.

6.50 pm

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): I congratulate the hon. Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth) on securing the Adjournment debate. Many of us have been trying to do so for some weeks, in the knowledge that there was an important issue to bring to the notice of the House. The hon. Gentleman has been successful in the ballot and he is to be congratulated on that and on all the good work that he has done.

My concern and interest lies with the Greenford plant of Clarke Foods, which lies firmly within my constituency. Of the 108 workers who have been made redundant, almost all of them are my constituents. There are one or two who live in Ealing, South and there are others in Ealing, Acton.

I have had meetings with the displaced work force and I have seen several members of it separately in my constituency over a period. The Lyons Maid site, which was purchased by Clarke Foods and became the Clarke site, is one that I have known for 18 years and visited regularly. I have known it as the site of a company that produced the best ice-cream in the world. I attempted to persuade people to eat Lyons ice-cream rather than anyone else's because it was the best and was made in the best place.

I was puzzled when I learnt that during the hot summers of the recent past Lyons Maid started to lose as much as £5 million a year. I still do not understand how that happened, bearing in mind the sales that the company must have had during the hot summers that we enjoyed in the late 1980s and early 1990s. In any event, the losses were made and the directors felt that they were unable to continue. As a result, they sold out to Clarke Foods. I should mention my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young), the Minister for Housing and Planning, who I know would wish to be present this evening. One or two of his constituents who worked at the Greenford plant have been made redundant. I know that he has been seeing them and helping them.

Lyons Maid was sold to Clarke Foods. The work force was happy to continue in the new set-up and it gave its all, as I am sure did the work force in Liverpool. That can certainly be said of my constituents. When I met them, I was reminded of the work force at the nearby Hoover factory, which was closed. That closure was declared on a terrible day 10 years ago this week. I spoke to 1,200 members of that work force on a hoary December morning after the announcement had been made that they would lose their jobs. They were told that they would all,

except the headquarters staff, lose their jobs by March. They worked with enormous dignity until the last minute of their employment. My constituents who worked at the Greenford plant have been the same. They put a great deal into Lyons Maid, first, and then Clarke Foods. They deserve better than they have had.

As the hon. Member for Knowsley, North said, when Lyons Maid sold to Clarke Foods there was an allowance of £1·4 million. I am not certain how to interpret that. I do not know whether that meant that Clarke Foods acquired the company for £1·4 million less. I note that the hon. Gentleman is nodding. I do not know whether any other prospective purchasers were in line.

Mr. George Howarth: Perhaps I can help the hon. Gentleman. According to a report that appeared recently in the *Financial Times*, the original sale price was discounted by £1·4 million.

Mr. Greenway: I think that that is a fair transaction. I met the directors of Lyons Maid shortly after I met the work force on the Clarke Foods site at Greenford. I promised that I would see the directors. They explained matters to me. They said clearly that they thought that the money to which I have just referred should have covered any redundancy payments. I am glad to say that at Greenford there are no problems with pensions, which are safeguarded and assured. On the other hand, the members of the work force have had no redundancy pay. Some of them worked at the site for 40 years. It cannot be morally right that suddenly they should find themselves put out of work, having lost a fortnight's pay because effectively they were put out of work by the receiver. Holidays were due to them and they received no redundancy payments.

It is only natural that these people are looking to Lyons for some sort of payment. One can only appeal to Lyons —I do so again tonight—to make an ex gratia payment. The company has explained to me that it has no legal obligation to make such a payment. I am not a lawyer and I have to accept that, but when a company has employed people for a long time—some for as long as 40 years—I would hope that it might be able to find a way of making ex gratia payments to them. I think that they deserve that.

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): I sympathise fully with the hon. Gentleman's constituents. As he has said, they worked for the company for 40 years and then they were just dismissed. Does he agree that it would be better for his constituents and other workers like them—where there is no trade union to defend their interests—if wages councils were to remain in place? The councils would be of benefit to the hon. Gentleman's constituents and to many thousands of others throughout the country, especially in the catering trade.

Mr. Greenway: I do not want to be taken down that road. When my constituents were dismissed, wages councils existed. The question does not arise in this instance. I know that that point was made genuinely because I know the hon. Gentleman too well to say otherwise, but it is not valid.

I appeal to my hon. Friend the Minister to do anything that he can to secure for the workers involved the ex gratia payments that they surely deserve, or any other sort of payment that they can be given. I have written to the receiver on their behalf. I have not received an answer; I am not terribly impressed with that. It is some time since I wrote to him. He should answer letters punctually, whoever has written them.

Mr. Peter Kilfoyle (Liverpool, Walton): Is the hon. Gentleman aware that the former employees at the Greenford site who served for 40 years would have been entitled to about £100,000 each in combined redundancy and severance pay?

Mr. Greenway: They are certainly entitled to large sums of money—hence their grievance. They are morally entitled to that money, and I should have hoped that they were legally entitled to it. Instead, they have lost everything—the wages due to them and their other benefits. It is a sorry and unjust tale. I hope that all concerned will be able to do something for people who have given their loyal and honest work over many years —in an honourable, fair-minded and genuine way.

7 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs (Mr. Neil Hamilton): I congratulate the hon. Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth) on being fortunate enough to secure this important debate. I know what a doughty fighter he is for the interests of his constituents; his reputation for that is well known far beyond Knowsley. I have listened with considerable attention and concern to what he has had to say, and to the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) and the hon. Members for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Kilfoyle) and for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien), whom I am pleased to see here.

The appointment of receivers is always a sad event in the life of any company, especially when it results in a considerable number of employees being made redundant. I extend my sympathy to those affected by redundancy in Clarke Foods, and to their families. I know very well that this has been a bitter blow for Knowsley, and, as a north-west Member and DTI Minister responsible for the north-west, I know of the social problems involved.

Clearly, the hon. Member for Knowsley, North believes that all is not well with the way in which certain aspects of Clarke Foods' affairs were conducted, particularly those related to planned redundancy payments after it took over the Lyons Maid business earlier this year. As a result, the hon. Gentleman wants the Secretary of State to authorise an investigation of Clarke Foods using his powers under the Companies Acts. I can understand that; I should have been surprised had he not pressed hard in support of his constituents' interests. Before dealing with the issues involved in an investigation, I ought to set out the facts of the matter as they are known to me.

Clarke Foods (United Kingdom) Ltd. bought the Lyons Maid trading operation from Allied-Lyons in February this year. I understand that even before the sale Allied-Lyons had decided that the Lyons Maid operation needed rationalisation. Parts of that involved closing the plant at Greenford, in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North. To make the reorganisation more acceptable, the company proposed to offer enhanced redundancy terms to employees. Those would apparently have been rather more attractive than the terms that apply under the statutory redundancy payments scheme.

[Mr. Neil Hamilton]

No action had apparently been taken by the time of the purchase by Clarke Foods. It has, however, been reported that, as a result of the proposed redundancy arrangements, Clarke Foods was able to renegotiate a reduction of £1·4 million in the price that it paid to Allied-Lyons.

I know that this brief outline of the facts may give rise to the assumption that Clarke Foods had, at least by implication, agreed to make available the same redundancy package as Allied-Lyons had proposed. Hon. Members may even suspect that, as has been suggested in this debate, the sum of £1·4 million was put aside for this purpose, although that is doubtful. As far as I am aware, there was never any written agreement between the company and its employees relating to the proposed redundancy package. Needless to say, if hon. Members have evidence to the contrary, I shall be happy to receive it—it should also be given to the receivers. I make no comment on the discount in the purchase price of Lyons Maid that Clarke Foods apparently negotiated.

Following the sale, the proposed reorganisation of the company's trading operations did not take place. Initial indications are that that was because of substantial cash flow problems affecting Clarke Foods. Those difficulties prompted the company's backers, the National Westminster bank, to commission a report on the company's financial health from City accountants Robson Rhodes——

Mr. George Howarth: Based on the inquiries that the Minister has made, can he tell us at what point these cash flow problems became apparent?

Mr. Hamilton: I cannot give the hon. Gentleman that information, because we have not instigated inquiries under the powers given to us by the Companies Acts. If the hon. Gentleman were to contact the receivers, he might acquire the information from them.

I understand that the report presented to the National Westminster bank was submitted in September. The bank was clearly unwilling to continue to support the company, and on 13 October it appointed two Robson Rhodes partners as joint administrative receivers. The receivers' primary obligation is to look after the interests of the bank that appointed them. Of course, they cannot ignore the other legitimate interests involved, including those of Clarke Foods' employees, and they did authorise a continuation of trading in the hope that income from such trading would be sufficient to meet the company's liability to the bank. However, I am informed that the financial pressures of funding the company during the trade-on period following the receivers' appointment were extreme.

The success or otherwise of the post-receivership trading was always going to depend heavily on the generation and availability of funds to meet the numerous obligations implicit in trading on the business. Quite quickly, it became impossible to maintain the size of the work force, and hon. Members will know that the receivers have found it necessary to make 280 employees redundant —148 at the Greenford plant and 67 at Knowsley.

Fortunately, we have in place legislative provisions to mitigate the effects of redundancy in cases such as these. Under the provisions of the redundancy payments scheme, employees who are declared redundant and who satisfy the qualifying conditions are entitled to a lump sum payment calculated according to their age, length of service and rate of pay. In addition, the redundancy payment service can also pay certain debts owed to employees of insolvent employers—these include arrears of pay, accrued holiday pay and pay in lieu of notice.

I understand that there has been a misconception in some quarters to the effect that the wheels of this scheme grind rather slowly. Of the 178 claims for redundancy pay received by the Department of Employment, 145 have already been paid; and there have also been 92 claims for insolvency payments, of which 79 have been paid.

Mr. Harry Greenway: May I express my gratitude for that? I raised the matter the moment I knew of the problem at Greenford, and the rapid response is greatly appreciated.

Mr. Hamilton: I am most grateful for my hon. Friend's kind remarks. I assure him that the Departments of Employment and of Trade and Industry will do their best to respond as quickly as possible if anything further can be done to benefit those who have suffered from these distressing events.

All is not entirely lost, although I fully appreciate that the constituents of the hon. Member for Knowsley, North can derive little pleasure from the circumstances that he outlined. Hon. Members will be pleased to learn that on 16 November the receivers apparently sold the Clarke Food business to Nestle, and as a result about 300 jobs have been saved.

I come now to the suggestion that this is a case into which the Secretary of State should initiate an immediate investigation under the Companies Acts. I understand the hon. Gentleman's concern, but I believe any action of this sort to be premature, pre-empting, as it would, consideration by the receivers of the relevant facts. Before I clarify certain important aspects of the receivers' role, I shall outline the responsibilities of the Department's investigation branch, because in my experience there is a significant degree of misunderstanding about how investigations are set in train and about the principles on which we act to use the powers available to us.

The hon. Gentleman asked me to investigate under the various powers that we have, but the companies investigation branch follows up investigations under the Companies Act 1985, the Companies Act 1989, the Financial Services Act 1986 and the Insurance Companies Act 1982, where appropriate. The investigative powers can be used only when the Secretary of State thinks that there is good reason to do so. In a typical case, if there are sufficient grounds to suspect fraud, misfeasance or serious misconduct, inquiries may be authorised under section 447 of the Companies Act 1985, as amended by the Companies Act 1989. Those investigations are confidential and are not generally announced. Prosecutions are instituted when the investigations bring to light misconduct of a criminal nature. The reports that the Department receives when such an investigation has been authorised are confidential. We have no powers under the Act to publish them and cannot do so.

That pall of secrecy which inevitably surrounds the investigation under that section of the Act creates some confusion about the circumstances in which the Department can act. It often raises in the minds of those who are suspicious the inference that perhaps we have something to hide and are trying to effect a cover-up. I

assure the hon. Member for Knowsley, North that the Department has no interest whatever in covering up fraud, misfeasance or other misconduct in companies. On the contrary, in recent years we have significantly tightened the available penalties, and the circumstances in which we are able to take action against errant company directors have been significantly extended in the Company Directors Disqualification Act 1986.

Hon. Members asked my Department questions about Clarke Foods and requested an inquiry. Before any decision can be taken on whether an investigation beyond that carried out by the receiver is warranted, considerably more information will be required. I shall consider any information that has been provided in the debate and I shall carefully consider submissions by any hon. Member who would like to write to me.

Mr. George Howarth: Will the Minister confirm that the receiver has scope in his report to cover the issue of share dealing and my allegations that there is possible evidence of insider trading? Will he also confirm that, even as this stage, he could ask for an interim report?

Mr. Hamilton: Insider dealing is dealt with under a different section of the Companies Act, section 177. If the receiver suspects material fraud and has the evidence to back it, it is incumbent on him to present that information in his report. We would be able to take that into account in deciding whether to take action under the various powers that are available to us.

I warn hon. Members of the danger of assuming that there is something suspicious about every insolvency. Grounds for suspicion are not made stronger merely by virtue of large sums being involved. It is important and a basic principle of natural justice that Ministers who are given these heavy responsibilities, the exercise of which can have a significant impact on those who are subjected to them, must use them conscientiously and only in circumstances where we believe it to be reasonable on the facts to do so. It would be wrong for Ministers to exercise those functions arbitrarily and in cases where they did not have to satisfy themselves that there was "a serious case to answer on the facts as revealed to us."

Prima facie evidence to justify an investigation cannot be gathered in every case, even though the consequences of whatever has happened have been a disaster for many people, as is the case with several hundred constituents of hon. Members who are present for the debate. We must exercise our powers within the law and must not exceed them through excessive liberality in their interpretation.

Many companies that fail do so for genuine reasons. Insolvency is not necessarily accompanied by dishonest motives, nor are all directors of failed companies guilty of misconduct. In this instance, I must satisfy myself that the ingredients of dishonest motive, or other motives of that kind, are present before I can use these rather draconian powers. It is not a pleasant experience to be investigated under the powers of the Companies Act. The rigour of such an investigation cannot be fully appreciated unless one is involved in some capacity in the process. As the Minister responsible, I have come to understand that very well in the six months or so that I have held this office.

In a case such as Clarke Foods where the company has gone into administrative receivership, the administrative receiver has a duty to report to the Secretary of State if he forms the view that the conduct of a director makes him unfit to run a company. The hon. Member for Knowsley, North spoke about that. In practice, those reports are submitted to my officials in the Insolvency Service's disqualification unit. It is then a matter for the Secretary of State's discretion whether it is expedient and in the public interest to apply to the court for a disqualification order against the director who is the subject of the report. In determining the application, the court has to have regard to those aspects of conduct specifically mentioned in the Company Directors Disqualification Act 1986. These include breach of duty, misapplication of assets, responsibility for the causes of the company's failure, preferences and a breach of statutory duty.

The events that the hon. Member for Knowsley, North described in respect of Mr. Clarke's other companies in the United States could not, I understand, be brought within the areas to which we have to have regard in taking decisions under legislation in this country. That is because the definition of a company for the purposes of the Act, which is set out in section 22(2), includes any company which may be wound up under part V of the Insolvency Act which applies, of course, only to companies registered in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Kilfoyle: The Minister spoke about whether it would be expedient and in the public interest for the Secretary of State to recommend an inquiry on the basis of the receiver's report. Is he now saying that the record in another country of a company director in this country has no bearing whatever, even if it involves fraud or criminal acts?

Mr. Hamilton: I am open to correction, but my understanding of the Company Directors Disqualification Act is that the companies to which it applies are only those that are incorporated in the United Kingdom. Earlier, I said "registered": I should have said "incorporated". I shall check that matter, as I am speaking off the top of my head, and it is dangerous to do that when trying to be as helpful as possible at the Dispatch Box. If I have inadvertently misled the hon. Gentleman, I shall inform him and see what we can do to remedy the defect.

In deciding whether disqualification proceedings should be brought the Secretary of State must have regard to a number of matters. Can he satisfy the requirements about evidence placed on him by the courts? Part of the problem that we would face in this case is the acquisition of evidence to prove that which is alleged in court. When dealing with a foreign jurisdiction, it is difficult to be sure that the facts which gave rise to an offence in another country would be relevant to a prosecution for a similar offence in this country. That is because the elements of the crime, or whatever the charge, and the standards of proof may be different. A variety of factors would have to be considered. It is not certain that the evidence to be placed before the court would necessarily be as meaningful as evidence derived from experience in relation to a British company in the United Kingdom. That is my surmise of what I understood the position to be. I shall check that to ensure that my understanding is correct.

We should have to take into account also whether there is a reasonable prospect of the disqualification order on the company director being made. Prosecutors always have to bear that point in mind. If they believe that their prosecution will not succeed, it will not be possible for them to bring the case before the court.

[Mr. Hamilton]

We must take into account also any factors that, in the public interest, would weigh against bringing proceedings. However, if proceedings are taken and a conviction is obtained, the director is disqualified and the order that is made by the court can run for between two and 15 years. In some cases, the maximum penalty has been exacted, and that is a significant tightening of the powers in respect of misfeasance on the part of company directors, an offence that has been in existence for only four years. That shows how seriously the Government take company fraud and other malpractice.

As the administrative receivers need time to consider all the relevant facts, the legislation allows them up to six months to do so. In the case of Clarke Foods, that period will elapse in April next year and I cannot anticipate what the receivers will find or whether they will consider it necessary to submit a report.

Mr. George Howarth: Will the Minister confirm that he has the power to ask the administrative receivers to produce an interim report? In those circumstances, would it not be sensible to do so?

Mr. Hamilton: I can ask the receiver to produce an interim report and, if the hon. Gentleman asks me to do so, I shall; but I cannot say whether the receivers will agree to do so.

In all the circumstances, it would be more sensible not to pre-empt the outcome of the inquiries by proceeding with a Companies Act investigation at this stage. After all, if the receivers have discovered information that throws light on some criminal activities or some other breach of the law, they will bring that forward in due course. It would make it more difficult for us to take action that would succeed in the hon. Gentleman's aim of bringing miscreants to justice if that is what proves to be the case. I cannot prejudge the facts on the company.

We want to ensure that all the relevant ingredients of an offence can be proved, and we shall not be able to take action until we have sufficient information to enable us to do that. I wonder how far an interim report would help to take us further down the road towards a realisation of the hon. Gentleman's objective, which is the same as mine —to ensure that if there has been wrongdoing, it is exposed and, where possible, punished.

I take seriously the points made by all hon. Members in the debate and, although I cannot prejudge what may be discovered, I shall give them the promise that if we discover wrongdoing and form the view, in conscientious exercise of our power, that disqualification proceedings or further action should be taken, the Department will have no hesitation in taking it.

Mr. Harry Greenway: The request made by the hon. Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth) and my hon. Friend's response are of the utmost importance. None the less, as far as I can see, they will not be putting any money back into the pockets of the work force, which is what those workers will be most concerned about. Will my hon. Friend support my moral contention that someone, somewhere, ought to support an ex gratia payment to the work force?

Mr. Hamilton: It would be wrong for me to give an opinion on that. If there is no legal obligation on any company to make a payment, it would be improper for Ministers to lean on it and exert what my hon. Friend calls moral pressure. It is for him to make the case, as I am sure that he has been doing and will continue to do, that his constituents deserve an ex gratia payment. However, it is not for Ministers to use their position to influence companies or private individuals to do more than the law requires. That would be to abuse the power of my office, because I would have no means to distinguish in different cases between deserving and undeserving cases, especially where there are significant elements of subjectivity.

Mr. Kilfoyle: Is not the crux of such problems, which occur far too often, that, right at the back of the queue in all the assessments—legal, moral or whatever—are the employees? Commitments to the employees go out the window with the start of the legal arguments about the responsibility on one company in a takeover of another. In this instance, I am sure that Mr. Clarke will thrive and prosper no matter what he does but, as the hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) said, the employees will suffer.

Mr. Hamilton: It is incontestable that the employees are already suffering. In so far as they become creditors of the company, they are not treated any differently from any other creditors. They are not disadvantaged through being employees. Through the Insolvency Act 1986, which was a significant reform of the law, we have tried to reduce the number of preferred creditors so as not to disadvantage individuals who might not be as able to defend their own interests as some of the public authorities or companies that might be preferred creditors of the company concerned.

I disagree with the hon. Gentleman's implication that, under the present law, insolvency provisions discriminate against employees. They are in the same position as other creditors, but many of their rights are protected by law —for example, under the redundancy payments schemes —and the Department of Employment will make the necessary payments to them.

All hon. Members can sympathise with that. Unfortunately, I can do little more than express that sympathy, but I reiterate the promise that I gave before my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North intervened. If any wrongdoing is revealed, and we can take action, we shall not hesitate to do so.

Small Businesses (Deregulation)

7.28 pm

Mr. Gyles Brandreth (City of Chester): Despite having the dubious distinction of once featuring in "The Guinness Book of Records" for making the longest-ever after-dinner speech, when I spoke non-stop for 12½ hours, I shall not be detaining the House for long tonight. However, I welcome the opportunity to bring the House a message from Chester, and in particular the Chester chamber of commerce. This body of men and women are men and women who, when the business community is referred to, like to be known as "the business community" or "business people" rather than business men. That is an aside, but an important one. Ministers often refer to the business community as business men, just as they refer to consumers as housewives. The business community is the business community and consumers are consumers.

The Minister knows that the business community in Chester is active and articulate because recently, in his dual role with responsibilities for corporate affairs and for the north-west, he came to Chester for a lively and useful dialogue with the chamber of commerce, in which we exchanged views, and I reckon that he learnt a great deal.

The message that I bring from Chester, and from the chamber of commerce, is simply this: it is vitally important for the burdens imposed on business by Government to be kept to an absolute minimum. That applies particularly to small businesses, which form the backbone of our corporate life in Chester. Small businesses simply have not the resources to spend a lot of time filling in forms that serve little or no useful purpose.

I have been in business myself. I recall that, at the time of the 1987 general election, only some 21 per cent. of new Members of Parliament had had any experience of business or manufacturing, but I know that people who are in business from day to day do not want to have to fill in endless forms. The Government can take some credit for moving in the right direction: deregulation has been an important element of Government strategy since 1979, and advances have been made, from the abolition of exchange controls to the withdrawal of some 5,000 business forms. Nevertheless, there is always the danger of new regulations creeping into the system—regulations that are either too complicated or simply unnecessary. They can come from a range of sources: national Government, local government, bye-laws and EC directives.

Tomorrow, I shall present a ten-minute Bill which aims to introduce plain language to commercial contracts. Tonight, on behalf of small businesses, I urge the Minister to ensure that what regulations do exist are kept as simple as possible. I salute the Department of Trade and Industry for what has been achieved so far.

Earlier today, I had the pleasure and privilege of presenting the 13th annual plain English awards. I was but a poor substitute for the Prince of Wales—or the Earl of Chester, as some of us like to think of him—who was unable to attend, and sent his apologies. I will quote those apologies, because they are relevant to the debate. The Prince of Wales wrote, from Kensington Palace:

"Due to a frequent regrettable inability to prevent my presence in other locations, I find that I must convey to you my goodwill in a correspondence format. It was when I was still a juvenile future constitutional figurehead substitute that I first became sensitised by mother-tongue abuse awareness. How many of us, I wonder, when faced with pretentious gobbledegook and empty jargon, experience a kick start into despair mode? My feelings towards all of you at today's Awards are, attitudinally, those of enormous encouragement . . . God bless the Plain English Campaign."

I do not quite say, "God bless the Department of Trade and Industry", but I do salute Companies house, which is an executive agency of the DTI. It produces a lot of information to help companies avoid the many pitfalls of company law. A Companies house document won an award today: it is called "10 excuses for not filling company accounts and what Companies house thinks of them". I salute the DTI agency. During my short time in the House, I have noticed that hon. Members spend a great deal of time criticising Government agencies and flinging brickbats, and I think the occasional bouquet is in order. A bouquet was certainly forthcoming today, because this no-nonsense booklet gets its point across. It carefully demolishes the 10 most common excuses for not filing company accounts—and it is put in simple language too. I am pleased to say that it is one of those Government documents that are as modern as tomorrow, while being presented in a very simple style. It has not opted for an unnecessary use of colour, but it is quite legible.

The booklet begins by telling us that this is not just a "lot of red tape". It then tells us why, taking us through all the excuses that small businesses use for not filling in forms. For example, they may say, "I cannot afford it". The answer comes back,

"Can you afford not to? Apart from risking a fine and a criminal conviction, think of the impression that your failure to file accounts gives to those you do business with. And its effect on your credit rating."

There is the answer—in a couple of dozen words, not of gobbledegook but of straightforward business talk.

The last of the 10 excuses for not filing accounts really sums up the no-nonsense approach of the booklet. The reply to the excuse

"I didn't know I had to"

is "You do now." I hope that the Minister will pass on my congratulations to the head of the London office of Companies house, Alan Bryant, on the work that he and his team did in producing such a clear leaflet. We want more clear leaflets.

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): This document is obviously important to small businesses. Does it refer to the forms that are sent to small businesses, particularly those in the building trade, by water authorities demanding information about certain matters? What does the DTI say to bodies unconnected with Government that demand form filling and lengthy question answering before small businesses can operate?

Mr. Brandreth: I entirely agree with the hon. Gentleman. The leaflet to which I have referred is designed to encourage small businesses to file their accounts properly, and it explains to them, in straightforward business terms, why it is important for them to do so. There are many regulations that we do not like, but I think that I am right in saying that the Government are not anti-regulation; they want deregulation—fewer regulations, simpler regulations and only the necessary regulations. I regard the filing of a VAT return to Customs and Excise on a quarterly basis as a necessary evil: it has spin-off benefits for small businesses, because it can help them to keep their accounts more effectively.

[Mr. Brandreth]

The point made by the hon. Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) is not answered in the leaflet, but I hope that the Minister will answer it, because I consider it valid.

We want simple forms, and we want as few of them as possible. We also want as few regulations as possible. One of the problems of the Minister's very existence is that, because he exists, he has work to do. I trust that he is working for his own redundancy: we want to secure sufficient deregulation not to need a Minister for deregulation any longer, the whole thing having become sufficiently simplified for him to be able to move on to even greater things in a Government whom he already adorns with such style, distinction, acumen and scholarship. Having buttered up the Minister to such an extent, I hope that I will get the right answers from him later—otherwise Chester will want to know why not!

Some of the regulations about which my constituency complain have turned out to be phantom regulations. I received a number of telephone calls, and several letters, a week or two ago, following a television report that was shown in the north west. It may have been seen in other parts of the country. It featured a European Community regulation which, apparently, would require fishermen—I suppose that, in this context, I must tolerate the use of the word "fishermen" rather than the word "fisherperson"—to wear hairnets. The programme showed fishermen wearing hairnets, looking embarrassed and running down the regulation. I was of course appalled to discover that the European Community was insisting that fishermen wear hairnets, but it turned out not to be true—it was one of many phantom regulations.

The Community has agreed that there should be a high standard of cleanliness on board fishing vessels but that does not mean that fishermen must wear hairnets. It is left to member states to decide the appropriate standards of hygiene. I understand from the Department of Trade and Industry that headgear is not included. I imagine that the measure was confused with a directive agreed last year on hygiene standards for fish processing and packaging plants on land, which is an example of necessary regulation. We all want high standards of hygiene and business requires them—that is the fine line which must be drawn between unnecessary regulations and regulations that will lift standards and improve life for businesses.

It was extraordinary that in the same post I received letters telling me that jams and cakes sold on charity stalls would need to comply with European Community labelling requirements. Again, I was requested to speak to the Minister in charge of deregulation to ensure that that was one of the first regulations that he repealed. It turns out that it was another phantom regulation. Food sold on charity stalls for the benefit of a society officially registered under the Industrial and Provident Societies Act 1965 or food sold for anything other than commercial gain at, for example, school fêtes and church bazaars—the type of event which we are rather good at in Chester—is exempted from the general labelling requirements which are designed to assist the consumer. Therefore, it is not a regulation that needs to be withdrawn.

I sometimes feel that as a country we always want to believe the worst in everything. We half want such regulations to be true so that we can complain about them, like people who enjoy collecting examples of gobbledegook because it is fun to mock them. I want to see the best in everything. I know that under their deregulation initiative, the Government are working to minimise the administrative and regulatory burdens on business and to cut unnecessary and outdated regulation by improving the focus and administration of essential regulation. We accept that some regulation is necessary but please, let us keep it to a minimum by taking into account the views of business people when framing new policies and regulations, especially with regard to the potential cost of compliance.

I salute the Minister because it is one thing to say that one will take into account the views of business and welcome letters from people saying what they want, but it is another to travel to a chamber of commerce meeting—as he did—and listen to and make note of what people said and promise to take action. I shall prove how effective the Minister can be and he can confirm the veracity of what I am about to say.

During the meeting at Chester college of further education there were repeated demands for a cut in interest rates. The Minister had to take a break and left the room. He returned half an hour later bringing news from the Chancellor of the Exchequer that, during the meeting, the decision had been taken to bring down interest rates by a further percentage point. He is very much a Minister who delivers, and the Chester chamber of commerce sends a serious message of gratitude.

To operate effectively, businesses need rules and regulations, but they need them to be kept to an absolute minimum. Those which are enforced should be clear, simple and light.

7.44 pm

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): We are fortunate to have the opportunity to discuss deregulation as it affects small businesses. The hon. Member for City of Chester (Mr. Brandreth) mentioned a number of reasons for deregulation, but regulations covering small businesses involve Departments other than the Department of Trade and Industry. The Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs may be responsible for deregulation, but other Departments are involved in creating regulations which target small businesses.

The hon. Member for City of Chester mentioned the Treasury and told the story of how the Minister left a meeting in Chester and returned to say that the Chancellor had just announced a reduction in interest rates. Clearly, one must take the Treasury into account when considering small businesses. From time to time, there is a need for more regulation of small businesses, especially when banks are involved. On 27 October I wrote to the Chancellor of the Exchequer requesting that he take action against banks which were levying exorbitant charges on small businesses.

A constituent had written to tell me that a bank had raised its charges by 500 per cent. in one quarter earlier this year. If there is a call for regulation involving small businesses, it is to ensure that banks cannot attack small businesses in such a way. Banks may be having difficulties in making ends meet, but it should not be taken out on small businesses.

When considering deregulation, I hope that the Minister will consider a point made by a Treasury colleague who, in a letter to me dated 13 November—only

a few days ago—wrote that it was impossible for the Government to intervene when banks applied such pressure on small businesses. He stated:

"I am afraid that there is nothing directly that the Government can do to help since the level of charges applied by the banks for particular services is a matter for the commercial judgment of the banks and is not something in which the Government can intervene."

If there is a need for regulation, it is on the issue of bank charges.

When a small business person enters into an agreement with a bank, certain assurances are given, but the bank has the power to increase its charges without notice to the client. Although I agree with the principle beind the debate—deregulation of Government intervention in small businesses—there is sometimes a need for additional regulation and, from time to time, the Government should consider what small businesses have to face.

One of the highlights of this period is the fact that small businesses are finding it difficult to make ends meet and to keep themselves alive. The reason is invariably that they are subcontracted to large undertakings that go into liquidation, which has an effect on small businesses. Reducing regulations is important, but the Minister should consider additional regulations where necessary. The banks impose exorbitant charges for their services. A regulation should be introduced to control bank charges and the Government should intervene to ensure that there is fair play at all times between banks and small businesses.

Another question concerns Government regulations on the rating of small businesses. I realise that it is not the Minister's Department that issues regulations in that respect for small businesses. The hon. Member for City of Chester referred to the Treasury, and I accept that Treasury regulations need to apply to small businesses. The Department of the Environment also issues regulations concerning small businesses.

I hope that the Minister will analyse the regulations that apply to small businesses, especially the uniform business rate. All non-domestic rates are paid directly to the Government. Small businesses, often as a result of Government policy, find it difficult to continue in business because the rates demand means that about one third of their income is taken by rates. There is need to reconsider the regulations that control the rates for small businesses.

The Government's philosophy, which I do not support, is that large companies should pay the rate poundage as small companies do. In many instances, about 30 per cent. of the profits of small companies are taken to pay the rates. For large companies, the sum needed to pay the rates may be only about 3 per cent. of their profits. There is an anomaly there.

The regulations on non-domestic rates should be reconsidered. If small companies have difficulties in making ends meet, the regulations should be amended so that such companies can have a rate rebate to help them over a difficult period. Such a measure could be introduced in co-operation with local government. There is no reason why the Government should not consider a rate rebate for small businesses.

I assume that there is a periodic review of how the uniform business rate applies to small businesses. The Minister should examine the possibility of giving a rate rebate to businesses that are in difficulties. I make that point because the Government encouraged people to invest in small businesses. Many people in my constituency and elsewhere mortgaged their homes and everything they had to set themselves up in business. As a result of recession and hardship, families lose everything if the businesses goes into liquidation. A little Government help in the form of a rate rebate might have got them over a difficult period. When the Minister considers the question of regulation, or deregulation, he shoould consider carefully whether there should be a rate rebate for businesses that find themselves in difficulties.

The Minister should also give further consideration to the question of loans to businesses. The hon. Member for City of Chester gave the example of the Minister advising Cheshire chamber of commerce of a reduction of 1 per cent. in the bank rate. All the Minister had to do was to go outside, lift up the telephone and talk to the Chancellor of the Exchequer or to Treasury officials. The Minister should discuss with his Treasury colleagues the possibility of there being a sliding scale under which small businesses which are having difficulties could be given a concession in the form of a reduction in interest charges. Over the past few years, interest charges for small businesses have been very high.

In an intervention, I spoke about the attitude of water companies. I accept that the Government can act only on the regulations for which they are responsible, but I assume that there is nothing to stop the Government considering the legislation that controls the utilities, especially the water companies. There should be a regulation that prevents the water companies from putting pressures on small businesses in the shape of the forms and questionnaires that they have to complete. Small companies should be allowed to continue in business without having such demands placed on them, especially by the water companies.

Yorkshire Water is responsible for the control of effluent in my constituency. Yorkshire Water demands that companies put money up front. In one case, a small company could not meet all the demands. Some 90 jobs were lost because the water authority could not and would not help that small company. One reason is that Yorkshire Water has a monopoly. Although I represent a constituent who is having difficulty with the water authority, I could not raise the matter in the House with any Minister. This is the only opportunity I have had to present my constituent's case. We are talking about deregulation, but there may be a case to introduce regulations to control the monopoly position of water companies and of other utilities.

It is all very well for Ministers to say that there is a regulator for the water industry. The question is, who regulates the regulator? Who tells the regulator what is fair and what is wrong? Conservative Members support competition, but there is no competition in the water industry. The Minister responsible for deregulation should consider the way in which the water industry affects small businesses.

A few years ago, the association that represents small businesses called for the appointment of a Minister for Small Businesses. Conservative Members often refer to the last Labour Government. However, 13 years ago the last Labour Government had a Minister responsible for small businesses, but the Government have abolished that position.

I have no reason to doubt the sincerity of the hon. Member for City of Chester about small businesses. He admitted that he was involved with small businesses before

[Mr. William O'Brien]

he became a Member of this House. If he believes that small businesses should be fully represented, the Government must consider appointing a Minister responsible for small businesses who would answer questions about small businesses at the Dispatch Box.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs is halfway there as he is responsible for the interests of small businesses and for the regulations that apply to them. However, that does not go far enough. Perhaps we should consider the appointment of a Minister responsible for the interests of small businesses in total.

This debate is significant and important and I hope that the Minister will consider the issues that cause serious concern among many people who we represent in small businesses. We have been told that at least 70 to 80 small buinsesses go into liquidation each day as a result of the recession. We must do something to help those people and we can do that by pleading with the Minister to consider the regulations and, where they need amending to help small businesses, to amend them and where they need abolishing to help small businesses, to abolish them.

I hope that some action will be taken to help small businesses to survive because the Government have made it difficult for the small businesses that were encouraged to develop in the 1980s. The Government are now turning their back on them. They are not prepared to help them in any way, shape or form.

I hope that the Minister will consider my points about the banks and bank charges and about water companies and water charges. I hope that the Minister will consider the need for more investigation into the difficulties that small businesses face. The Government should introduce a rebate scheme to help small businesses over difficult periods.

Those are not unreasonable requests. The Government could attend to those issues without much difficulty. If the Government paid as much attention to the survival of small businesses as they paid to the survival of the pound on black Wednesday a few weeks ago, the country would be better off and small businesses would have a better opportunity to continue to be the backbone of the economy. I hope that the Minister will consider the points that I have made.

8.3 pm

Mr. Mike Hall (Warrington, South): It is a privilege to take part in this debate about the future of small businesses. The hon. Member for the City of Chester (Mr. Brandreth) considered the effects of deregulation on the small business community and my hon. Friend the Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) gave the Minister practical examples of how we might help small businesses in the British economy.

It is also a privilege to participate in this debate because the Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs, who is to reply, is the Minister responsible for small businesses. I have been advised that he is also the Minister responsible for the north-west. He is also a fellow Cheshire Member. I want to focus on the protection of small businesses and my remarks will have as much bearing on the Minister's constituency and that of the hon. Member for City of Chester as they will on mine.

I ask the Minister for practical help in relation to the protection of small businesses. He should use the powers of the Department of Trade and Industry to intervene in respect of what might be considered a larger fish in this particular pond.

I sought an assurance from the Prime Minister in Prime Minister's Question Time that he would intervene on behalf of the future of ICI which employs 4,000 people in the constituency of my right hon. Friend the Member for Halton (Mr. Oakes) in the chlora-alkali factory in Runcorn. The great majority of my constituents work in that factory which has seen a 60 per cent. increase in its electricity prices since April 1991. If it cannot negotiate a reduction in electricity prices or benefit from bulk purchases, 4,000 jobs will go at Runcorn ICI.

One can imagine the impact of that loss of productive capacity on the small businesses in Runcorn and, more generally, on the small businesses in the north-west. That loss may also have an adverse effect on the British economy and that would have a major effect on small businesses in general.

Another 3,000 ICI workers are involved in associated productions with the chora-alkali factory. It has been estimated that between 10,000 and 17,000 jobs will be lost in associated production if ICI closes the factory in Runcorn. That haemorrhage of jobs will have a major impact on the small business community in the north-west and particularly in my constituency as 16,000 of my electors live in the Runcorn area.

I want the Minister to focus on the following statistic when he considers how best to help small businesses in my community. In my part of the Runcorn constituency unemployment is 17·4 per cent. and that costs £13,554,000 in unemployment benefit and lost taxation. That amount of money is being taken away from the local economy and paid in unemployment benefit. It could be better spent to protect the small business community.

If the Minister is horrified at that statistic, he should consider what would happen if ICI closed the chlora-alkali factory. If we consider the associated job losses in small businesses that supply ICI, we are looking at £153 million or perhaps £198 million in money lost to the Government.

The Government could intervene and secure the future for ICI and, therefore, the future of small businesses in the community. The chlora-alkali factory in Runcorn uses 1 per cent. of the production of the national grid. If the factory closes, that 1 per cent. of national grid production will not be purchased and that will force up electricity prices for small businesses throughout the United Kingdom. The Minister should use his powers in the Department of Trade and Industry to intervene in that respect.

I welcome the President of the Board of Trade saying that he would intervene to protect industry before breakfast, before dinner and before tea. Intervening in big business—in respect of ICI—would have a major effect on securing the future of small businesses in my constituency.

I suspect that the Government may already have decided that they are not going to intervene. In a letter to the leader of Halton borough council about the future of ICI, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment, Viscount Ullswater, stated:

"Should major redundancies occur, then the Employment Service (ES) and local Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs) offer a wide range of options to help unemployed people find jobs, retrain or set up businesses on their own . . .

'Local Action for Employment—Tackling Job Losses', which sets out the way in which TECs, the ES and Local Action Groups are helping individuals and communities respond to job losses."

The best way to respond to the potential loss of small businesses in Runcorn and elsewhere in the north-west is for the Government to intervene in a major way on behalf of ICI.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs (Mr. Neil Hamilton): I am listening to the hon. Gentleman with great care. For greater clarification and so I can give some thought to the matter, which particular powers available to us in the DTI would the hon. Gentleman like us to use which would not fall foul of European Community competition law?

Mr. Hall: I am grateful for the Minister's intervention. I shall conclude my contribution by saying precisely why the Department of Trade and Industry should intervene and why that would be possible without offending EC regulations. The Minister should be a little more patient as I do not have much longer to speak.

ICI wrote to me and to the Minister concerned, because he is a Cheshire Member whose constituency is affected by the problem, saying:

"You will probably also be aware of the threat which this poses to the entire sector of UK manufacturing industry which is based upon the chlora-alkali manufacture".

That affects small and large businesses alike and it is relevant to the debate. The second paragraph of the letter states:

"In attempting to address this problem, ICI has had extensive discussions with the Generators, the RECs and the Regulator, but has been unable to find a solution within the current regulatory framework. The only possible route to a solution now lies through intervention by the Department of Trade and Industry with whom discussions continue."

The hon. Member for City of Chester said that burdens placed upon businesses must be kept to an absolute minimum. I agree with that. The burden that has been placed upon ICI with regard to the price that it must pay for its electricity could have a major impact on the small business community in my constituency. When I asked the Prime Minister to intervene, he said:

"I cannot intervene in the way in which the hon. Gentleman invites me to, and it would not be right for me to do so."—[*Official Report*, 19 November 1992; Vol. 214, c. 409.]

PowerGen and National Power, from whom ICI directly buys its electricity, are 40 per cent. owned by the Government. The Government are the major shareholder. In consultation with the Prime Minister, the DTI could exercise its rights as the major shareholder to ensure that ICI is given a fair deal on electricity prices. To refuse to intervene in that way would condemn 4,000 direct jobs, 3,000 associated jobs in ICI, and 10,000 to 15,000 other jobs.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: What impact would it have in Brussels if we were to do as the hon. Gentleman invites us? What would Sir Leon Brittan, the competition commissioner, have to say to the Government?

Mr. Hall: The straightforward answer is that it would be wrong for me to presume what Sir Leon Brittan might say—I am not in a position to do so. I guess that he would be very supportive. He would see nothing wrong in ICI being given a bulk-purchase discount, because bulk-purchase discounts are a feature of the business community writ large. I am sure that that feature is prominent also in France and Germany.

The Minister could give an assurance that he will intervene because of the potentially large number of job losses in the constituency of Halton, in my own constituency, and in the constituencies of Tatton, City of Chester and Ellesmere Port and Neston. I would be grateful if, at this late stage, he would intervene on behalf of small and big businesses alike. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to address the House.

8.12 pm

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): It is a great pleasure to take part in the debate, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As one who is active in a small business called Featherstone Rovers, I commiserate in yesterday's result in Lancashire. St. Helens took them to pieces. Hon. Members can rest assured that Featherstone Rovers will once again represent successful small business in terms of winning rugby league cups.

The debate has been good-hearted. Behind the hype on the two Front Benches there is much common ground about how to develop small businesses and find practical ways and means to bring about partnership arrangements in the public and private sectors to develop local economies and the key role that small businesses play in local economies. I remember watching the hon. Member for City of Chester (Mr. Brandreth) as the agony aunt on TV-am when I was hospitalised for a long period. The hon. Gentleman kept me going in the mornings between the painkillers and the nurse manipulating my back. I thank him for that brief respite from the rigours of treatment.

If we are to reach common agreement about the role of small business and its relationship with the public and private sectors, whether large-scale or medium-scale companies as subcontractors or directly providing goods and services, particularly in the north-west and in the Yorkshire, Humberside and northern regions, we have to accept that the small businesses that were created in the 1980s are now under great strain. Thousands have already gone to the wall. Consequently, there has been a loss of employment opportunities for people in already devastated communities, and the individuals who ran small businesses have lost not only their businesses but their homes, their life savings and their resources. On many occasions, they have lost redundancy payments.

One reason for that is the Government's colossal mistake in terms of interest rates. Interest rates have come down recently, but for tens of thousands of businesses it was too late. Businesses that are still struggling need further information from the Government on what they intend to do. Businesses are hanging on by their fingertips. They need information to be able to continue and, when we come out of recession, to be involved in the development of our local industrial base. The other reason is the way in which large institutions treat small businesses. Big business, month after month, failed to pay for the goods and services provided by small companies. In my constituency, companies have literally gone to the wall or have had to shed labour simply because larger companies have regularly refused to pay for goods and services. The Government owe it to small businesses to provide greater

[Mr. Ian McCartney]

protection when large companies use small businesses as a free banking system and thereby risk the good management and financial stability of small companies.

The DTI has responsibility for small businesses and large manufacturing industries not only in the regions of Scotland and Wales but in Northern Ireland. In my area, by deliberate Government policy, large companies have suffered severe difficulties, and that has undermined the fabric of the local economy and risked substantial numbers of small businesses. When I became a Member of Parliament, my area contained more than 10 collieries either within its boundaries or in its travel-to-work area. Parkside colliery, in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans), was the last colliery in the Lancashire coalfield to remain open, and it is now one of the 10 under threat of closure in the 90-day procedures.

Mr. Hall: Will my hon. Friend consider the future of the Point of Ayr colliery in north Wales? It sells 80 per cent. of its coal to Fiddlers Ferry power station, which is also threatened and might face a similar fate as that of the Parkside miners.

Mr. McCartney: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. I relate that remark to the position of subcontracting small businesses and what is happening to them during the 90-day period, to what is happening to the long-wall mining subcontractors and main contractors, and to the small companies that provide goods and services to them, and to the need for the Government to take some logical decisions.

Mr. William O'Brien: I am listening carefully to what my hon. Friend is saying. He is following the track that I laid, which is that, although the Minister may be responsible for deregulating small businesses, there is a need for additional regulations to defend the mining machinery industry and other industries for which protection is necessary. The Minister should take that issue on board. I wonder whether my hon. Friend would consider that matter.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. I remind the hon. Gentleman that the debate is about deregulation as it relates to small businesses, so he should confine his remarks to that.

Mr. McCartney: I am well aware of the content of the debate, and I do not intend to stray from it. It is important to highlight the fact that we can regulate to assist some small businesses and deregulate some of them when regulation does not assist them.

The regulatory body for the coal industry has failed, which has resulted in tens of thousands of jobs in small businesses and mining communities being threatened. Many of those jobs have already gone. In my constituency, and in the constituencies of my hon. Friends the Members for Wigan (Mr. Stott) and for Leigh (Mr. Cunliffe), Gullick Dobson is a classic example of a company whose future is at stake because of the way in which the electricity supply industry's regulatory body has interpreted the electricity regulations. In the past few years since the introduction of privatisation, Gullick Dobson has shed 70 per cent. of its work force and its United Kingdom market has shrunk to virtually nothing. Because of that shrinkage, the whole concept of its export market is put at risk. Its inability to have a market at home means that it cannot produce for an overseas market.

Many small businesses, such as fitters' companies, shot blasters, machine tool companies and transportation companies, are linked to the long-wall mining industry. In turn, they are linked to the decisions of the regulator through the Department of Trade and Industry because the mining industry is the largest employer. Therefore, there is a direct link between deregulation of large companies and the consequences for small companies when the regulatory machinery fails.

Another example of the failure of regulatory machinery which threatens the financial viability of small businesses is the regulatory body for tariffs and small users of electricity. It is scandalous that companies such as the North Western electricity board, the Merseyside and North-Western electricity board, the Eastern electricity board and the South-Eastern electricity board impose substantial tariffs that undermine the financial viability of small companies. The viability of local economies is threatened by such companies because they have a monopoly of the supply of electricity.

The electricity suppliers make huge profits. Competitors abroad cannot believe their luck when they see what the British regulatory framework and the electricity supply industry do to large, medium and small businesses.

It is outrageous that the regulatory body has failed to take into account the effect of the pricing policy on small businesses. Having seen that effect, the President of the Board of Trade has failed to take any action against the regulator to rein in the profit-making activities of the supply industry which undermine small businesses in the United Kingdom.

Another sector in which a lack of regulation has affected small businesses is the housing investment programme of the Department of the Environment. The Minister should speak to the Secretary of State for the Environment about how the regulations have been framed and how local authorities disperse the resources for the housing investment programme. Millions of pounds which would go directly to small businesses in the private sector for housing refurbishment, housing development, new starts and new partnership schemes between the public and private sectors and the private and voluntary sectors have been held up. Those programmes will not take place as a result of the way in which the Government operate the housing investment programme.

If we are serious about getting out of the recession, we must recognise that one of the main vehicles is the businesses in the building supply and construction industries. The Minister knows that small businesses in the north-west are contracted to large companies, local authorities and housing associations which work in the voluntary sector. The Minister could make a dramatic input into the recovery by persuading his colleagues in the Department of the Environment to take some action.

Mr. Hall: Does my hon. Friend agree that one way of stimulating small businesses is to allow housing investment programmes to introduce capital repair schemes, which are much easier and quicker to introduce than capital projects? Capital projects may take two or three years to come to fruition.

Mr. McCartney: My hon. Friend was a member of a finance committee of a local authority before coming here. He is absolutely right. The Government have suggested that the Conservative party is the party of small business and enterprise. However, when we see Conservative Members in action, we find that they are not the party of small business. Some of their activities and the way in which they interpret things are anti-enterprise. They believe that any investment in the public sector is bad, even though that investment goes directly through the local authority and the voluntary sector into the private sector.

Most of the public sector investment is picked up by small businesses in the private sector. The Government's ideological excuses and policies are a major stumbling block to small businesses in the construction industry. The Government owe it to the industry and those who are employed in it to conduct a serious review of their policies.

The President of the Board of Trade needs to talk to the Secretary of State for the Environment about the regulation of city grants. The regulations were introduced to ensure that capital projects took place in areas in which the Government deemed it necessary to build a local infrastructure. The regulations related to investment in which there was a direct input by the private sector, a direct benefit of jobs through the private sector and, especially, the creation of small businesses in the area designated by the Secretary of State for the grants.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wigan and his constituents, and my other colleagues in the north-west who represent areas which are taking part in the city grants, now find that the Department of the Environment is reinterpreting the regulations, which undermines confidence about the development of joint projects with small businesses in the community. That is unacceptable. We will not argue about whether city grants should be made available.

If the grants are part and parcel of the Government's policy because the major beneficiaries in the community are small businesses, why do they not just get on with it? Why do not the Government allocate the resources and say to local authorities, training agencies in the community and private firms involved in joint projects, "Here are the resources. Go away and get on with the job."? The Government should stop getting on the back of local authorities every five minutes of the day, changing decisions and rescheduling where the money should be spent. That undermines the extent to which small businesses in the community can bounce back.

Opposition Members do not accept that all that is necessary to rebuild the economy of Britain is to create 1 million small businesses. It was not true in the 1980s when Mrs. Thatcher said it; it is not true now. However, small businesses must be part and parcel of the overall economic objective to work with and link in with medium-sized and large companies, with the private sector and the public sector. With such a partnership it is possible to develop job opportunities for young people, people with skills, semi-skilled people, women and ethnic minorities.

Unless the Government take on that challenge we shall come back next year to unemployment at 4 million, growing desperation in the communities of the north-west and another lost opportunity. It will be another decade of young people without hope or opportunity. That is the challenge for the Government.

The challenge is not to take regulation off the back of industry. It is to work side by side with industry to develop new jobs, new opportunities and new markets. If the Government can meet the challenge, they will go some way towards removing the misery of mass unemployment in our region.

8.31 pm

Mr. Andrew Miller (Ellesmere Port and Neston): I offer my apologies to the hon. Member for City of Chester (Mr. Brandreth) for missing the first few minutes of his speech. I was in a meeting with a Minister to discuss a case which is a spin-off from the collapse of a small business and has had an effect on the domestic affairs of some of my constituents. I am grateful for the time that I spent with the Minister discussing that matter.

I have a particular interest in small businesses engaged in high technology. It is ironic that the debate was introduced by the hon. Member for City of Chester whom, as my neighbour, I have come to know reasonably well. I noted that a review in a magazine of a piece of software manufactured by a small business described the software as being somewhat like the hon. Member for City of Chester—"erudite as it is annoying."

I join the hon. Member for City of Chester in calling for deregulation and improvement of the resources and facilities available to small businesses, many of which in our area are suffering for some of the reasons that have been described by hon. Members on both sides of the House.

Businesses are suffering as a result partly of the regulatory regimes in force and partly of the spin-off of changes which impact on large industries which are themselves regulated. My hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Hall) made that point in the context of ICI. My hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) made the point in the context of the coal industry.

I recently met the Neston and Parkgate chamber of trade. The Minister represents a seat in the north-west so he will know that part of Cheshire; it is one of the nicest parts. The chamber of trade made several points which impact on the debate. It made precisely the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) about bank charges. It saw the problem in two ways. The first was the lack of control of banks. Banks can levy outrageous and variable interest rates and charges associated with the activities of small businesses in an unstructured way.

It also saw the problem in comparison with the system in other countries. The Minister asked in an intervention what he could do on some of the European issues. The chamber of trade made a comparison with the position in Germany. It is well known that small and large businesses in Germany can have assistance from the banking sector spread over a much longer period than is normally the case in the United Kingdom. Although that problem does not stem directly from the regulatory regime, the Minister and his colleagues from other Departments could take steps that would be of use to small businesses.

The chamber of trade also noted that several small businesses in the area had been set up by people who had received redundancy payments from larger companies which had shed labour for one reason or another. One of the most common factors in my area is that companies decide to dispose of what they describe as non-core activities. Those activities still have to be undertaken and

[Mr. Andrew Miller]

small enterprises often do so. On the face of it they are self contained but often they operate under the constraints and indirect management of the large companies for which they provide services.

There is a powerful argument that contracts established between small businesses and large multinationals in such circumstances should be controlled so that the small business is not so beholden to the large multinational that it cannot conduct its affairs in a fair and competitive way.

My hon. Friend the Member for Normanton also mentioned delays in payment by large companies. That is indirectly related to the regulatory regime. Small businesses often find themselves indirectly the bankers of the large multinationals by virtue of the policy of delayed payment of invoices and charges that they have incurred. That is a matter in which the Government could intervene directly by either introducing regulations or providing in the next Budget to ensure that small businesses are protected from such practices. It is clear that such practices are not only anti-competitive but can put small businesses out of existence.

Another aspect of the debate emerged today in a letter from one of my constituents. Mr. Brown has a small shoe repairing business. He wrote to me today saying that the proposed regulations on Sunday trading could put him out of business. I am aware that Sunday trading is not the subject of the debate but it must be considered when the House discusses the Sunday trading proposals. Whatever regulatory regime we decide to accept, we must take into account the small business sector. We cannot base our decisions solely on the interests of large supermarket chains, but must consider those of the entire retail and supply sector.

Mr. Neil Hamilton *indicated assent.*

Mr. Miller: I see the Minister nodding. That will be an important aspect of the Sunday trading debate.

Small businesses often tell me about their difficulties in getting what they see as a fair share of training resources. We have been told that the provision of the training and enterprise councils should have ensured that that problem did not exist. Many small businesses feel that they are disadvantaged over access to training, when compared with the local major players. Perhaps the Minister should study the regulatory regime which covers the TECs to ensure that small businesses are provided for adequately.

Several hon. Members have mentioned the building industry and clearly many small building companies are in extreme difficulties. The regulatory regimes that affect them could be improved and enhanced. However, as my hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield said, their needs go far beyond the realms of this debate.

The hon. Member for City of Chester referred to various phantom regulations. We can all quote chapter and verse of wonderful European Community stories, which inevitably turn out to be untrue, but are spread around by people—including some hon. Members—who do not have Europe at the centre of their hearts or wish to be at the heart of Europe. However, there are many real, and in some cases perfectly reasonable, regulations which need careful consideration.

Neston is a beautiful sandstone town. I am sure that the hon. Member for City of Chester knows it, and as we both have an interest in historic buildings, I am sure that he would agree that no one would want the character of such a town to be destroyed. The small traders of Neston have a difficulty. They want to improve security and shuttering at night because of increased crime levels, which have affected many constituencies. The local authority has said, reasonably, that because of the nature of the town and the character of the buildings it would be totally improper to make the place look like Fort Knox of an evening. The town needs to retain its character. No one in the House is likely to disagree about the fact that the aspirations of both parties are reasonable. The Minister could help small businesses by seeking ways to intervene to assist financing of projects when the interests of small businesses are in conflict with those of the national heritage.

I do not suggest that he should bail out large multinationals in such circumstances, but there is a powerful argument for better protection for the small enterprises which form the core of many of our small historic towns. As he is a Cheshire Member, I am sure that the Minister knows Neston. Perhaps there could be some improvement in the regulations governing the conduct of small businesses when they conflict with the proper interests of national heritage.

The hon. Member for City of Chester and I share another interest—the development of plain English, although sometimes his version does not coincide absolutely with mine. It is clear that many small businesses suffer because the forms and documents that they have to fill in are over-complicated and require them to engage laywers unnecessarily and at great expense. There is a powerful argument for regulations to require all Government Departments to ensure that documentation, wherever possible, will not require small businesses to involve expensive lawyers. That is not a plea for keeping lawyers out of everything. I know that some of them are also small businesses, but they are in a fairly privileged position.

I fundamentally disagree with the Government's handling of some local authority agencies which have recently sought to assist small businesses. A number of agencies were established by local authorities in the 1980s, under the general title of enterprise boards. I am sure that the Minister could quote chapter and verse to criticise enterprise boards, but some extremely successful experiments were conducted. Lancashire Enterprises is still working extremely well and supports small and medium-sized businesses in the area.

There is a place in our society for local organisations which are accountable at a local level. There is an important difference between such organisations and some of the existing agencies. Local organisations could help to stimulate and to promote small businesses, as they have a specialist knowledge of the local area.

My hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, South mentioned the number of small businesses which exist as a spin-off from larger enterprises and referred to ICI, and that was an important argument. About a week ago, my hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) told us about the huge number of jobs that hang on the back of Cammell Laird. Similarly, in my constituency there were 500 redundancies at Shell and, a few weeks before that, another 500 at British Nuclear Fuels. Because of the nature of those industries, they require a huge number of supply companies. As I said in the media when talking about the Shell redundancies, the knock-on effect will

carry on right the way down the chain to the man on the street corner who sells newspapers to people coming out of the plant. The multiplier effect is well known.

The Minister may say that it is outside his brief to consider the major redundancies that hon. Members have mentioned, but the knock-on effects need careful consideration. I do not know whether that is intervention before dinner. We shall not go through that again as it was tedious when we first heard it because we did not believe it. We need some Government involvement to ensure that proper support is given to the many small businesses that are being hit by major redundancies in the north-west.

Finally, it is interesting to note that hon. Members representing constituencies in the north of England have made the largest contribution to this debate. A significant number of contributions have been made by my hon. Friends. Contrary to the popular belief of those on the Government Benches, as evidenced by their jeers from time to time, our party is not opposed to enterprise and small business. Far from it, we want to see a thriving economy that, by the very nature of modern industry—given the rise of new technology companies—will be represented by small enterprises. They will need positive Government support. They do not need interfering regulations, but supportive ones, as my examples about the shutters in Neston and bank charges illustrated.

The Government must also remember, as my hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield said, that the activities and management of large enterprises have an indirect effect on small businesses, perhaps through a shareholding, which is vital to the success of small businesses down the chain.

I urge the Minister to consider the importance of that relationship between large and small businesses when he replies to the debate.

8.51 pm

Mr. Neil Hamilton: With the leave of the House, I shall reply to the debate.

First, I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for City of Chester (Mr. Brandreth) on giving me the opportunity to be here at this time of the evening. I had feared that I would be here much later, but, unusually, we have been able to have an extended debate on this important topic. I welcome that.

I welcome the fact that, as the hon. Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Mr. Miller) said, this debate has been dominated by the men of the north, including even the hon. Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon), whom I am delighted to see here. He took a fatherly interest in my career when I was in the Whips Office and I learnt a great deal from him which, should we ever go back into opposition, I shall put to good use. As that seems such an unlikely prospect, however, like so many of the qualifications that I have acquired during my life, I fear that those lessons will be condemned to eternal redundancy.

I also welcome the fact that the debate has been dominated not only by Members representing the north but by those representing Cheshire, including the hon. Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Hall), whose constituency abuts mine. Who knows, but for my intervention—canvassing in his constituency during the general election—he may not have been here this evening. It is a great pleasure to welcome hon. Friends on both sides of the House to the debate and even one from the other side of the Pennines, the hon. Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien), who was brave enough to poke his head over the western side of that mountain chain, metaphorically speaking.

I am sorry that the hon. Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney), which is in Lancashire, has had to leave. He informed me that he had to go to Broadmoor; I am not quite sure in what capacity, but no doubt that will be revealed in due course. I welcome all the contributions to the debate.

My hon. Friend the Member for City of Chester referred to the role that he had performed on behalf of the Prince of Wales and the Earl of Chester. I am not at all surprised that he has been selected to carry out that important role, because, before he became a Member, he was the clown prince of television. If one has a reputation for being amusing, however, it is difficult to convince people that one can ever be serious. I am afraid that my hon. Friend will have to bear that burden. I am sure that it is already evident to hon. Members and to his constituents, however, that the capacity to amuse is not at all inconsistent with the ability to represent one's constituents extremely effectively. My hon. Friend has already shown me in many respects that he can do that and I wish him a long and successful career in the House.

The subject of deregulation is extremely important. I must admit that I was somewhat disappointed when I assumed my office after the general election as the Minister for Corporate Affairs—in which capacity I am also responsible for company law—and took down two volumes from the bookshelf and compared their size. The 1980 Butterworth's Company Law Handbook had 486 pages, but the 1991 volume, which was the latest then available, had 3,544. That vast increase in complex legislation, no doubt much of it for desirable reasons, nevertheless demonstrates the increase in the regulatory burdens that have been put upon businesses of all kinds. Perhaps that is the most dramatic example of the way in which legislation has proliferated.

In front of me on the Table are the bound volumes of the product of all our labours since I entered the House in 1983. It is a frightening prospect when one considers that we have visited those laws upon the people. No doubt there is much in those volumes that is good, but no doubt there is much that is redundant or that, in retrospect, we now believe, perhaps, we should have done in a different way.

My job, although it is consistent with the desirable objective of protecting the public in a variety of ways, is to ensure that the burden of legislation and regulation is no more than is absolutely necessary in order to provide the protection that, on other grounds, we think is appropriate. So often, however, regulation remains on the statute book for years, decades and sometimes even centuries after the need for it was first appreciated and after the circumstances which gave rise to that need have long since disappeared.

There are all sorts of peculiarities on the statute book today at which we might be somewhat surprised. I have discovered that some of the more peculiar ones are in respect of betting offices. The Betting, Gaming and Lotteries Act 1963 (Schedule 4) (Amendment) Order 1986 makes the following requirement in a new para 8(i):

"No apparatus for making information or other material available in the form of visual images"—

[Mr. Neil Hamilton]

in plain English that means a television—

"shall be used on the licensed premises unless those images appear on a screen; and any screen so used shall not *(a)* exceed 30 inches wide."

I have no idea what gave rise to that restriction on the size of the television for use in a betting shop. As there is no restriction on the number of such sets that can be displayed inside a betting shop, the more innovatory of those establishments have attempted to get around the legislation by setting up a video wall of televisions.

In paragraph 10 we find the list of refreshments that may be sold on those premises which include,

"*(a)* biscuits (not including cakes);
(b) chocolates, sweets and similar confectionery;
(c) potato crisps, potato sticks, potato puffs and similar products made from the potato, or from potato flour, or from potato starch; and
(d) salted or roasted peanuts."

That is clear enough, but the consequences of being so prescriptive is that one cannot sell prawn crackers, which are made from rice flour; nor may one sell cashew nuts, almonds or any other form of nut. I shall not weary the House with the huge variety of such absurdities, but I hope that, over time, we shall be able to clear them from the clutter of the statute book.

Mr. William O'Brien: I followed that point with interest. The Minister said that only one Yorkshireman but five Lancashiremen had taken part in the debate, which shows that one Yorkshireman is equal to five Lancashiremen.

The Minister was correct to point out that some of the regulations still on the statute book are out of date and should be erased. Does he also accept that new regulations should now be introduced to defend the interests of small businesses?

Mr. Hamilton: In general, small businesses do not welcome greater regulation. Indeed, much of my time is spent discussing with them how we can reduce the regulatory burden on them, which serves no purpose other than to annoy. Where a case can be made for introducing regulations, we are prepared to consider it, but there must be a beneficial purpose behind proposed regulations. Moreover, the costs that they impose must be proportionate to the benefits to the public at large. It is not easy to generalise, but often in the past when we have decided to legislate or regulate we have not taken the cost into account. I am happy to say we shall now require cost-compliance assessments, where appropriate, when new regulations are proposed. That applies also to European regulations.

I hope that in future we shall make increasing use of risk assessment techniques, whereby we can try to quantify the risk which the public run by doing nothing and compare it with the cost imposed on business. After all, business is involved in wealth creation, which is also in the public's interest. If we think that the regulatory burden on business is excessive in relation to the proposed benefit to be bestowed on the public in some other way, whether it be environmental health, fire regulations or whatever, we shall take it into account in deciding whether to regulate. Often, that has not been done in the past, with the consequence that the volume of legislation with which we must now cope has been formulated without a rational basis—rational in the sense of choosing the level of regulation that we wish to impose, bearing in mind the associated costs. No regulation is justifiable unless we can perform the arithmetic of that equation, because until we know what cost we shall impose on business, we cannot take the overall view of the public interest, which is what good legislators should bear in mind.

Mr. Miller: Will the Minister be more specific about the question raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) about bank charges? Does he believe that regulations governing bank charges to small businesses should be tightened?

Mr. Hamilton: That is a matter of contract between freely consenting adult partners. I do not believe that it is appropriate for the Government to become involved in such matters, because if we sought to lay down the law on that matter, it would have repercussions on other banking activities. We might then find that certain functions were not performed by banks because it would not be worth their while to do so. We might find that the costs imposed by legislation would be recouped in other undesirable ways from people who would not reap the benefits of the lower bank charges advocated by the hon. Gentleman.

It is not a simple question. It is not sensible for the Government to become involved in the detail of contracts between individual businesses, lenders and borrowers because each case has its own facets and features. If we start to second-guess those decisions, we shall take a step down a road that leads we know not where. Consequently, if the Government take an intiative of the kind proposed by Opposition Members, they may find that, far from being the friend of small business, they are the foe, because banks would be less likely to lend in those circumstances. That would significantly inhibit individuals' ability to set up small businesses, which we hope will eventually become large businesses.

Mr. Miller: I am sorry to press the Minister further on that point, but I used the word "control", not the words "make lower". Does he believe that the Government should regulate or control activities regarding bank charges? I asked that question specifically because of the number of businesses that have complained about charges that have been unilaterally imposed on them from on high by the banking regime, putting pressure on those businesses. Does the Minister accept that that is an unfair practice? Against that background, does he believe that there is a place for control?

Mr. Hamilton: There is a multiplicity of sources of lending. If it is a profitable way of doing business, it is possible to incorporate into any contract for borrowing and lending the type of legislative clauses that the hon. Gentleman implies.

I think that it is not for Governments to lay down the forms of contract that banks should be obliged to use in lending to customers. One of the consequences of such a prescriptive approach might be to encourage banks to make loans that are not good loans. We have seen the results all too clearly and dramatically in recent years: the costs of the losses are redistributed among other customers. It is wrong for the Government to seek to second-guess such decisions, which ultimately are not costless. The repercussions of the decisions are often not foreseen, and when they come back to haunt us we regret that we took them.

Mr. William O'Brien: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Hamilton: I must move on to the more general points that I wish to make on deregulation rather than remain on the narrow issue of bank lending, important though it is to individuals. I shall press on with the few general points that I wish to make.

Mr. O'Brien *rose*——

Mr. Hamilton: I shall not give way. I am sorry. I think that I have been generous in allowing hon. Members to intervene. We can argue the matter on another occasion. The hon. Gentleman may be fortunate enough to secure a debate on the Consolidated Fund Bill, to which I shall be happy to respond at about 4 am in a week's time—I say that with tongue in cheek.

The issue of deregulation goes far and wide. I shall confine myself to the general principles that apply to what the Government are seeking to do in this Parliament to take forward an important task. We wish to reduce the burdens on business and hence encourage the wealth-creating process that we all want to see.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has charged me in particular with the duty of making myself the most hated Minister in Whitehall—not with Opposition Members but with my Front Bench colleagues. He has authorised me to enter every Government Department and to require each individual deregulation Minister to produce a list of regulations for repeal and simplification. Anyone who knows anything about Whitehall will know that my task will not be an easy one to perform. The culture of Departments is regulatory and not deregulatory. We must change the way in which legislators and civil servants think about the way in which they do their jobs. We must get them to bear firmly in mind that, when we introduce regulations, we are often imposing a cost burden on business and, therefore, an inhibition on the wealth-creating process. The consequence is that we must each examine our own conscience and examine also the accumulation of legislation which we have inherited from our predecessors in our respective Departments. The examination must be carried out in accordance with the searching test that I have described.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is taking a close and personal interest in the initiative, the prime responsibility for which he has entrusted to my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade, to whom he has given the task of hacking away the jungle by which we are beset. That is something that my right hon. Friend will carry out with great gusto. I hope that within a short time we shall be able to produce our first checklist of legislation for repeal or simplification to achieve a positive and worthwhile objective.

In the coming months, I shall report regularly to the House. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister also wants me to report to him every month on the progress of this initiative. That should be a signal to all my right hon. and hon. Friends that they need to take it seriously. This is an opportunity as great as, if not greater than, the one that we seized in respect of the citizens charter, which was designed to make public services more user-friendly and responsive to the citizens who, through their taxes, pay for them. In this case, we have what is probably a much greater opportunity to improve this country's wealth-creating potential and hence the employment-creating potential of the economy.

I can illustrate that by giving a simple example of how we can stop onerous legislation being introduced and make the burden of legislation more suitable to the task set for it. Recently, the Home Office introduced draft fire regulations in pursuance of a new European Community directive. As originally drafted, the Association of District Surveyors estimated that it would impose a cost burden of £8 billion on industry. The deregulation advisory panel in the DTI, composed of private sector business people who will have to cope with these regulations, made representations, together with others, with the result that the Home Office has withdrawn the regulations and will significantly reduce the impact on business—without doing violence to our proper regard for the protection of the public. Premises in which people operate must of course be safe for use, but it is absurd that a one-man business operating from home should be required, as it would have been under the original draft, to reverse all the doors through which the public might pass so that they open outwards, not inwards, under illuminated signs saying, "Fire Exit". That would have happened had we not sent the draft regulations back for translation into more acceptable form.

There is much that we can do; we must examine what has gone and what it is proposed shall come—not only in Britain but from the European Community. We are anxious not to over-implement the obligations that we assume through the EC, thereby imposing a competitive disadvantage on our firms.

I shall not be able to answer all the points made in this debate, but I shall do my best to respond to some of them. The hon. Member for Normanton referred to several issues, including bank charges, with which we have already dealt. He asked whether we could introduce new regulations with respect to the national non-domestic rate. I am surprised that he, as a northern Member concerned about manufacturing industry, should ask for that. The new business rating system has resulted in an enormous transfer of resources from the south to the north and from service industries to manufacturing industries. Given the interest shown by Opposition Members in these subjects, I am surprised that they should be so ungracious about the system that we have introduced.

Mr. William O'Brien: Once again, the Minister has missed the point, just as he did with bank charges. The contribution from the profits of small businesses to the rates works out at between 25 and 30 per cent. The contribution from the profits of larger companies to the rates is about 2 or 3 per cent. So regulations act against small businesses. When the latter experience trouble making ends meet, they should be eligible for a rebate.

Mr. Hamilton: The hon. Gentleman is arguing for a form of corporation tax, which is paid according to the size of a company's profits. If he thinks carefully about that, he may realise that that will not do many small businesses a great favour. It is a big step: the abolition of the rating system as we know it—the very system that the Labour party has been arguing that we should bring back in respect of domestic properties. It will be interesting to see how the hon. Gentleman reconciles those two positions —but on another occasion. The hon. Members for Warrington, South and for Makerfield——

Mr. O'Brien: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Hamilton: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will forgive me if I do not, because I am about to deal with a matter of great importance to Cheshire Members. I should like to reply to the issues raised about ICI, which is a major employer in my constituency at Northwich. ICI Pharmaceuticals is also located at the other end of my constituency at Alderley Park. I have had close co-operation with ICI throughout my career in the House. I spoke to Sir Denys Henderson and his senior colleagues only last week and one of the complex topics that we discussed was energy prices.

The powers that Opposition Members imagine we have are not available to us. Electricity is now a regulated industry and the regulator's role is laid down by legislation. His job is to balance the interests of consumers and producers and to ensure that there is no discrimination. The generators and the regional electricity companies operate under licence and their operations must reflect the wider concerns of the new regulatory regime. It would be wrong for us arbitrarily to select individuals or companies to receive power on a discriminatory favourable basis.

I fully understand ICI's concerns. It wants to dedicate the output of one power station, Ince power station, to Runcorn. As the hon. Member for Warrington, South said, fairly, ICI consumes 1 per cent. of the entire output of Britain's electricity generators. One of the reasons for price increases being as great as he said is that, under the previous system, ICI was able to make use of the marginal tranches of coal for which a marginal cost was levied under the special qualifying industrial users scheme introduced by the Government. The consequences of the phasing out of that scheme is that a return to normal levels of pricing from a low base gives the impression of large and unjustified price increases.

I have told ICI that we shall consider its case and if we find a means of addressing its concerns which does not do violence to the general principle of competition and fair and equal dealing between customers, we shall assist. This is a complex matter, and it is not for me but for my hon. Friend the Minister for Energy. We are in close contact with ICI and shall give the greatest consideration to its arguments.

Mr. Hall: I listened with great interest to what the Minister said about the regulatory framework which has dictated the 60 per cent. increase in ICI's electricity charges over the past 18 months. There is a way around the problem. Does the Minister accept that the regulatory framework was introduced by his Government on the privatisation of electricity?

Mr. Hamilton: I am happy to accept that, because, as a consequence, the average electricity consumer is now paying 11 per cent. less for his electricity than he was paying before the regulatory regime was introduced. We are discussing changes in the relativity of prices. Customers who previously enjoyed low electricity prices have had greater than average increases as a result of phasing out discrimination. Overall, the consumer is paying less for electricity, but by implication some consumers must be paying more. That does not sit well with the arguments of the hon. Member for Makerfield and others who asked for special treatment for British Coal.

Coal prices are the principal ingredient of electricity prices. The average price of coal produced by British Coal is £43 a tonne, compared with £33 a tonne on the spot market, and the considerable burden of that extra cost is placed on all power consumers in this country. I am happy to congratulate all those who work in our coal industry on the massive increases in productivity that have taken place over the past six years and on the enormous strides towards converting what was fast becoming an industrial museum into a modern and competitive industry. If such steps had been taken earlier, we would not be facing such severe problems now.

We cannot on the one hand argue that there must be no electricity prices and on the other hand support practices that produce high-cost coal. I do not want to be led into an argument about the coal industry, because it is not a small business, and I think that you, Madam Deputy Speaker, would rightly call me to order for straying more widely than the title of the debate should allow; but, as the point was raised in the debate, I felt it right to make some reference to it in my reply.

The hon. Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston made a number of points. I was particularly interested in what he said about the impact of regulations on small businesses in conservation areas and other heritage locations: I am a strong supporter of regulation in that context. I am very interested in the "built heritage" of this country, and in the maintenance of historic cities such as Chester and the many agreeable towns that can be found in Cheshire and other counties in the north-west—some of them in my constituency.

We must tempter the zeal for regulation with some moderation, but I do not believe that the two need be inconsistent. I think that we can have regulation without making it too burdensome for businesses. Much of the regulation that preserves the historic continuity of our conservation areas need not impose any cost on business; in fact, to the extent that it prevents them from making costly but ugly changes to their premises, it could benefit them in terms of competition.

The Government are determined to make considerable strides in the current Parliament to reduce the regulatory burden on business. If we failed to do that, we would fail in our duty, because it is by that means that we can increase the wealth-creating potential of this country—and from that will come the jobs that hon. Members on both sides of the House desire to see.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-two minutes past Nine o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 8 December 1992

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

HEALTH

Royal Free NHS Trust

1. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received about the work of the Royal Free NHS trust.

The Minister for Health (Dr. Brian Mawhinney): We have received many favourable comments about the quality of patient care at the Royal Free NHS trust.

Mr. Marshall: Has my hon. Friend seen the annual report of the Royal Free trust which serves many of my constituents and which can boast of a 9 per cent. increase in the number of in-patients treated, a substantial reduction in waiting lists and additional facilities for the mentally ill, victims of AIDS and the elderly? Is that not a record of which the Government and the trust can be justly proud?

Dr. Mawhinney: My hon. Friend is absolutely right, and he will see that I, too, have a copy of the annual report which was issued this week. He will be pleased to know that I visited the Royal Free only yesterday and was able to learn at first hand of some of its successes as a trust. I endorse everything that my hon. Friend said, except that I would reverse the order—it is something of which the trust can rightly be proud and the Government also.

Ms. Glenda Jackson: Is the Minister aware that his previous reply will ring somewhat hollowly in the ears of my constituents in Hampstead and Highgate in the light of the news announced 10 days ago that operations at the Royal Free will have to be postponed due to the lack of funds from its central purchasing authority because of the news that the Royal Free will have to trim its budget by between 3 and 5 per cent., amounting to £4 million next year, which will mean that 16 beds will be lost to the national health service for ever? Far from solving a problem, trust status is creating a crisis.

Dr. Mawhinney: The hon. Lady's point is far from the truth. I am pleased to be able to tell her that those responsible for the trust were yesterday in much more robust form and were looking forward with far greater enthusiasm to the success that they will continue to achieve, building on what they have already achieved. The hon. Lady's constituents will be pleased that activity at the Royal Free last year increased by 10 per cent.

Mr. McCartney: Why does not the Minister of State tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth about that particular trust? It has a hospital maintenance backlog of more than £18 million, two thirds of its staff accommodation fails statutory standards and it has legionella problems in the air-conditioning system, which have not been solved because of a lack of resources. By December, the trust will close at least three wards because of expenditure cuts in this year's budget, nurses are to be forced to work a 12-hour shift instead of an eight-hour shift because of the cuts, and vacancies will not be filled because of problems in the current budget cycle. In 1993-94 there is to be a 3 to 5 per cent. cut in the budget. That is a story not of success but of serious problems in the trust. The Minister should rethink and suggest real reasons why the trust is to be underfunded by £4 million next year.

Dr. Mawhinney: I do not recognise the Royal Free trust from the information that the hon. Gentleman tried to give the House——

Mr. Skinner: And he never took a breath.

Dr. Mawhinney: It was a great performance.

The Royal Free trust has managed to increase facilities for the elderly, including a new ward. It has increased facilities for the mentally ill and the elderly and introduced new facilities for those suffering from HIV and AIDS. It is treating more patients than ever before and plans to treat even more next year. If that is the hon. Gentleman's definition of failure, I hope that many more NHS hospitals are failures by his standards.

Community Care

2. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the latest progress towards the implementation of the Government's proposals for community care.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Tim Yeo): Good progress is being made by most local authorities in implementing the new arrangements. Where there are difficulties, we are offering help in a variety of ways, including our community care support force.

Mr. Nicholson: My hon. Friend will be aware that there is a general welcome from all parties for the ring fencing of the substantial grant given for the implementation of care in the community. He will also be aware that Somerset has been especially singled out by a recent Audit Commission report for making excellent progress, in collaboration with the health authority, in preparing to implement the proposals. However, is my hon. Friend also aware of a matter about which I am in correspondence with him and other right hon. and hon. Friends, which is that Somerset feels that it has lost about £1·3 million of grant for having followed Government guidelines in giving the private sector proper scope in the administration of care in the community? Do I have my hon. Friend's assurance that he and his colleagues will carefully examine that matter?

Mr. Yeo: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his welcome for ring fencing, which ensures that the very generous resources that the Government have provided for local authorities to deliver community care will reach their targets. My hon. Friend is a most vigorous champion of the interests of Somerset in all respects. I am, therefore,

aware of the particular difficulty to which he alludes. When Somerset county council entered into arrangements to ensure maximum participation by the independent sector in Somerset, it was aware of the likely arrangements for funding the new policy from next April. I shall continue to look into the matter most carefully.

Ms. Jowell: Will the Minister confirm the guidance given by civil servants last week to health service managers that trusts are to be regarded by local authorities as part of the independent sector in purchasing community care? Will he make it clear to the House that he agrees that care for many elderly people will not now be free at the point of use and that their health care has been privatised by stealth?

Mr. Yeo: There is absolutely no question of privatising the health care of any person, whether elderly or otherwise. As the hon. Lady really should know, a distinction has always been drawn between health care needs, which are met free of charge at the point of delivery to patients, and social care needs, for which we have never guaranteed that services would be delivered free. It is proper that all local authorities should make a charge for social services to those families who can afford to pay for them.

I gladly confirm that, as part of our general programme of maximising participation by the independent sector and of giving all local authorities the best opportunity to meet the requirement that 85 per cent. of the transfer funds must be spent in the independent sector, NHS trusts will qualify as being part of the independent sector because they are not controlled, managed or owned by local authorities.

Dame Jill Knight: Does my hon. Friend agree that the Children Act 1989 laid on social services departments the duty to take care of and to watch over children aged 16 who have left care? Is he aware that that is not being done and that children of 16 are not capable of managing by themselves? Will he look into that problem?

Mr. Yeo: I am aware that, in terms of implementing the provisions of the Children Act—which require local authorities to prepare all children, from the day they enter care, for the moment when they leave care, and to befriend children up to the age of 21 after they have left care—and in terms of the powers they have to help children where necessary not only with cash payments, but with advice and general counselling, there has been some variation in the performance of local authorities in the year since the Act came into force.

We are studying the matter and we have a research programme at Leeds university. We are also carrying out a careful survey of all local authorities to see exactly how they are implementing the Act. We shall study the information submitted to us and we shall include it in the report that we make to Parliament in the new year, as required by the Act.

Mr. Hinchliffe: Has the Minister fully considered the implications of requiring a set quota of next year's community care funding to be spent in the independent sector, bearing in mind that independent sector domiciliary care is non-existent in many areas and that local authority domiciliary care faces cuts in 87 per cent. of councils, according to the directors of social services? Are we not in danger of seeing more rather than fewer elderly and disabled people ending up in unnecessary private institutional care?

Mr. Yeo: Absolutely not. I very much regret the fact that the hon. Gentleman continues to adhere to his party's traditional hostility towards the private sector in any form. What the policy will deliver, by replacing the awful alternative of a local authority monopoly in the provision of all social services, is higher standards and better value for money. Local authorities will have to contract with private and voluntary organisations, not only for the provision of residential or nursing home care but for domiciliary and day care services. We have an initiative in hand that is designed to encourage local authorities to work with the independent sector to develop innovative methods of delivering domiciliary care.

Hip Replacement Operations

3. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many hip replacement operations were carried out *(a)* in 1979 and *(b)* in 1991.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Tom Sackville): The number of hip replacements climbed from 28,788 in 1979 to 44,477 in 1990-91, an increase of 54 per cent.

Mr. Knapman: Does my hon. Friend agree that those excellent figures are testimony to the improvements in the national health service over the past decade? Will he comment on the citizens charter where it is suggested that no one should wait more than 18 months for a hip replacement operation?

Mr. Sackville: I can confirm to my hon. Friend that a target of 18 months has been set and that regional health authorities tell us that they are on target to meet that by April next year. I certainly agree that the operation is wonderful and that it has improved the quality of life of hundreds of thousands of people over the past 20 years.

Ms. Abbott: Is the Minister aware that if he and his colleagues go ahead with the closure of London hospitals outlined in the Tomlinson report, waiting lists in inner London for elective surgery such as hip replacements are bound to grow? Is he aware also that the statistics quoted by the Secretary of State at the Dispatch Box about an excess of beds in London have proved to be unfounded? In the context of the Tomlinson report, is he further aware that London's general practitioners have come out unanimously against the closure of those great teaching hospitals?

Mr. Sackville: I can only tell the hon. Lady that the evidence of the increase in efficiency with which hip operations are carried out all over the country is there for everyone to see. The number of orthopaedic surgeons has increased and the number of staff specialising in orthopaedics has increased from 2,000 to 2,400. It is a success story.

Mr. Liddington: Will my hon. Friend congratulate the orthopaedic teams at Stoke Mandeville hospital in my constituency on the increased treatment that they are providing for patients in my area? Will he also assure the House and my constituents that when the £20 million capital programme proposed for Stoke Mandeville reaches

his Department, it will be treated sympathetically and with speed so that top-quality NHS treatment can be assured for my constituents?

Mr. Sackville: I can confirm that. The temporary problems have been matched by a very sharp increase in activity at the hospital over the past year, including in orthopaedics.

NHS Staff (Pay)

4. **Mrs. Jane Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the future of the pay review bodies dealing with the pay of NHS staff.

The Secretary of State for Health (Mrs. Virginia Bottomley): The remits for the review bodies have been amended for next year. Pay restraint will help us to improve services to patients. The review bodies have been asked to resume their full role for 1994-95.

Mrs. Kennedy: Does the Secretary of State accept that that answer will be a great disappointment for those members of staff whose pay is subject to the decisions of a pay review body? The House will recall that in 1984 the then Chancellor of the Exchequer imposed a 3 per cent. pay limit on the public sector. Notwithstanding that pay limit, the nurses' pay review body recommended a 5 per cent. pay increase. The Government recognised the special case made for nurses and awarded that pay increase. Will the Secretary of State reassure the staff who are concerned about the matter that she will honour and respect the independence of the pay review bodies, fully restore their independence and allow them to make recommendations next year, based on the circumstances of the staff whom they look after?

Mrs. Bottomley: The review bodies will have a continuing role. This Government introduced the review bodies for nurses and for doctors. Nurses had little to look for from the Labour party which was dominated by members of the National Union of Public Employees like the hon. Lady. When Labour was in power, nurses saw their pay cut by 3 per cent. in real terms. Their pay has been increased by 52 per cent. since this Government have been in power.

Mrs. Roe: Will my right hon. Friend join me in paying tribute to all the regional health authority chairmen and district and family health services authority chairmen in some areas who have volunteered for a pay freeze next year? Does she agree that that sacrifice to help patients should be warmly applauded?

Mrs. Bottomley: I certainly join my hon. Friend in paying a warm tribute to all of those regional chairmen who have agreed to take no increase in pay next year and the growing number of regional chairmen who have told me that their district health authority chairmen and FHSA chairmen have agreed that, as an act of leadership, they will take no increase in pay. Sir Donald Wilson, the chairman of Mersey regional health authority, is one such chairman who has made an act of commitment on his part and on the part of his chairmen.

Mr. Wigley: Notwithstanding the pay restraint which the Government regrettably find necessary to impose, can the Secretary of State give an absolute assurance that such restraints will not preclude the Government from meeting any recommendations for the dental service to get the service out of the total chaos in which it finds itself?

Mrs. Bottomley: As I am sure the hon. Gentleman knows, this year the dentists received an increase of 8·5 per cent. from the review body. In addition, the system has overpaid an average of £5,000 a head. The review body was also able to agree an increase in expenses of 11 per cent.

A review of dental remuneration is under way. We will consider that review carefully once it has been published. At the same time, the 1·5 per cent. overall envelope applies to dental practitioners as well as to others this year. It will be for the dental rate study group to decide how to translate that 1·5 per cent. into fees.

"The Health of the Nation"

5. **Mr. Fabricant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress has been made in the regional health authorities in taking forward the strategy outlined in "The Health of the Nation".

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The NHS is making excellent progress. Managers and professionals in hospitals, health authorities and primary health care teams are working together to achieve health improvement in the key areas and other local priority areas.

The NHS is setting the pace for other organisations to follow.

Mr. Fabricant: Will my right hon. Friend join me in congratulating the Mid-Staffordshire group of hospitals on getting trust status? Will she confirm that being a trust means that no one in my constituency who goes to that group of hospitals will need to enter a building that is more than 10 years old? How does she intend to expand the scheme so that other parts of the country may enjoy trust status hospital treatment?

Mrs. Bottomley: I certainly congratulate my hon. Friend. Like many other Members of Parliament, he, on behalf of his constituents, is seeing the benefits that trusts can bring. I am pleased to tell him that today I have accepted a further 121 expressions of interest in the fourth wave of NHS trusts. If all those applications are successful, 95 per cent. of hospital and community health service provision will be in the hands of trusts. That is good for the NHS and for the health of the nation.

Ms. Lynne: Will the Secretary of State explain how the guidelines laid out in "The Health of the Nation" White Paper relating to mental health patients can be seen to be implemented when people such as Dr. Loucas, who was the subject of a "Cutting Edge" documentary on Channel 4 last night, are still allowed to practise? Despite repeated warnings from the Mental Health Act Commissioner about his activities, he still practises. Will she give an assurance that there will be a full inquiry and that the results of that inquiry will be made public?

Mrs. Bottomley: The hon. Lady asked about the guidelines in the White Paper on mental health. Last year, 71 million working days were lost as a result of mental health problems. That is 14 per cent. of sickness absence,

and it accounts for 23 per cent. of the drug budget. The problems of mental illness that the nation faces are very serious and are certainly a priority.

In relation to the case raised by the hon. Lady, the Mental Health Act Commission made it clear that progress had been made at the special hospital. As to the further allegations about Riverside health authority, further investigations and assurances are on their way.

Mr. Sims: The successful implementation of the proposals laid out in "The Health of the Nation" involve not only my right hon. Friend's Department but a number of other Government Departments. What mechanism exists to ensure co-ordination between Government Departments? To what extent is that co-ordination reflected at regional and health authority level?

Mrs. Bottomley: I assure my hon. Friend that there is a Cabinet Committee, under the chairmanship of the Lord President of the Council, which oversees progress in meeting the targets in "The Health of the Nation". That committee met last week, and further progress was made. At regional level, there is a particular officer to take progress forward, and it is subject to the management review.

There will be a series of regional conferences in the new year to ensure that all parties to a healthy alliance are able to contribute. Only by different agencies working together will we achieve the real improvements in health that underlie our health strategy.

Mr. Blunkett: Will the Secretary of State accept that her answer this afternoon about the revelations made by *The Independent* and the Channel 4 "Cutting Edge" programme about Dr. Kypros Loucas shows that the Department is unwilling to act on a series of recommendations made by, first, the Mental Health Act Commission and, secondly, interested parties who have expressed grave concerns to the Department and Ministers about the activities of Dr. Loucas not merely at Broadmoor but at Horton general hospital and subsequently as an employee, at present at Wormwood Scrubs? Is the Secretary of State telling the House this afternoon that hormone experiments of a kind practised by Dr. Mengele, the application of electro-convulsive therapy without anaesthetic and the overdosing of patients' drugs are practices which her Department is willing to countenance? In what way does the right hon. Lady recommend that the powerless in our society protect themselves from the powerful in high places?

Mrs. Bottomley: I have already informed the House that the Mental Health Act Commission commented on the position at Broadmoor in 1989; at that stage, it said that progress had been made in the matters to which the hon. Gentleman referred. That was the year in which the doctor involved left Broadmoor. We are carrying out further investigations with Riverside health authority into the subsequent events at Horton general hospital. We have also drawn the attention of the General Medical Council to the programme.

Fund-holding Practices

6. **Mr. Booth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to meet representatives of the National Association of Fundholding Practices to review their progress.

Mrs. Bottomley: I met representatives of the National Association of Fundholding Practices on 18 November when we discussed the significant benefits that fund holding is bringing to patients. I am pleased to be able to tell my hon. Friend that I shall also address the second annual conference of the National Association of Fundholding Practices tomorrow.

Mr. Booth: Will my right hon. Friend welcome the success of the fund-holding practices and in particular the way in which they have played their part in reducing waiting lists throughout the nation? Will she welcome the way in which we have brought down waiting lists since 1979?

Mrs. Bottomley: I certainly warmly commend the fund-holding practices and the national health service generally for the progress that they have made in reducing waiting lists. The Labour party said that we would never meet the targets for waiting lists, just as it said that we would never meet the targets on immunisation or cancer screening. We have met all those targets and, indeed, beaten them. But the contribution of fund-holding practices goes much wider than tackling waiting lists; it concerns the quality of care, the integration of primary and secondary care and the dramatic progress in bringing down the cost of drugs.

Mr. Barden: Given what the Secretary of State has said, what advice would she give to my constituent, Mr. Kitching, whose general practitioner referred him for an appointment because he might require surgery to his knee, in which he had arthritis? He was told in January this year that the waiting list for an appointment was about 91 weeks. Last month, he received a further letter telling him that he might have to wait another 13 weeks. Would the Secretary of State say to Mr. Kitching that that is an appropriate or reasonable time to wait? If she would, why is she also considering shutting the royal orthopaedic hospital in Birmingham, which could provide Mr. Kitching with the treatment that he needs?

Mrs. Bottomley: All are agreed that there is more for the national health service to do. All are agreed, I hope, that remarkable progress has been made in reducing long waiting times. We hope to set an out-patient target under the patients charter initiative. However, it is not by avoiding difficult decisions that further progress for patients is made. It is certainly the case that GP fund holders have pioneered innovative treatments and care of their patients which others have been able to follow.

Mr. Rathbone: Can my right hon. Friend give us an assurance on the way in which fund holders have improved the services that they offer to patients—rather than having to send them to hospital, for example—in analyses for diabetes or cholesterol?

Mrs. Bottomley: Indeed, there are numerous practical examples of the ways in which fund holders have developed new services, either by inviting consultants to undertake out-patient work at their practices—by way of a treat and teach model—by pioneering different ways to deal with diagnostic assessments, or by the organisation of a contract with the local hospital, which other general practitioners have followed. The point is that GP fund

holders have been able to push forward the frontiers and to demonstrate new models of practice, which can then be spread widely within the NHS.

Ms. Primarolo: When the Secretary of State speaks to the National Association of Fundholding Practices tomorrow will she make it clear that the House is appalled at the massive profits that GP fund holders are making out of the national health service? We consider it scandalous that practices can make £190,000 or £280,000 in profit from fund holding when cash-starved hospitals are freezing waiting lists. Will she ensure that that money is returned in full to the district health authorities, so that it can be spent on patient care, especially the care of those on long waiting lists?

Mrs. Bottomley: Yes, we see the two-facedness of the Opposition. They profess to believe in primary care, but when we find a way to mobilise it so that GPs can act on behalf of their patients, they say that they dislike it. I suspect that at the next election the Leader of the Opposition will say that fund holding is another policy with which he agreed, but that he did not think that he could face up to telling his party that he supported it. Fund holders are saving 4 per cent. in their fund-holding work. The point is that that money can be invested in the practice, to make further improvements in primary care.

Mr. Dunn: Is the Secretary of State aware that two practices in my constituency are now fund holding—at Longfield and at Dartford East—and that they are both working extremely well, to the benefit of patient care? Is she also aware that my Labour opponent at the last election is a general practitioner in a practice in Bexleyheath, which is in the fourth wave of applications for fund-holding status?

Mrs. Bottomley: I am delighted to hear that information from my hon. Friend. I very much hope that in spite of the mischievous and often wilfully misleading comments of the Opposition, sensible GPs who put their patients' interests first will see the advantages of fund holding for themselves and for the progress that it can encourage throughout the NHS.

Elderly Population

7. **Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimates she has made of the impact of the growing elderly population on health expenditure; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: It is estimated that slightly under 0·5 per cent. growth in resources will be required in the hospital and community health services next year to take account of all demographic changes. That is much less than the estimated increase of at least 2·5 per cent. in hospital and community health activity which we expect the national health service to achieve as a result of the £1 billion extra funding announced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Mr. Milburn: Why has planned spending on the NHS been cut by 2·3 per cent. in real terms for next year, when the Minister acknowledges that the growth in the elderly population requires an increase of at least 0·5 per cent. simply to stand still? Is it not a fact that his failure to take account of the growth in the numbers of elderly people when setting the health budget means that there will be real cuts in patient care next year? What is his message to my constituents, who face yet another year when health budgets will be squeezed as a result of his Department's failure to make available growth funding to my health authority in Darlington? When will the Government come clean about the real shortfall in NHS expenditure?

Mr. Yeo: I am sorry that after such a short time here the hon. Gentleman has succumbed to the Opposition obsession with inputs rather than outputs. The statistics of interest to elderly people are those that show what the health service is doing for them, such as the 54 per cent. rise since 1979 in the annual total of hip replacement or the 91 per cent. increase in the number of elderly people treated as in-patients.

But if the hon. Gentleman wants a battle about inputs, I remind him that spending on the health service has risen by 60 per cent. in real terms since 1979—up from 4·6 per cent. of gross domestic product to 5·7 per cent.—and that for the first time in British history, under the present Government, more taxpayers' money is being spent on health than on defence.

Mr. Dickens: Can my hon. Friend confirm that the elderly of today are most fortunate because they live under a national health service which has developed medical techniques unthought of years ago, with drugs beyond their wildest dreams being available? I look forward to immortality. I warn the Opposition of that.

Mr. Yeo: I am sure that, with the benefit of the NHS, my hon. Friend will achieve his goal of immortality. I agree with the points he makes, but there are others of importance too, not least the relevance of the patients charter to elderly people. That has now set maximum waiting times for hip replacements, knee replacements, cataracts and a whole range of other treatments which are of great relevance in delivering even higher quality health care to our elderly population.

Provider Units (Targets)

8. **Mr. Gapes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps she is taking to improve performance in those provider units that are not reaching targets specified in the patients charter.

Mr. Sackville: Regional health authorities are accountable to the NHS management executive, through contracts, for their districts' performance and for taking aciton to ensure that problems are remedied. It is for health authorities, as purchasers, to ensure that providers' performance on patients charter activity meet the standards set in contracts. Authorities must, therefore, take action where performance falls below standard.

Mr. Gapes: Is the Minister aware that there are in my constituency people who have been waiting for 54 weeks at King George's hospital and 66 weeks at Barking hospital for orthopaedic operations, while others have been waiting for up to 35 weeks to see a female gynaecologist? Is he further aware that since the present Secretary of State took office, 130 additional people per day have been added to waiting lists and that in the North-East Thames region there has been an increase of 2·1 per cent. in the number

of people on the waiting list for up to one year and 3·9 per cent. in total? It is a disgrace that the Government should be doing nothing to reduce waiting lists.

Mr. Sackville: I ask the hon. Gentleman to remember that activity on in-patients has gone up by 32 per cent. in recent years in Redbridge, that it has gone up by 15 per cent. for day cases and that there is a £58 million hospital development at Goodmayes, the largest in the whole of the North East Thames region.

Mr. Trotter: In connection with homoeopathy, given the importance and popularity of alternative and complementary medicine, does the Minister agree that it would be an important addition to the patients charter to set standards for health authorities to implement ways in which patients might obtain those benefits? Does he recall that his predecessor, the present Financial Secretary to the Treasury, said that the alternative disciplines could be paid for through the NHS if the necessary powers were delegated and responsibility was taken by GPs?

Mr. Sackville: Under our system, purchasers, whether health authorities or fund holders, have greater opportunity to decide on the treatment that they consider to be appropriate. I have no doubt that complementary medicine will be given all proper consideration.

Mr. Turner: How does the patients charter relate to dermatology patients at the Royal hospital, Wolverhampton, who had to occupy their ward last weekend to prevent it from being closed at weekends to save cash? How does that relate to the rights of patients?

Mr. Sackville: The hon. Gentleman knows that health authorities must monitor the standard set locally by providers. They will all be required to publish annually a report showing how those performance standards have been met.

Fund-holding Practices

9. **Mr. Hendry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on progress towards adoption by general practitioners of fund-holding status.

10. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment has been made of how general practitioners' interest in the fund-holding initiative has changed since the scheme began.

Dr. Mawhinney: I am pleased to report growing interest and support for fund holding amongst GPs, who are realising the benefits that it brings patients. By April 1993, more than 1,000 practices will have joined the fund-holding schemes, covering one in four of the population.

Mr. Hendry: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that reply. Is he aware that in High Peak every GP practice eligible for fund-holding status has achieved it or applied for it? Is not that a clear demonstration that even if the Opposition fail to realise the benefits of fund-holding status, doctors who are most in touch with their patients' needs clearly do?

Dr. Mawhinney: I am sure that my hon. Friend is right. It shows that GPs have been listening to their patients and probably also to their Member of Parliament.

Mr. Gill: Notwithstanding the massive amounts of additional money which the Government continue to pump into the national health service, does my hon. Friend agree that the efficiency savings made by GP fund holders are extremely valuable because they free resources so that more patients may be treated?

Dr. Mawhinney: Of course, my hon. Friend is absolutely right. We are concerned that more patients should receive high-quality treatment from the record amount of resources made available. It is a matter of regret that others do not take the same view.

Mr. Cryer: Will the Minister assure the House that, in cutting down waiting lists, GP fund holders will not be able to get privileges for their patients by paying extra to NHS trusts and gaining access to hospitals? If he will not give that assurance, he stands convicted of establishing a two-tier system in the NHS, which is supposed to be a service open to all, free at the point of use. One tier will be for GP fund holders' patients and another will be for the rest.

Dr. Mawhinney: The hon. Gentleman knows, but will not accept, that clear rules have already been agreed with representatives of the medical profession. Those rules preclude a contract being set if it will disadvantage other patients. The hon. Gentleman has been told that before and he must simply accept it.

Mr. Bryan Davies: If and when GP fund holders overspend, who pays?

Dr. Mawhinney: The hon. Gentleman asked me a similar question last time. He will recall that I told him that there was some imprecision in the early stages of setting GP fund holders' budgets. I told him that, in a few cases, GP fund holders had to go back to the region to have their base budgets adjusted in the light of experience. The reverse of that coin is also true. We are discussing with some GP fund holders the return of some of the money which they received from the similar imprecise setting of their budgets. He will be pleased to know that we are doing that with the full support of the National Association of Fundholding Practices.

North East Thames Region

11. **Mr. Jenkin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she will announce a target date for the full implementation of capitation funding for the allocation of resources for the NHS districts within North East Thames health region.

Dr. Mawhinney: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will today be announcing revenue allocations for regional health authorities for 1993-94. They will include a real increase of 0·4 per cent. for North East Thames and other Thames regions, even though they are above their weighted capitation share. That is primarily to allow progress towards weighted capitation for their districts. Allocations to districts are the responsibility of regional health authorities, but progress in the Thames regions is closely related to the reconfiguration of health services in London. My right hon. Friend will be making an announcement about this after the recess, and North East Thames regional health authority will then be in a better position to set targets.

Mr. Jenkin: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. Does he agree that the Tomlinson report is important, not just for the improvement of primary health care in the capital, but to ensure a fairer share of resources in the outer regions such as my constituency? Will my hon. Friend comment on the discussion paper on capitation funding published by the North East Thames regional health authority in November?

Dr. Mawhinney: My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to the fact that the Tomlinson report is about the reconfiguration of health care in London. On my hon. Friend's second point, my understanding is that, after consultation, the North East Thames regional health authority decided to review the information in the consultation document, with the prospect, I hope and am led to believe, of seeking to do better by those districts that are still disadvantaged in terms of weighted capitation. I know that that will be of some reassurance to my hon. Friend.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Ms. Hoey:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 8 December.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Ms. Hoey: Does the Prime Minister agree that the present 999 emergency service is highly efficient, flexible and adaptable? Will he assure the House and the thousands of people lobbying Parliament today that he will put his foot down and stop the Oftel report which will —if its proposals are implemented—destroy the system and endanger the lives of millions of citizens?

The Prime Minister: I agree that, generally, over the years, the present system has been efficient, although, as the hon. Lady will know, there have been drawbacks, which have been brought to people's attention from time to time. The consultants' report will be carefully considered by all the interested parties. I give great consideration to ensuring that the new arrangements will at least maintain, and preferably improve, the current high standard of response to calls. If the hon. Lady has specific propositions to put, I know that the director general of Oftel will be happy to receive them.

Q2. **Mrs. Lait:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 8 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mrs. Lait: While recognising that my right hon. Friend will be under enormous pressure at Edinburgh from our European Community partners to give ground on the rebate, may I tell him that he will have the total support of Conservative Members in resisting any such pressure?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for her mention of the Edinburgh summit. There is no doubt that a large number of complex things are to be decided at Edinburgh—the enlargement negotiations are difficult, the future finance negotiations will undoubtedly need a good deal more work and we are committed to finding, if we can, a satisfactory conclusion to the Danish problems. What is quite clear, as I told the House last week, is that there can be no change in the British abatement to the budget.

Mr. John Smith: On the issue of the Edinburgh summit, at a time when unemployment is rising faster in Britain than in any other country in the Community, should not a programme of jobs and recovery be at the top of the agenda for the Edinburgh summit? Why did the Prime Minister not even mention that in his reply?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. and learned Gentleman will be pleased to know that there will be a discussion among the Heads of Government on the European economic situation, and Britain, as President, specifically invited the Finance Ministers to Edinburgh. The economy has been a main topic of discussion at all the meetings that we have had in Europe in recent months, and a team of Treasury officials has been travelling throughout Europe to co-ordinate positions. I very much hope that co-ordinated measures will emerge from those discussions, but we shall have to wait to see what our partners feel at Edinburgh this weekend.

Mr. John Smith: Does not the Prime Minister understand that the obligations of being President of the Community entail more than chairing interesting discussions; that it is action that is required? Why have all the suggestions—increased support for research and development, more investment facilities for the European investment bank, infrastructure projects in transport and other areas, and emergency action on unemployment—come from others and nothing from the President of the Community?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. and learned Gentleman is characteristically mistaken, as he will find from the presidency paper that has been placed for discussion this weekend. On the subject of action during the presidency, he has clearly overlooked the agreement sought for a long time between the United States and the Community on agriculture, the fact that agreement has now been reached on more than 50 single market measures, which means that we will be able to declare the single market open as at the end of this year, the resolution on making the single market work, the London conference on Yugoslavia, and the preparations for enlargement; and he has overlooked, or chosen to overlook, a great deal more as well.

Mr. John Smith: Why, in that litany, did not the Prime Minister mention unemployment? Why has no action been taken before now? Why was unemployment not on the agenda for the Birmingham summit? Does not the right hon. Gentleman realise that when 750 manufacturing jobs are being lost each working day in this country it is high time action was taken? His presidency will be condemned for gross inaction.

The Prime Minister: I know that the right hon. and learned Gentleman is desperately trying to recover his European gloss after the shameful way in which he and his colleagues have been behaving over the Maastricht Bill. As for providing opportunities for growth and jobs, he might bear in mind that we have the lowest corporation tax in the

Community or the G7, the lowest interest rates in the Community, inflation down well below 4 per cent., low direct taxation, exports at record levels, car production growing, and retail sales growing—the right hon. and learned Gentleman does not like any of this because it shows what we have done and how things are going to change.

Q3. **Mr. Clifton-Brown:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 8 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: My right hon. Friend will be aware that since the autumn statement and the abolition of car tax, car sales since last October have increased by 22 per cent that Honda has created another 1,100 jobs at Swindon, Nissan has created another 1,800 jobs at Sunderland and that Toyota is about to create a great many more jobs in Derby. Is not that excellent news for the car industry in particular and the economy in general? *[Interruption.]* Does it not demonstrate that low taxation boosts consumer demand, whereas the high-taxation policies of the Opposition destroy jobs?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is learning that Opposition Members are not too keen on hearing good news—no doubt we shall hear a good deal more of that in the months to come.

People sometimes forget how far the motor car industry has come since the early 1970s. It was then a national disgrace; the trade unions wrecked it day in, day out. The fact that it has come so far is a great tribute to the work force, to the management and to the legislation passed by successive Conservative Governments.

Q4. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 8 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Hughes: Given that the Prime Minister was elected, in his own words, to create a nation more at ease with itself, how does he reconcile that objective with the fact that between 3 million and 4 million people are unemployed in this country, with the number still rising, and that more than 17 million people are unemployed in the European Community? At the end of two years of his premiership and six months as President of the European Community, does he believe that he has succeeded in achieving the target that he set himself so few months ago? *[Interruption.]*

The Prime Minister: When the hon. Gentleman has ceased being heckled by Opposition Members on the Front Bench below the Gangway, I will try to answer him. As he knows, I set out a programme for a full Parliament. He will be able to criticise if we do not realise our objectives by the end of this Parliament, by when he will see that we will have achieved them.

Mr. Harris: My right hon. Friend made some welcome remarks about doing away with excessive and bureaucratic regulations in this country. Will he perhaps start by looking at the regulations on meat hygiene and inspection which pose a real threat to small and medium-sized slaughterhouses in this country and, although a welcome start has been made, will he carry that even further?

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend knows, I have asked my right hon. Friend, the President of the Board of Trade to co-ordinate a considered examination right across the Government, local government and the European Community on the extent of regulations. I shall certainly draw my right hon. Friend's attention to the specific examples which my hon. Friend mentions.

Q5. **Mr. Livingstone:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 8 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Livingstone: Has the Prime Minister been briefed on the murder of the British journalist Jonathan Moyle in Santiago and, if so, what is his response to the Chilean judge charged with the investigation of the murder, that his investigation was obstructed by the unwillingness of British officials to co-operate? How does the Prime Minister explain British officials briefing the press that Mr. Moyle died while masturbating when he was murdered by a lethal injection in the heel? Does the right hon. Gentleman think that there is any link with the fact that Jonathan Moyle was investigating the arms trade of Carlos Cardoen, the main arms procurer for Iraq, who was responsible for the transmission of Matrix Churchill equipment and was also the associate of Mark Thatcher?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman makes a series of unsubstantiated comments to which he knows I have no intention whatever of replying. If the hon. Member has detailed evidence that he believes should be examined he should take it to the proper authorities.

Q6. **Sir John Hannam:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 8 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave some moments ago. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. The House must come to order.

Sir John Hannam: My right hon. Friend will recall the meeting he had recently with hon. Members from the south-west when he was made aware of the particular problems of differential electricity and water charges. Has he seen the latest survey by Exeter chamber of commerce which shows that 60 per cent. of businesses there have increased their sales in the past three months, that 25 per cent. are expecting to increase their labour force and that only 4 per cent. to reduce their labour force? Will he continue his efforts to reduce the regulatory burdens which bear down on business expansion?

The Prime Minister: The figures that my hon. Friend mentions are encouraging and I am grateful to him and my other hon. Friends for the comments they made to me recently. I fully accept how important all those factors are to the prosperity of the west country, but they have similar importance for the economy of other parts of the country as well. I assure my hon. Friend that we shall be doing all that we can to lift the burden from all companies—large, medium and small.

Q7. **Mr. Raynsford:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 8 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Raynsford: What has the Prime Minister to say to the thousands of parents of children in Greenwich who are deeply concerned at the adverse effect of Government-imposed cuts on the standards of education for their children in schools in Greenwich? Why have this Government failed entirely to respond to the concerns expressed in the signatures of thousands in the petition that I presented a few weeks ago? Why have they not bothered to make any observations on that petition or to those concerned?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman should bear in mind which Government published information about what is happening in schools and how children are being taught and what their results are. When he and his right hon. and hon. Friends are prepared to release that sort of information he might be in a position to issue such pious lectures.

Single Currency

Q8. **Mr. Sweeney:** To ask the Prime Minister whether the establishment of a single currency within the union remains the policy of Her Majesty's Government.

The Prime Minister: The Government believe that it is too soon to consider whether or not the United Kingdom should move to a single currency. The United Kingdom is not obliged or committed to such a move and no decision to move to a single currency will be made without the specific approval of Parliament.

Mr. Sweeney: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for that reply. Does he accept that under article 109J of the treaty we shall be driven inexorably towards a single currency whether we want it or not?

The Prime Minister: No, I do not accept that. As my hon. Friend knows, we have a specific provision that will enable us at an appropriate time to decide whether or not we take part in a single currency. That provision does not prevent us from preparing with our Community partners for their move into a single currency, but we remain uncommitted until and unless the House decides that we should move into one.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. I remind the hon. Lady that this is a closed question.

Engagements

Q9. **Mr. Bill Michie:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 8 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Michie: In view of the Prime Minister's stated commitment to defend this nation's heritage, will he and his colleagues call for a moratorium on all supermarket developments in green-field sites and launch an investigation into their value, compared with the amount of heritage that is lost under the concrete and car parks of supermarket development? The right hon. Gentleman can start the survey with Meadowhead in Sheffield.

The Prime Minister: Such matters must be dealt with on a case-by-case basis, as they have been in the past, are now, and should continue to be in future.

Points of Order

3.31 pm

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Perhaps you can help me with a point of procedure. You will be aware, Madam Speaker, that the Select Committee on Health intends to publish its document on national health service trusts on 16 December. I have documented evidence showing that someone on that Committee intends to make that confidential report available a few days before— *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. This is important. Will those hon. Members who are remaining in the Chamber please do so quietly? I need to hear the hon. Lady. I understand that she is telling me that a confidential document is to be made available.

Mrs. Mahon: I have documented evidence, Madam Speaker, that that report, which is a confidential document, will be made available a few days before the Select Committee decided that it should be made available. Last Wednesday, the Select Committee decided that the document should be made available 24 hours before the press conference.

The purpose of my point of order is to ask for your ruling on that latest leak from the Select Committee, which already has a case before the Select Committee on Privileges. I believe that the Health Select Committee's procedures are being abused, and I would like your ruling.

Madam Speaker: From what I heard of the hon. Lady's remarks—and I find it difficult to hear across a noisy Chamber—the matter to which she referred is not one with which I am familiar. It sounds as though there is some contempt involved, and I ask the hon. Lady to write to me without delay, when I will certainly consider her point.

Mrs. Audrey Wise (Preston): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. I refer to a different aspect, though one also related to the Health Select Committee's report. Will she confirm that the purpose of Select Committees is to monitor the Government's work, and will she consider——

Madam Speaker: Order. Is the hon. Lady referring to me when she uses the word "she"?

Mrs. Wise: I apologise, Madam Speaker. Will you confirm that the purpose of a Select Committee is to monitor the work of a Government Department, and will you consider and advise us on whether the desperate eagerness being shown by the Government to obtain the report in order immediately to rebut it illustrates that they have no intention of giving the Select Committee's recommendations the careful consideration that it is the Government's duty to give them? Is it not a fact that the Government must reply to a Select Committee report within two months but that the Government intend to reply within two minutes? Is that not illustrative of the Government's complete contempt for the Select Committee system?

Madam Speaker: The hon. Lady has raised matters that must be taken up in that Committee or with Ministers. They are not breaches of our Standing Orders or our procedures at this stage. On the first point made by the hon. Lady, of course it is the task of the Select Committees to investigate as thoroughly as possible the workings of the appropriate Government Department.

Mrs. Barbara Roche (Hornsey and Wood Green): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. May I seek your assistance? Late this morning I received an emergency telephone call from a constituent who had a friend who was due to arrive in this country this evening from Lagos. The friend had been refused a visitor's visa by the British high commission in Lagos. I telephoned the high commission in Lagos and was informed that the second secretary refused to take my call. Is that not contempt of the House and obstruction of the work of Members of Parliament?

Madam Speaker: The hon. Lady alleges that she is being obstructed in her work as a Member of Parliament. If that is what she believes, it may well be a question of privilege and she should write to me immediately.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Do you, Madam Speaker, concur that, if the Health Select Committee has taken a decision in deliberative session not to release its report until 24 hours before it is due to be published, no member of that Committee is in a position to reveal the report's contents to any member of the press or of the Government? Will you confirm that?

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman and many other hon. Members put matters to me which are not points of order on which I cannot rule and of which I have no knowledge other than what has been said to me across the Floor of the House. It is unfair for them to expect the Speaker of the House to rule on matters on which he has no information or knowledge whatsoever.

Mrs. Jacqui Lait (Hastings and Rye): It is with some trepidation that I raise a point of order further to the issue of the Health Select Committee, but can you, Madam Speaker, advise me whether it is in order for our proceedings at a deliberative meeting of the Select Committee to be regarded as confidential so that no member of the press should be aware of those proceedings?

Madam Speaker: Of course; I would have thought that every hon. Member was aware that hearings in a deliberative form are confidential to that Committee. Are there any more points of order?

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. You may have noticed that twice this afternoon during questions there was a failure in the amplification system in the House. On two occasions when hon. Members were speaking the microphones were not open and it was extremely difficult to hear. I have formed the opinion in the course of the last six months that the present amplification system in the Chamber is not a patch on the old one. We were told that the present microphones were of greater sensitivity, but either the microphones are not well placed or they are not being well operated. Could this matter be looked into?

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South) *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Is it further to that point of order?

Mrs. Currie: Yes, Madam Speaker. Is the problem not with the microphones but with the fact that so many hon. Members look alike, which causes difficulties for the

operator? Surely, if there were more women in the House who all looked different, the operators would have no trouble.

Madam Speaker: The hon. Lady would not expect me to agree that there are any look-alikes in the House. But, in all seriousness, our equipment has been improved. Inquiries and investigations into it are still being made. I have no problem whatsoever, because I have my own equipment here, but I will have the matter looked into.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. May I ask, with what I hope is customary politeness, when you decided to advise the House of a closed question during Prime Minister's Question Time, and whether you intend to continue the practice?

Madam Speaker: It is not my practice to advise the House of a closed question, but I happen to think that, when a question is as closed as the one to which the hon. Gentleman refers, it is a matter of courtesy to remind the hon. Member who is on his feet. Hon. Members often forget that questions are closed, and I think that it is preferable to avoid embarrassment.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. As you know, nowadays I am very reluctant to rise on a point of order; the House is noisy enough without me. Nevertheless, I have to say—and I have been saying it for years—that, since the introduction of these damned television cameras and the related hearing equipment, the whole purpose of the engineering control is to avoid any interference with the television output by our own bits of equipment, as you call them. That is the problem: the primary consideration is the audience outside, and hon. Members can go hang if they cannot hear.

Madam Speaker: That was a most interesting comment.

SCOTTISH GRAND COMMITTEE

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 97(1) (Matters relating exclusively to Scotland),

That the Matter of public expenditure in Scotland, being a Matter relating exclusively to Scotland, be referred to the Scottish Grand Committee for its consideration—*[Mr. MacKay.]*

Question agreed to.

Plain Language

3.41 pm

Mr. Gyles Brandreth (City of Chester): I have no problem with either the technology or the amplification, Madam Speaker.

I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to secure improvements to the language and layout of certain contracts.

Language is what disinguishes the human race; it is the characteristic that sets us apart and makes us unique. Even I, as an ardent animal lover, must acknowledge that, however eloquently a dog may bark, he cannot tell us that his parents were poor but honest. Language makes us unique, and we in this country are born with the privilege of having a unique language as our parent tongue—English, the richest language in the history of humanity.

Our language is rich precisely because it is not pure. Emerson called it

"the sea which receives tributaries from every region under heaven."

It is the language of Chaucer and the King James Bible; of Keats, Joyce, Anthony Trollope and Anthony Burgess. It has taken 2,000 years to reach this far—and where is it now, in 1992? Let me show you, Madam Speaker, by quoting from the terms of sale offered by that excellent builders' merchant, Jewson Ltd:

"If and to the extent that any person by whom the Seller has been supplied with the goods supplied hereunder (hereinafter referred to as 'the Supplier') validly excludes restricts or limits his liability to the Seller in respect of the said goods or of any loss or damage arising in connection therewith the liability of the Seller to the Buyer in respect of the said goods or of any loss or damage arising in connection therewith shall be correspondingly excluded restricted or limited."

There you have it, Madam Speaker: the English language today—and those were just five of more than 100 such lines that feature on the back of the Jewson delivery note. When the driver drops off the breeze block and says, "Sign here, guv", what I have just read out constitutes 5 per cent. of what the recipient is agreeing to—whether he likes it or not, and whether he understands it or not.

Does it matter? Yes, I believe that it does. It cannot be good that people regularly sign contracts that they do not understand, and, indeed, are not meant to understand.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Has the hon. Gentleman read the Maastricht treaty?

Mr. Brandreth: As it happens, I have and I understood it, but I can understand that it might be a little sophisticated for the hon. Gentleman. However, the rest of this is in plain English, so he will feel wholly at home.

Costly mistakes can be made. A constituent of mine discovered that when he signed an incomprehensible contract to lease a photocopier. When he wanted to change the photocopier, he was faced with the option of a so-called settlement charge of about £10,000, which was three times the value of the original equipment, or the prospect of leasing the equipment, whose lifetime according to the manufacturer was three years, for a total of seven years. None of that was clear from the contract whose wording was deliberately obfuscatory and arcane. *[Interruption.]* Translation will come later!

The Bill is designed to encourage the use of clear, plain language in commercial contracts and to prevent the unscrupulous, arrogant or incompetent from hiding

[Mr. Brandreth]

behind legalese, jargon, gobbledegook or small print. It would apply to consumer contracts, consumer credit contracts—think of all the confusion that we would all be spared if we understood the small print that comes with our Access cards—and housing contracts.

The plain language that I have in mind is not so much the language of Shakespeare as that of Dickens, not William Shakespeare but Geoffrey Dickens—clear, no-nonsense language that says what it means and means what it says, language that is indeed a lean, mean fighting machine.

A plain language law might appear to be a contradiction in terms because is it not the law and lawyers which are responsible for much of the gobbledegook found in contracts? I believe I am right in saying that in 1595 an English Chancellor chose to make an example of a particularly wordy document filed in his court. He ordered a hole to be cut in the centre of the document—all 120 pages of it—and had the author's head stuffed through it. The offender was then led around Westminster hall, 100 yards from where we are now—even 100 metres—as an example to all and sundry. Alas, that Elizabethan lesson did not stick; and that is where I come in, four centuries later but not a moment too soon.

I propose that the contracts covered by the Bill should be written in clear and readily understandable language using words with common and every-day meanings, be arranged in a logical order, be suitably divided into paragraphs and headings, be clearly laid out and be easily legible.

It is not asking much, but you, Madam Speaker, might well ask, "Why do people sign contracts they don't understand?" Often it is because they are in no position to negotiate. Most consumer contracts are in standard form, drawn up by the supplier and offered on a take-it-or-leave-it basis. The Bill would help consumers. It would also help businesses because those which have taken voluntary steps in the right direction have learnt that clear contracts have advantages and that intelligible contracts promote customers' trust and loyalty and encourage consumers to stick to their contracts. They also achieve savings in management and staff time. The new law would encourage better practice and, if necessary, would enforce it, although the sanctions that I propose are moderate.

The experience in the United States is that a plain language law such as this would immediately improve practice and standards, but, if a contract did not comply with the Act, the party which made the contract in the course of business would be liable to an action for damages brought by the other party—so there is also something in this for the lawyers.

That said, there is no question of any form of criminal penalty. Offending contracts would not be void, unenforceable or voidable. I propose compensation for the consumer who can show actual loss and, in some cases, a small sum of additional damages. I also propose, as back-up, an extension of the existing powers of the Director General of Fair Trading to deal directly with businesses which ignore the new law.

The case for such a law is overwhelming. Clear, coherent, easy-to-read consumer contracts bring advantages to consumers and to business, but the signs of voluntary implementation are piecemeal. I believe that, as in the United States, the chief merit of the new law would be its impetus for change. Alas, only legislation will prompt businesses to sit up and start to take notice of their own paperwork.

I trust that the advantages of the Bill will be obvious to the House. Inevitably, some people will not see its virtues, but then, as the saying has it, a slight inclination of the cranium is as adequate as a spasmodic movement of one optic to an equine quadruped utterly devoid of visionary capacity.

3.50 pm

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): I shall not detain the House unduly, but I think that a protest must be made against the linguistic chauvinism of the speech by the hon. Member for City of Chester (Mr. Brandreth). He referred to English being the mother tongue of all hon. Members, ignoring the native British languages which were spoken in this country when the speakers of Anglo-Saxon were howling, pagan barbarians.

If I were to speak in the language of this country, and if I were to say to you, Madam Speaker:

"When that Aprill with his shoures soote
The droghte of March hath perced to the roote"——

Madam Speaker: Order. I would respond to the hon. Gentleman by saying that that is not understood in this House.

Mr. Flynn: With respect, Madam Speaker, it is in order because the language I am speaking is English. It is the English of Chaucer, to which the hon. Member for City of Chester referred. If I went on to quote in the beautiful language of Chaucer, I should be incomprehensible to you, Madam Speaker, and to every other hon. Member. I am allowed to use the language of Chaucer, but I am not allowed to use the language of Wales, which is understood by many people.

This is the only Parliament that Wales has, yet the language of Wales, the language of Scotland and the ancient language of Ireland are forbidden here. There are Parliaments that conduct their business in a dozen languages. I make that point because of the comments made by the hon. Member for City of Chester. His Bill called for plain English, but it should also call for plain Welsh, plain Gaelic and plain Irish Gaelic.

Question put, pursuant to Standing Order No. 19 (Motions for leave to bring in Bills and nomination of Select Committees at commencement of public business), and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Gyles Brandreth, Mr. Alan Howarth, Mr. David Willetts, Mrs. Angela Browning, Mr. Roger Moate, Ms. Liz Lynne, Mr. Joseph Ashton, Mr. Roger Evans, Mr. Rod Richards, Ms. Joan Walley and Ms. Glenda Jackson.

PLAIN LANGUAGE

Mr. Gyles Brandreth accordingly presented a Bill to secure improvements to the language and layout of certain contracts: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 22 January and to be printed. [Bill 97.]

Opposition Day

[7TH ALLOTTED DAY]

Unemployment

Madam Speaker: I must tell the House that I have selected the amendment standing in the name of the Prime Minister.

3.52 pm

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): I beg to move,

That this House deplores the rising tide of unemployment with its intolerable cost to the British people; notes with concern the high level of redundancies in British manufacturing industry, the falling level of job vacancies, and the steep increase in the number of long-term unemployed; condemns the Government's Autumn Statement for its total failure to tackle the jobs crisis at a time when unemployment in Britain is rising faster than anywhere else in the European Community and is forecast to rise above 3 million once again; regrets the continued neglect of training and investment in skills which are essential to the modern economy; and further condemns the Government for squandering the opportunities of the British Presidency to develop a strategy for growth and employment for the whole of the European Community.

In plain language, in Britain today more than 4 million people are out of work. That is the real figure reflecting what is really happening to real people in the hard, real world of Britain today—a Britain in which 20 million working days are lost every week through unemployment. What a waste!

The Government do not publish the real figures. Instead, every month they churn out the official figures, reduced now by no fewer than 30 successive statistical fiddles. That shoddy process may reduce the embarrassment of Tory Ministers, but it does not reduce the job queues or the pain of unemployment.

Even if we take the Government's own figures, the rising tide of unemployment is there for all to see, to feel and to fear. Last month, there were 2,868,000 of our fellow citizens officially out of work. More than 30 unemployed people were chasing every job vacancy, with no fewer than 70 people chasing every job vacancy in London. Almost 1 million people had been out of work for more than a year. Some quarter of a million of the people out of work were young people who face the worst job prospects in our country's history. As we all know, there is worse to come. Parts of the country that once seemed almost immune to unemployment are now suffering as badly as the worst.

After the job losses of the past two years, there are now fewer than 4·5 million people employed in manufacturing industry in Britain. Just 4·5 million people are left making things in a country with a population of 57 million. However, the Government do not seem to care. For years, they have been prepared to let British industry be wiped out, in the fond belief that the people of Britain could earn a living by selling one another hamburgers and insurance policies. Even the hamburger joints and the insurance companies are in trouble now.

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Dobson: No, not at the moment.

The Tories keep saying that if an industry is not paying its way, it should be closed down. It is a good job for us that the rest of the world does not think like that, because, under the Tories, Britain is not paying its way. By the standards that the Tories have set, the Bundesbank would be sending in the brokers' men.

The Tories used to claim that the factories that were closing were in rust-bucket industries which were bound to close. There was some truth in that, but it is not true any more. The 500,000 manufacturing jobs that have gone in the past two years are mainly from modern, high-tech industries with highly skilled work forces—the industries of the future if we are to have an industrial future.

For far too long, far too many people have been without a job. When one loses one's job, one loses one's income and becomes dependent on benefits, if one is entitled to them. However, people who lose their jobs do not lose just their money. They can also lose their self-respect, sense of worth and purpose in life. People without a job are beset by an awful feeling that they no longer matter. Unemployment can lead to the break-up of marriages and to separation, divorce and domestic violence.

However, the harm caused by unemployment does not stop there. Unemployment damages the health of the jobless and their families. If one is out of a job one's mental and physical health deteriorates. Unemployment does not just make people ill. In plain English, unemployment kills and maims. It kills mainly by cancer, suicide, accidents and violence. For a middle-aged man to lose his job doubles his chances of dying in the next 10 years. Unemployment does not just kill the jobless: it kills their wives, husbands and children—born and unborn. What a wicked waste.

The cost of unemployment is not just borne by the jobless and their families. The Secretary of State admitted recently that it costs the taxpayer £9,000 a year to keep someone out of work. That is £9,000 in benefits paid out and tax not taken it. Even according to the official figures, the present mass unemployment is costing taxpayers £25 billion this year. That is equal to more than £1,000 for every family in the land. What a waste.

It does not end there. When people are out of work, they are not producing anything. Back at work, they could produce goods and services which would add to the country's wealth. If just the 10 per cent. who are officially jobless were back at work, they would produce goods and services worth more than £50 billion. That is equal to more than £2,000 for every family in the land. Instead, they are doing nothing. What a waste.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Dobson: No, certainly not to the hon. Gentleman.

Even by the crudest and coldest Treasury standards of accountancy, and making no allowance for human misery, mass unemployment is costing a fortune. The cost of mass unemployment in terms of lost production——

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Dobson: No, not at the moment.

The cost of mass unemployment in terms of lost production and loss to the taxpayer is therefore equal to more than £3,000 for every family in Britain. That is surely an intolerable cost.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): The hon. Gentleman has described a dire and concerning situation, and we share his concern. Why is the impression given that his party, given those circumstances, would seek to make matters worse by embracing the social chapter and increasing the burden on industry and also, no doubt, by increasing taxation which would also increase the burden on industry and make the level of unemployment much worse?

Mr. Dobson: If the hon. Gentleman bides his time, I will come to those matters.

The cost of unemployment does not end with those costs. The damage to health places extra strain on the national health service. Domestic violence and family breakdown place extra demands on social services, the police and the courts. By breaking up families, unemployment adds to homelessness. By giving young people nothing to do, it leads to crime. That does not mean that not having a job automatically makes someone a criminal. Unemployment does not provide an excuse for theft or violence.

Mr. Oppenheim: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Dobson: No, I will not give way until I have finished making my point.

Mass youth unemployment means the breakdown of the ties that bind society together. Unemployment opens a gap between the generations. It creates a gulf between the dispossessed and those with possessions. With no honest way to earn a living, unemployed young people are exposed to the temptations of a life of crime which can provide more money and excitement than respectable society can offer.

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North): While my hon. Friend is on the subject of the relationship between crime and unemployment, will he comment on Clarke Foods which recently closed down Lyons Maid in my constituency? Perhaps he will refer specifically to allegations that have been made of insider dealing, fraud and possible gun-running by the proprietors of that company. Does not that example contrast sharply with the risks that young people take? The people who own companies such as Clarke Foods are often dodgy.

Mr. Dobson: I do not have such detailed information about the owners of Clarke Foods. However, I believe that the proposed closure—throwing people out of work and reducing their pay—is a crime against the people of Knowsley.

Mrs. Jacqui Lait (Hastings and Rye): I am intrigued by the hon. Gentleman's belief that increased unemployment among young people will result in a higher burglary or crime rate. Is it not true that, although we had high employment, the crime rate continued to increase at a rate of which none of us would approve? Is the hon. Gentleman aware that in Sussex, which has high unemployment at present, the burglary rate has gone down?

Mr. Dobson: The fact is that we have had mass unemployment in many parts of the country since this Government took office in 1979. We have had rising crime, year in and year out. The greatest increase in the crime rate has occurred in the areas with the highest unemployment. As my hon. Friends will confirm, large and small pockets of disenchantment are developing all over Britain.

Mr. Oppenheim: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Dobson: No.

Those pockets of disenchantment are filled with young people who are alienated from society. Those young people share fewer of our values, and are less and less convinced that anyone cares for them. They are prey to exploitation by the evil right-wing forces of prejudice, hatred and unreason, which we have already seen unleashed elsewhere in Europe.

What do the Government have to offer in response to all of that? Nothing, or next to nothing. The Secretary of State expresses her concern and sympathy. She talks about counselling and training. But she knows that her Department's training budget per unemployed person is less than half of what it was just three short years ago. Counselling and training and concern and sympathy may ease the pain of unemployment, but they are not enough. The only cure for unemployment is a job. The Secretary of State is doing nothing about jobs.

The autumn statement was so feeble that the Secretary of State and her colleagues have refused to estimate how many jobs it will create. I think that the reason for that refusal is that any jobs created would certainly be outpaced by the Government-induced job destruction which is taking place at the same time. Neither the Secretary of State nor the Government has anything to offer.

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that one of the best ways for young people to find jobs is through youth training and that the Government have probably the largest youth training programme in Europe? Does he accept that, for other people, employment action is important in providing training? Will he tell the House why the Transport and General Workers Union—which sponsors several Front-Bench Opposition Members, one of whom is sitting next to him—has said consistently that it will boycott those programmes?

Mr. Dobson: The hon. Gentleman would do well to consider the true record of the various training programmes. Let us take employment training——

Mr. Coombs: What about youth training?

Mr. Dobson: I will come to youth training in a moment. Employment training was much vaunted until the Secretary of State herself denounced it recently and said that it needed to be replaced. I can see why she denounced it. Fewer than one in five of the people who go on employment training end up with a job. The figures show that people stand less chance of finding a job if they have been on employment training than if they have not. That is scarcely a success rate. About one in four of those who go on youth training do not get a job and 65 per cent. do not obtain a qualification. The scheme is an effort, but it is not good enough.

What has the Secretary of State to offer anyone in Britain? What does she have to offer Andy Cartlidge? He is one of 325 people who lost their job at Rolls-Royce in Nuneaton. He is a trained craftsman in his late 20s. He worked in that factory using state-of-the-art equipment to work sophisticated metals to produce discs and spacers for aero engine turbines. He is out of a job now. He is one of the most highly skilled people in Britain. He does not need training; he needs a job.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Dobson: I shall press on for the moment because other hon. Members wish to speak.

Mr. Oppenheim: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Is it in order for an Opposition spokesman to say consistently that he will give way to me and keep a humble Back-Bencher in a state of excitement and anticipation and then to give way to everyone else?

Madam Speaker: That is not a point of order for me. I would not describe the hon. Gentleman as a humble Back-Bencher by any means.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): I hope that my hon. Friend will be happy if I do not hit the note of petulance that is being struck on the Conservative Benches. This is a serious debate. Will my hon. Friend consider that one way in which the Government could protest about unemployment and do something to redeem their position would be to abandon the Bill to privatise British Rail? They would thereby protect 1,500 jobs in my constituency, where 5,000 jobs have already been lost in manufacturing.

Mr. Dobson: I entirely agree with the point that my hon. Friend makes. Indeed, I shall deal with that matter later in my speech, if I am allowed to reach it.

What does the Secretary of State have to say to Linda Wilkinson of York? Compulsory competitive tendering left her with the choice of giving up her job cooking school dinners at English Martyrs school in York or accepting a £600 cut in pay and the loss of statutory sick pay and other benefits. Is that the choice that the Tories offer to hard-working women in Britain, where the Minister responsible for equal opportunities is also the Secretary of State for Employment?

What does the Secretary of State have to offer the unemployed in Basildon, where unemployment has doubled in the past two years? People in Basildon have lost jobs recently at Yardley Perfumes, Northern Telecoms and even, dare I say it, Access. Basildon people lost jobs when Marconi in Chelmsford laid off hundreds. The jobcentre in Basildon recently advertised a job for a clerical assistant with the police force. More than 500 people applied for that job. What does the Secretary of State have to say to the 500-odd people who did not get that one job?

Mr. John Sykes (Scarborough): Is the hon. Gentleman aware that in May this year the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) admitted the devastating effect that the minimum wage would have on jobs and said that "any silly fool" knew that? Does the hon. Gentleman agree?

Mr. Dobson: If the hon. Gentleman had read out what my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) actually said, I should be able to agree, because it was true. As the hon. Gentleman did not read it out, I cannot agree with him.

Those are just a few from millions of examples.

Mr. Oppenheim *rose*——

Mr. Nicholls *rose*——

Mr. Dobson: No, I shall not give way to the riff-raff at the back.

Mr. Nicholls: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. If the hon. Gentleman will not give way to a humble Back Bencher, why will he not give way to an arrogant Back Bencher who at least knows what he is talking about?

Madam Speaker: That is a point of frustration and not a point of order.

Mr. Dobson: Perhaps I should explain that, when many people have no jobs, I am reluctant to give way to Tory Back Benchers who have legions of jobs between them.

Mr. Oppenheim: On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: I hope that it is a point of order with which I can deal. If it is not, I shall not deal leniently with the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Oppenheim: Is it in order for the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) to make a claim about the "legions of jobs" that I supposedly have when my only job is in this House?

Madam Speaker: Order. Let us have some order in the House this afternoon. The hon. Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) has explained his position and it is recorded.

Mr. Dobson: The examples that I gave are just a few of millions which show what is happening, but unemployment also affects people who are still at work. Under this Government most people in work think that they are lucky to have a job. Their workplace is filled with rumours of redundancy and they do not fancy their chances of finding a new job. If they are made redundant they are reluctant to pursue new jobs because they fear the insecurity that goes with being the last in—they may turn out to be the first out. They are frightened to speak out at work for fear of the sack, and they are frightened to borrow or to spend because they rightly fear another rainy day.

That fearful and aquiescent work force may appeal to the Victorian values of the Tories, but it is no role for fellow citizens in a democracy.

Mr. Ralph Howell (Norfolk, North): Will the hon. Gentleman explain what the Opposition would do to solve the problem? They are very good at telling us what we have done wrong. He has already said that unemployment is terribly wasteful, and I agree. I am sure that he agrees that most unemployed people desperately want to work. Does he agree that we should set up a voluntary workfare system, because thousands of unemployed people would accept such work if they had the chance to do so? Does he recognise that the Secretary of State has gone some way towards agreeing with my views by agreeing to set up a pilot workfare scheme?

Mr. Dobson: My general view is that if there is work to be done and people to do it, they should be paid the rate for the job; workfare would not then be necessary.

What do people have to show for all the pain that they have suffered? Tory apologists have argued for years that unemployment is the price that we must pay for economic advance—that it is the medicine to cure our economic ills. The first thing to note is that those who prescribe unemployment as a medicine always fight shy of taking a bracing draught of it themselves.

Secondly, that argument is total economic rubbish. After more than thirteen and a half years of Tory Governments doling out doses of unemployment by the

[Mr. Dobson]

bucketful, what have we got? Britain is economically weaker than it has ever been; our share of the world trade in manufactures has fallen; the trade surplus that the Tories inherited has been turned in 10 successive years of deficit and is heading for an official total of £14 billion this year; Government borrowing is set to hit record levels; the gap between rich and poor is the widest that it has been this century; investment is down; and bankruptcies are up. On top of all that, the Government have allowed Britain —the only country in western Europe with substantial reserves of coal, oil and natural gas—to fritter away our fuel trade surplus and to become a net importer of fuel again.

That brings me to the failure of Tory Ministers for which they will surely never be forgiven. I refer to the way in which they have squandered the advantage of North sea oil and gas. Handled properly, the takings from the North sea could have been used to transform Britain, getting us ready for the challenges of the new century, which I remind Conservatives Members is only seven short years away —wealth for Britain, protection for the balance of trade, capital to invest in our future and massive revenues for the Government.

Mr. Phil Gallie (Ayr): The hon. Gentleman has said much about investment and earlier he spoke of a young man who had worked for Rolls-Royce. Is he aware that the advances of modern technology have meant that companies such as Rolls-Royce can purchase machines that can do the jobs of 20 or 30 men over a 24-hour period? Does he appreciate that problem, which is also a problem of investment?

Mr. Dobson: I had intended to deal with that issue later. Rolls-Royce, one of our blue chip companies which should be putting a great deal of money into the future, is investing less in research now that it is privatised than it invested when it was in public ownership.

Over the last thirteen and a half years, the Tories' revenues from the North sea have totalled £110 billion. What do we have to show for it? Nothing. It has all been squandered on financing unemployment, on tax concessions for the very rich and on trying to ease the pain of the poll tax. Every penny has gone.

A far-sighted Government would have used that money to invest in research and development, in new plant and equipment, in education and training for our young people and on retraining our older people. But the Government did not do that. They were too busy pushing through tax concessions for, for example, the Duke of Westminster, to whom, if we understand the *Evening Standard* aright, the hon. Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) is giving money to help him support his money-raising activities from his estates.

Mr. Nicholls: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. There has for long been a tradition in the House that if an occupant of the Front Bench refers specifically to another hon. Member, as the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) just has, he should gives way. The conventions that apply to Back Benchers should apply to Front Benchers.

Madam Speaker: The House knows that it is a convention, but it is entirely up to the right hon. or hon. Member who has the Floor whether or not he gives way.

Mr. Dobson: If the impatient and well-paid hon. Member for Teignbridge had waited for me to finish another sentence, he would know that I had intended to give way to him.

The Tories have also spent their time giving subsidies to foreign property speculators. I cannot believe that giving £370 million in subsidies to the Canadian developers of Canary Wharf was a good investment for the rest of Britain.

Mr. Nicholls: Does the hon. Gentleman believe that any prospective employer listening to his contribution to today's debate will be encouraged to provide job opportunities, especially as the hon. Gentleman is on record as recently as September as describing employers as "stinking, lousy, thieving, incompetent scum"?
That has been the nature of the hon. Gentleman's contribution today.

Mr. Dobson: My remarks in September appear, like Banquo's ghost, every time I come into the Chamber. I will make the position clear. I withdraw not one word of what I said, remembering that I addressed those words to those who pay poverty level wages and pay themselves a fortune on the backs of those poverty level workers, so they are exactly as I described them, which is why I do not withdraw a word of what I said.

Instead of using the heaven-sent opportunity of North sea oil to lift the skills and qualities of our people——

Mr. Oppenheim *rose*——

Mr. Dobson: I will definitely not give way to the hon. Gentleman.

Those revenues should have been used to lift the skills and qualities of our people to levels as high as any in the world. Instead, the Government have given up any idea of putting our people in a position where they can compete with the best. They have abandoned the idea of competing with German industry through innovation, quality and skill. They have thrown in the towel. Faced with the choice of Britain as a science park or a sweat shop, the Tories have opted for the sweat shop. They say that our people can now only compete if they work long hours for low wages in poor conditions.
When it comes to photo opportunities at international conferences, Tory Ministers are pictured as part of the Group of Seven developed countries, but when it comes to economic ambition the same Tories see our country as being in a trade war with the third world. That is why they fight against every effort to improve working conditions and reject the social chapter. They know that while they are in charge Britain cannot compete on quality with the best; under the Tories, we are reduced to competing on cost with the worst. Why else would the Prime Minister think that our miners should compete with coal produced by child labour in Colombia?

Mr. Oliver Heald (Hertfordshire, North): How can the hon. Gentleman describe British industry in those derogatory terms when Britain has six of the top 10 businesses in Europe competing with the best on quality?

Mr. Dobson: We do not say that it applies to every industry——

Mr. Gallie: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. The hon. Gentleman referred to the use of child labour in Colombia to produce coal that is exported. That statement is absolutely untrue and I ask that he withdraw it.

Madam Speaker: Order. That is certainly not a point of order which the Chair of this House can resolve at this stage.

Mr. Dobson: As the president of the Colombian mining industry says that there is child labour in Colombia, I am willing to go along with that—[HON. MEMBERS: "Domestic coal."] Let us see the Tory vision of the future: it is all right if the children are producing domestic coal. That is absolutely brilliant.

What should the Government do, apart from quieten down some of their Back Benchers? First, they should act to stop the rot. More than 300,000 jobs are presently on the line as a direct result of Government policies. More than 100,000 jobs are threatened by the Government's pit closure programme, partly induced by the import of child-labour coal from Colombia. Another 100,000 jobs are likely to disappear from local councils as a result of the new grant settlement. Dinner ladies, road sweepers and home helps will all be thrown on the scrap heap. The national health service could lose as many as 25,000 jobs as a result of the cuts now being pushed through. The Government could stop all that today.

Jobs in the Post Office, shipbuilding and defence supplies have all been marked to go by the Government. They could prevent that by abandoning Post Office privatisation, phasing their warship orders to help the shipyards, and buying British equipment and ammunition. It was bad enough to sell arms to Iraq, but if the Royal Ordnance closures go through, we could end up buying arms from Iraq. North sea revenues could have been used to diversify from defence to civilian production, drawing on the supremely skilled work forces of many of our defence manufacturers. Instead, the Government have let them go. Immediate Government action could save all those jobs.

However, it cannot stop there. In times like these, the Government have a duty to reduce unemployment by creating jobs. The Tories claim that Governments cannot create jobs but can only destroy them. I accept that that is true of the present Tory Government but they should not generalise from the particular. The Government have destroyed thousands of jobs, but that does not mean that Governments cannot create them.

Mr. James Cousham (Gillingham): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Dobson: No, not at the moment.

Governments can and do create jobs directly through investment and intervening to provide financial and other help for private investors, and indirectly by raising aggregate demand for goods and services. All those approaches would create jobs and the Government should adopt them before the roll call of the jobless becomes endless.

Once again, I call on the Government to halt the 300,000 job losses that will be created by direct Government action. As we have said time and again, the Government should begin to realise the takings from the sale of council houses for investment in new housing. As my hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) said, the Government should abandon rail privatisation and, instead, start a major investment programme in the railway system to give every part of Britain fast, direct and reliable connections to the rest of Europe through the channel tunnel.

The Government should release funds to improve the London underground and local railway systems. They should put seed corn investment into science parks and other industrial developments associated with research and higher education. They should invest more in effective, high-quality skill training rather than the ineffective job-chasing schemes that dominate their policies at present. Those proposals will start to stop the rot, but even bolder long-term measures are required.

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool, Garston): My hon. Friend has referred to the shipyards. Is it not a fact that the Government could make great inroads in reducing unemployment at the country's various ports if they decided to use "Options for Change" to build the badly needed merchant ships? I think that all hon. Members recognise the need for a merchant fleet to put shipyard workers back to work and our seamen back on ships that they can sail.

Mr. Dobson: My hon. Friend raises some good points, which are relevant in the present circumstances on Merseyside. I am sure that other of my hon. Friends will wish to press the matter of Cammell Laird and other yards.

I believe that the first requirement of bold measures is to return full employment to its proper place in the economic and political ambitions of both Britain and Europe. Nobody pretends that full employment can be achieved immediately, but it will never be achieved by accident. First, we need to decide that we want full employment. Only after we have decided the destination can we begin to plan the journey and to work out the route.

Full employment cannot be achieved in Britain alone; it must also be put back on the agenda of the European Community. At present, whichever figure we use, we find that more than 16 million people are officially out of work in the Community, which is shameful and presents a threat to the cohesion of the European Community. Some people cannot understand why Denmark voted no. They could do worse than look at the unemployment figures. When Denmark joined the Community in 1972 there were just 23,000 Danes out of work—now the figure exceeds 316,000. A European commitment to get those people back to work would, I suspect, work wonders with Danish public opinion.

Mr. Marlow: What are the figures here in the United Kingdom?

Mr. Dobson: The increase is not as bad.

Mass unempoyment does more than threaten the cohesion of the Community—it threatens democracy. The unemployed young have always been a principal recruiting ground of the racist, anti-Semitic, fascist, right-wing parties in Europe. With the neo-fascists strutting around in Italy and murdering neo-nazis stomping around in Germany, and their counterparts reappearing in France and Spain, mass unemployment must be tackled now, Europewide.

[Mr. Dobson]

All the democratic parties of Europe must address the problems of the unemployed in Europe before the unemployed transfer their loyalties, disillusionment and anger elsewhere. That is why getting Europe back to work should have been top of the agenda for the Edinburgh summit. Theological discussions about subsidiarity should have given way to practical plans to maintain and create jobs.

Mrs. Angela Browning (Tiverton): I am sure that Members on both sides of the House share the hon. Gentleman's concern about unemployment throughout the European Community. Would he like to comment on the words of the Commissioner with responsibility for employment, Mrs. Vasso Papandreou, who only last week in this House expressed her views on how work and jobs would be created in the Europe of the future? She expressed some anxiety that investment in jobs involving what was described as too much capital investment—investment in manufacturing jobs—was not the way forward, and said that future jobs in Europe should be created in the service sector. I would not wish to denigrate that view, but it is certainly not the way in which the Government are approaching the problem. It is the socialist view of Europe——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. I remind the hon. Lady that interventions should take the form of questions, not speeches.

Mr. Dobson: I am certainly prepared to comment on that. Germany may be able to afford a slightly higher proportion of its economy being devoted to the service sector, because it starts with 12 per cent. more people in manufacturing jobs than the European average, whereas we are below the European average. We are the country that practically got rid of our manufacturing base. We were promised time and again that the service sector could take the strain. But the service sector is not taking the strain: the 4 million people who are out of work are taking the strain.

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh): I note with great interest the correlation that the hon. Gentleman has drawn between violence in European countries and unemployment. The part of his jurisdiction in which I live has the highest unemployment in Europe. It is no coincidence that the three constituencies in Europe with the highest unemployment are represented by my hon. Friends the Members for Foyle (Mr. Hume), for Belfast, West (Dr. Hendron) and by me. Is it any surprise, therefore, that the correlation between violence and unemployment has demonstrated itself for the past 20 years in the north of Ireland?

I wish to pose a question and to ask the hon. Gentleman's advice. If there were three British constituencies—in England, Scotland and Wales—with the highest unemployment in Europe, would they not have been made disaster areas and been given special attention?

Mr. Dobson: There may be something in what the hon. Gentleman says. The problems of Northern Ireland are not simple, and there are clear links between violence and unemployment. I am glad to hear him confirm the points that I have been trying to make, which have largely fallen on deaf Conservative ears.

What are needed now are bold and positive policies, not just to cut unemployment but to aim for full employment. Full employment works. It worked when the Secretary of State and I started work in the early 1960s, when unemployment was low and there was almost one vacancy for every person seeking a job. That was a good time to go into the work force—a great deal better than now. Full employment works and is good for everyone. It gets people off the dole queues; it gives them self respect. It gives school leavers a choice of jobs. It gives people the security to change jobs. Full employment allows people at work to say what they think. It saves the taxpayer a fortune. It creates more wealth; it makes possible a better life for all our people.

Mr. Couchman *rose*——

Mr. Dobson: I have given way an enormous number of times.

To bring about full employment will not be easy. Technological change, as I acknowledged, can take away jobs as well as create them. Therein lies another criticism of this Conservative Government. As Benjamin Disraeli, born in my constituency, said of Conservatism:

"it offers no redress for the present, and makes no preparation for the future."

Faced with the changing nature of work, faced with the adjustments that society will have to make in response to these changes in work, the do-nothing Tory Government have given no thought to the problem and made no preparation for it. All, we understand, is to be left to market forces—and we cannot trust market forces.

We need to look in future to the capacity and skills of our people and measure them against the demands of our economy and try to match them. If we go about it the right way we can match them to suit the needs of the work force as well as the needs of the economy.

Properly organised, most people in future could be able to choose when to work and what hours each day, what days in a week, what weeks in a year and what years in a lifetime. That could transform, particularly, the position of women at work and so transform society.

With more and more powerful machines to do more and more of the work, we shall need to share out the work that needs to be done by men and women and the rewards that go with it. We in the Labour party reject the untrammelled free market approach to the future of work. We need only look at what is happening today. This very day we have, at the same time, 4 million people on the dole while millions of others are working far too long hours in circumstances that threaten their physical and mental well-being and clash with the needs of their families.

We need to invest to make this change, but we need to decide that the Government has a role in this change. Those in the Conservative party who reject the role of Governments in this change want things to go on as they are. The profits of our existing industries and the products of the hard work of their employees must be invested and reinvested in plant and equipment, in research and development, and in training for a better and more high-tech future. The people of our country want to see that investment and are entitled to see it. They have been sickened over the past few years by the way many company directors have lined their pockets with enormous salaries, share options and other perks, while at the same time laying off large parts of their skilled and loyal work forces and preaching for others the merits of frugality. The

mass unemployment of recent times has rendered such behaviour totally unacceptable and likely to undermine the stability of our society.

What we need now is an end to the rising tide of unemployment and the unacceptable burden it places on the people of our country. We need a package of measures to get Britain and Europe back to work. As we approach the new century we need a long-term commitment to aim for full employment and a new approach to work which shares out its demands and rewards more fairly and effectively. Nothing less will do.

4.37 pm

The Secretary of State for Employment (Mrs. Gillian Shephard): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

"recognises the need for the United Kingdom economy to remain competitive at a time of world recession; rejects the job destroying policies of Her Majesty's Opposition including the national minimum wage; notes that the United Kingdom has the second highest proportion of its population in employment of any country in the European Community; congratulates the Government on the new opportunities afforded by the Autumn Statement; and welcomes the Government's new package of 1·5 million employment and training opportunities providing more help than ever before to help unemployed people get back into work.".

There is one thing on which the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) and I agree and that is about the importance of the subject under debate. Unemployment is a difficult and distressing experience for the individuals concerned, and for their families and for the communities in which they live. Of course, in a time of recession, the fear of losing a job is very real. All of us, on both sides of the House, understand that.

This afternoon I intend to set out what the Government are doing, first, to promote growth in the economy and in jobs—because lasting employment is created only in a sound economy—and, secondly, to help those who have lost their jobs to get back into work. Jobs are created by the initiatives and enterprise of businesses and of the individuals who work in them. It is clear, on this side of the House at least, that jobs can come only from the competitiveness, the efficiency and the earnings of our industry and commerce.

But the Government have a vital role to play. They need to ensure the right economic framework; and because people, if they become unemployed or face redundancy, are nervous and anxious, they need to know that there is genuine and effective help at hand.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Does not the Secretary of State accept that Government privatisation policies are costing hundreds and thousands of jobs and that to privatise British Rail will not only destroy the existing integrated service but will throw many hundreds of people on to the dole quite unnecessarily?

Mrs. Shephard: Of course I do not accept the hon. Lady's premise. This country needs a proper infrastructure of efficient railway services and communications. If that can be achieved better by privatisation, so it should be. That will stimulate the economy and the creation of real jobs.

Before I describe the Government measures provided for those who are unemployed or who face redundancy, I will remind the House of certain points that Opposition Members like to ignore. They like to ignore the fact that there is a world recession. They like to maintain, in their unremitting efforts to talk Britain down, that ours is the only country in the world to be in recession; the only country in the world to be affected by unemployment. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Mr. Ronnie Campbell (Blyth Valley): A booklet circulated among all the high commissions and embassies throughout the world entitled "Invest in Britain" states that Britain's labour force is the cheapest in the world. —cheaper than those of France, Germany, and America. It states also that trade unions in Britain have no legal rights. I am trying to think of the many other things that the booklet said, and I wish that I had that document with me—*[Laughter.]* Conservative Members should not laugh, because the Government produced the booklet. Has the Secretary of State read it?

Mrs. Shephard: No, I have not—and it is a pity that the hon. Gentleman cannot quote from it accurately. I am sure that he is grateful that many jobs have been created in his constituency by inward investment.

Let us consider what is happening elsewhere in the world—for example, in Japan and Germany, for so long the acknowledged economic leaders of the industrialised world. As they struggle to emerge from recession, their economies remain sluggish. Last year, industrial output fell more in both Japan and Germany than in the United Kingdom. The German institutes—known more familiarly as the five wise men—predict no growth at all in the German economy in 1993. Recession continues in Sweden, Switzerland, and Finland. What of north America and the Pacific rim countries? They have shared the same problems.

Manufacturing jobs in the major economies have declined since the mid-1960s, and recent strains on the European monetary system and exchange rate mechanism show the seriousness of those economic problems in Europe. Every country in the ERM has been affected and nearly every currency, including the French franc. The Nordic countries, whose links to the ERM do not involve membership, have also been affected.

Last week in Brussels I chaired the Social Affairs Council, and I do have to say that the Opposition motion on the EC excels itself even for an Opposition motion, in being out of date, irrelevant, and wrong. For the very first time, employment Ministers of the Community spent time discussing the problems of people without jobs—and this entirely as a result of the United Kingdom presidency's employment resolution initiative. All the member states supported that initiative and the practical measures to help that it produced.

There is shared anxiety about unemployment across the EC—as well there might be, because in Spain and Ireland, unemployment is more than 17 per cent., in France unemployment among young people is 22 per cent. And even Germany now faces the prospect of rapidly rising unemployment—up by 54,000 in November alone.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): Does not the Secretary of State accept, in making her international comparisons, that, although the recession is deep and worldwide, other countries have responded differently? In Germany, for example, billions of deutschmarks have been invested in the coal mining industry to try to save jobs, and infrastructure investment is being made in many of the other countries that the right hon. Lady mentioned. Does

[Mr. David Alton]

she not think that, in trying to find a way forward, it would be worthwhile looking at the responses made by other countries?

Mrs. Shephard: That is precisely what took place in the Social Affairs Council. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would be interested to learn that this very day the Belgian employment Minister is in our country to learn how we cope with the unemployed.

The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras ignores the fact that other countries are affected as we are. In common with the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) and the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras never loses an opportunity to talk Britain down. He ought to know that the United Kingdom cannot insulate itself from the effects of world slowdown, and he should support Government action to deal with those problems.

The hon. Gentleman, predictably, is entirely blind to those positive aspects of our economy that mean that we are ready to benefit from recovery, and are in a better shape than many of our competitors. He ignores those positive facts because Government policy has achieved them. Those achievements include the lowest interest rates in Europe; inflation under control and, at 3·6 per cent., at a level comparable to our major competitors and below the EC average; producer price inflation at its lowest since 1969; business taxation at the lowest in the G7 and EC countries; welcome signs of moderation in pay settlements —underlying earnings grew by 5·5 per cent. last year, the lowest for 25 years; unit costs well under control; retail sales continuing on a rising trend; new car sales in October rose by more than 8 per cent., and, total consumer spending rose in the second quarter of 1992 by 0·5 per cent. —the first increase since recession began; a competitive pound, which gives growing opportunities to exporters; rapidly improving productivity; and an improvement in productivity made possible by the removal of burdens previously placed on industry by Governments and trade unions.

Mr. Dennis Turner (Wolverhampton, South-East): Does the Secretary of State accept that the people whom I represent in the black country always seek to be positive and are very resilient? However, my constituency has an unemployment rate of more than 20 per cent., and more than one third of our young people are out of work. My constituency is currently experiencing the closure of another company—the Rolls-Royce of the gas cooker industry, which has been producing cookers for 175 years. That plant is under the threat of closure, yet it has made profits and produces a top-line product. It has done everything that the company could have asked of its work force. Can you, as Secretary of State for Employment,——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I personally cannot do anything. Earlier in this debate, after an intervention by the hon. Member for Tiverton (Mrs. Browning), I drew attention to interventions being so long that they amounted to speeches rather than questions. The same applies to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Turner: My sincere apologies, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mrs. Shephard: The hon. Gentleman obviously feels strongly about that key company in his constituency, but lower inflation and rising productivity must help his constituency, too. It is the framework that matters, not the extra burden that would—sadly, I must tell the hon. Gentleman—be imposed by a Labour Government, were one to be in power.

Most important of all, there has been an unparalleled improvement in the climate of industrial relations in this country. In the whole of last year, only 800,000 days were lost through strikes—the lowest figure for any calendar year since records began.

Mr. Terry Lewis (Worsley) *rose*——

Mrs. Shephard: If the hon. Gentleman wants a different figure, I shall be glad to give him one. In the 1970s, when Labour was in power, 13 million working days were lost each year through industrial action. Even in 1989, at the peak of the economic cycle, the number was four times lower. When it comes to strikes, this Government's achievement is an improvement on the record not only of Labour Governments but also of the party of the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) when it was last in power more than 100 years ago.

Mr. Lewis: The Secretary of State talks about creating the right conditions and industrial relations. SmithKline Beecham, in my constituency, is closing a factory that it claims was profitable, had good industrial relations, and was an excellent part of that group's enterprise. Because the conditions have not been properly provided by the Government, they are now closing the factory and moving that manufacturing base somewhere else. What can the right hon. Lady say to that work force, who fulfilled every demand made upon them by the company and by the Government? That factory is on an estate where unemployment among 18 to 25-year-old males is 26 per cent.

Mrs. Shephard: Companies such as the one described by the hon. Gentleman have to make commercial decisions, and presumably that is the reason for the decision that this company has made. But if that company were in the grip of industrial action, as it was when the hon. Gentleman's party was last in power, if business, commerce and industry were in the grip of the burdens on business that his party would impose upon it, millions more would be out of work.

Our deregulation policies have been a major factor behind the phenomenal growth of small firms. Between 1979 and 1989, their number increased to nearly 3 million. More than 1 million jobs were created between 1985 and 1989 by firms employing fewer than 20 people. And even in this time of economic difficulty many new businesses are starting. In 1991, there were more than 200,000 new value added tax registrations—a higher figure than that for most of the 1980s.

Despite recent rises in unemployment, the United Kingdom still has more people in work than any other country in the European Community except Denmark: 71 per cent. of the adult population are in employment, compared with just 65 per cent. in Germany and only 59 per cent. in France. What we need to maintain that is a flexible labour market, improved industrial relations and an economy structured to promote enterprise. These are the foundations of economic success.

Mr. Dobson: I hope that the right hon. Lady is not claiming some peculiar credit for this Government because there is a higher proportion of the population in the work force in Britain than anywhere else in Europe other than Denmark. That circumstance has prevailed as far back as records go, and certainly to the beginning of the 1960s. Surely she is not claiming credit for it.

Mrs. Shephard: That, of course, is because Denmark has never had to endure the kind of burdens that would be imposed if the Labour party were in government.

What we need for the recovery to take hold is confidence: we need confidence in business and confidence among consumers. Everything is in place except that one vital ingredient.

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor recognised that when he set out the Government's economic strategy in his autumn statement. He stated clearly the aims of the Government.

Mr. Dobson: The right hon. Lady must have misunderstood my question. I asked whether she would confirm to the House that Britain's second place in participation in the work force, for which she was claiming credit, has existed as far back as records have been maintained and since long before this Government took office.

Mrs. Shephard: The hon. Gentleman must keep trying. The House knows very well that the sort of measures that he and his colleagues would impose on industry, business and commerce in this country would increase unemployment by millions. I shall go on to show that.

The aims of the autumn statement were to restore confidence, restart economic growth and, above all, create new jobs. The strategy for achieving these aims is clear: low inflation, tight control of public spending, competition and a vigorous supply-side policy. These are the policies which delivered growth and job creation on an unprecedented scale in the 1980s, and they will do so again in the 1990s.

My right hon. Friend also introduced measures aimed directly at job creation—measures aimed at boosting confidence and strengthening recovery; measures rightly targeted on those sections worst hit by recession, in particular construction and the car industry.

Mr. Eric Martlew (Carlisle): Can the right hon. Lady tell the House when she expects unemployment to start to fall?

Mrs. Shephard: The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that unemployment will begin to fall when the recovery begins, and the conditions for the recovery to begin are in place. What is needed is confidence, and confidence is boosted by the autumn statement.

Local authorities in England and Wales will be allowed to spend receipts from the sale of council houses. Priority will be given to spending on capital projects over pay increases for public sector workers. Some 20,000 empty houses will be taken off the market and all this should increase buoyancy in the housing market, create confidence and provide jobs. As one chief executive, Mr. Clive Thompson, has said:

"It's pretty much what the doctor ordered—tight public expenditure and priority to capital expenditure."

Car tax is abolished and there are other measures for industry generally. First-year allowances for plant and machinery are increased from 25 per cent. to 40 per cent. There is a special initial allowance of 20 per cent. for industrial and agricultural buildings, which is important not just for manufacturing industry but also for rural areas, whose unemployment problems should not be overlooked.

We now have the prospect of a GATT deal. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development has said that a successful Uruguay round agreement would boost world income by nearly $200 billion a year. That would add 1 per cent. to output in the European Community. The United Kingdom, with its record of improved competitiveness, is well placed to take advantage of a successful GATT deal. For exporters, whose prices are already highly competitive, the autumn statement measures have increased export credit cover. As business takes advantage of all these more favourable conditions, jobs will follow.

All forecasters now expect output to grow in 1993. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor predicts growth of around 1 per cent. Others, such as the National Institute of Economic and Social Research, are more optimistic and forecast growth at 2 per cent.

This is what some business leaders said after they heard the details of the autumn statement. Howard Davis, director general of the Confederation of British Industry, said:

"These measures . . . will rebuild industry's confidence in itself and in the Government."

Sir David Lees, chairman of GKN and of the CBI economic affairs committee, said:

"My response is very favourable. We needed a whole package of measures and that's what we got . . . it will help to restore confidence. The Chancellor has listened to what industry said to him."

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): I know that the right hon. Lady leads a very busy life, but does she take the opportunity to visit areas and communities in our country where unemployment is very high indeed? A high percentage of school leavers simply have no chance of finding a job and people in their middle age know that they are never likely to work again. Does she know about the deprivation, the poverty and the lack of hope in so many parts of our country, and does she not, as Secretary of State, feel ashamed that this is happening and that people take the view that there is no hope? That is the reason, as my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) said, why the extremists, the hate merchants, feel that they now have a fertile field to work in.

Mrs. Shephard: It is an insult to the vast majority of unemployed people to imply that criminal behaviour necessarily accompanies unemployment.

In direct answer to the hon. Gentleman's serious question, let me say that I spend a great deal of time visiting areas of the country where unemployment is high to see the success of the measures which we have in place to help young people, people in middle age, people who are facing redundancy. That is why I am delighted that I shall be announcing 1¼ million places in training and employment schemes to help precisely the people mentioned by the hon. Gentleman.

Business was pleased with the autumn statement. Nigel Whitaker, head of corporate affairs at the Kingfisher group, said:

[Mrs. Shephard]

"It's good news for the consumer and should help build confidence . . . It's certainly good in the run up to Christmas". Neil Marshall, chief economist of the Retail Motor Industry Federation, said:

"I think the whole package will have a very positive effect on both consumer and industrial confidence".

That is what business said, and business creates jobs; but we must face facts.

Mr. Richard Burden (Birmingham, Northfield): Will the confidence that the Secretary of State perceives among business men be boosted or destroyed in my city, Birmingham? Since May, Birmingham has lost 2,500 jobs, many of them in manufacturing. Will the confidence to which the right hon. Lady has referred be increased or undermined by the Government's threat to withdraw assisted area status from the west midlands?

Mrs. Shephard: I regret that I cannot comment on other Department's plans in regard to assisted area status. I know, however, that people in the west midlands will also have welcomed the measures in the autumn statement—measures relating to cars, manufacturing allowances and help for exports. The west midlands is a particularly vibrant area, and I know that it will bounce back in the conditions that I have described.

Unemployed people now need the security of knowing that we are providing them with real and practical help. I began my speech by stressing the seriousness of unemployment, and the distress that it causes individuals. I am determined to ensure that unemployed people are given ever more effective help to find new jobs; that is why I have carried out a full-scale review of my Department's employment and training measures. I want to tell the House about the new package of measures that has resulted from that review.

Our package will provide a wider range of opportunities than ever before—a total of 1·5 million. It is targeted on helping the long-term unemployed, and those who need most help to get back to work. It will be effective, because it is based on practical experience of programmes with a proven record of success. It will represent the widest range of help that we have ever made available, and it will provide nearly half a million more opportunities in 1993-94 than in the current year.

We shall give priority to the measures that help people the most. We know that two thirds of those who become unemployed leave unemployment within six months. We shall focus on the people with the greatest need, and the measures that have already proved successful.

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): How much more money will be available for the scheme to provide half a million places?

Mrs. Shephard: My Department's resources have increased by 1 per cent. in real terms, rising to an extra £200 million.

Dr. Lynne Jones (Birmingham, Selly Oak): Can the Secretary of State reassure the people of Birmingham that the new schemes will be more effective than Employment Training, under which only 17 per cent. of trainees have obtained jobs while 72 per cent. remain unemployed?

Mrs. Shephard: I shall deal with that point shortly. In the meantime, let me tell the hon. Lady that we have changed the employment training scheme: we have introduced "training for work", a major new programme which will be dealt with by training and enterprise councils and local enterprise companies. It will offer each individual what is right for him or her—skills training, temporary work opportunities or work preparation courses. TECs and LECs will have much more flexibility, and will be funded according to output—according to whether the courses end in people obtaining jobs or qualifications. The hon. Lady should be much encouraged and reassured by that news.

Job plan workshops, which give in-depth individual assessments to long-term unemployed people, build on the proven success of our restart courses and job review workshops. Restart has just been copied by the French: Socialist France is willing to learn from good practice as the British Labour party, apparently, is not. Job clubs improve the chances of obtaining a new job by 50 per cent., with an even higher rate of success for those who are unemployed for more than nine months. In the first six months of 1992-93, 36,600 people found jobs through the job interview guarantee scheme; many of them were long-term unemployed.

Because those two programmes are so successful, we shall be providing an extra 180,000 new places on them next year. Job review workshops, which help people to focus on the options open to them, will have an extra 10,000 places. About 60,000 career development loans, which are a major success story—seven out of 10 trainees obtain jobs after their training—will be made available to people both in and out of work over the next three years.

Ms. Angela Eagle (Wallasey): I do not think that people object to training, but surely the main problem is one of demand rather than supply. Might there not be some mismatch between skills and the jobs available? However well trained an individual may be, there are too few vacancies for that individual to be certain of securing a job when the training ends. Should we not look at demand for jobs, rather than simply at the supply of a work force?

Mrs. Shephard: The hon. Lady has asked two questions in one. She mentioned the mismatch of skills and jobs; that is precisely why the responsibility for providing training lies with TECs and LECs, which are best placed to know about local demand for skills. I think that the hon. Lady should put her question about demand for jobs to the 1·4 million unemployed people who were placed in work by the employment service last year. It is the experience of the service that, with training and re-skilling and, perhaps, a willingness to travel, people have access to opportunities.

We are focusing our programmes—with their record of success—on those in greatest need: those who have been unemployed for six months or longer, and the groups of unemployed people who face particular disadvantages and need special help to find jobs. Examples are people with disabilities, people who are unemployed as a result of large-scale redundancies, ex-members of the armed forces, ex-detainees, people with literacy or numeracy problems and people returning to the labour market after an absence of two years or more. All those people will be able to join programmes as soon as they become unemployed. These are constructive measures, focused on individuals and their specific needs.

I am sorry to say that this is one of the great differences between the Government and the Opposition: the

Opposition talk about numbers, while we try to provide for individuals. Another major difference between us is that Labour dwells in the past, while we invest in the future. Look at our differing attitudes towards young people, for instance: Labour wants them to leave school at 16 and receive benefit, while we rejoice that nearly twice as many are staying on in full-time education or training as did so in 1979. They are staying on because our reforms —opposed by Labour at every turn—have given the country a comprehensive national curriculum and an effective examination system.

We also provide a first-class youth training programme, giving young people skills and qualifications to fit them for the world of today and tomorrow rather than of yesterday. As one of my hon. Friends pointed out earlier, in Britain alone among European countries every 16 and 17-year-old leaving full-time education without a job is guaranteed a two-year training place.

Mr. Dobson: No Labour Member wants young people to leave school or college and go on to benefit. We want young people to go into jobs. Let me remind the right hon. Lady again what happened to her when she left college in 1961, when unemployment was at 1·5 per cent., and what happened to me when I left college in 1962, when unemployment was at 2 per cent. Like other college and school leavers, we were given a choice of a wide variety of jobs, and we rejoiced in that choice. Labour wants to return to that position.

Mrs. Shephard: The Labour party does not want people to go into training, otherwise it would not have voted against it at every turn, encouraged by its pay masters in the trade unions.

Feeding on ill-informed rumours as Labour loves to do, the hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) wrongly claimed in the House on 20 November that 75,000 young people were waiting for a training place. When I was able to tell the House on 1 December that about 19,000 of this summer's school leavers had yet to take up a training place, I thought that he would welcome the news. Like all members of his party, he seems far too busy singing Britain's funeral dirge to listen to the truth.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: Is the Secretary of State claiming that 19,000 people falling through the guarantee is a success for the Government?

Mrs. Shephard: The point is that that 19,000 will have been offered a place by the end of this month. I should have thought that that might be something in which the hon. Gentleman would be interested, but he is not interested in the practicalities. He does not seem to understand that some young people want a place which is not immediately available, that some change their mind, and that they all come on to the register at the same time. He should be congratulating us on our achievement.

We see the future as one of partnership, not confrontation. Nowhere is that better demonstrated than in our creation of the nationwide network of training and enterprise councils and local enterprise companies. TECs and LECs are well equipped to give positive and appropriate help to unemployed people in their particular parts of the country. TECs are based on Conservative concern for the individual, using local expertise which best understands local needs and problems. There is no better illustration of that than the swift response of the TECs in producing local action plans to deal with the results of possible colliery closures.

TECs and LECs succeed because they are a partnership in which Government and business come together. We know what the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras thinks of business men; indeed, he has reiterated it today. I appeal to him to drop his anti-employer stance and to drop the imagery and attitude of the Bolsheviks. He and I know that he is not that old. For once in his life, could not he accept that co-operation achieves more than confrontation?

The clearest evidence that the Opposition are stuck in their past is their attitude to the European social charter and everything that flows from it.

Mr. Jimmy Boyce (Rotherham) *rose*——

Mrs. Shephard: I must make some progress.

The Opposition have given unqualified and unthinking support to each and every proposal from Brussels, however half baked, however irrelevant to the needs of a modern economy and however damaging to jobs. I have news for the hon. Gentleman: he might like to listen to what I have to say as he should find it interesting.

At last week's meeting of the Social Affairs Council, the employment Ministers of Europe agreed that the most urgent task facing them was to take effective steps to help unemployed people get back to work. The Council did not adopt any new directives which would raise the costs of employment and hold back the creation of new jobs. Instead, it adopted unanimously a United Kingdom presidency resolution underlining the importance of increasing efficiency, supporting new businesses and avoiding the imposition of rigidities which would hold back the creation and development of employment.

The employment Ministers of the Community understand where the real priorities lie. Last week they showed a realism which was entirely missing—alas—from today's speech by the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras. The directives on part-time and temporary work, which we believe would be bad for Britain and for jobs, have not been discussed by the Social Affairs Council for two years.

There is still no agreement on the working time directive. We have always said that that directive is the most damaging of all the proposals under the Commission's social action programme. We have always opposed it resolutely for that reason, but it is now clear that other member states have substantial problems with it. Those problems are a sign of the difficulty of legislating on a European level on issues which have traditionally been dealt with in different ways in different member states, as we have always said. Such diversity of practice is something that the Opposition have not even begun to understand.

The truth is that in Europe, as elsewhere, the British Labour party is composed of yesterday's people pursuing yesterday's agenda.

Mr. Dobson: If the Government are so adamant that the working hours directive will not be passed, why have they taken powers to abolish the limit on working hours down the mines on the basis that it would be replaced by the working hours directive?

Mrs. Shephard: First, that is not so. Secondly, we have never made any secret of our dislike of the directive. We have always opposed it. Should there be any danger of its being introduced, we have also said that we should challenge it in the European Court. Nothing has changed in that respect, but what has changed is the fact that some of our partners in Europe are beginning to share our view. The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras has again proved that he is stuck in the past, and the same is true of his attitude and that of his colleagues to industrial relations.

Nothing has done more to attract foreign investment into this country than the transformation of industrial relations since 1979. Nothing could be more calculated to drive foreign investment away than a return to the trade union legislation which the Labour party put on the statute book when it was last in government.

Britain is now the most favoured country in Europe for investment by German, American and Japanese companies. In 1991, nearly 40 per cent. of all inward investment into the European Community from the United States and Japan came to this country. It is no wonder that Jacques Delors has described Britain as "a paradise for investment".

Trade union colleagues of the Labour party passed a motion at their congress in September 1991 describing Japanese investment in this country as "alien, perverse and undemocratic". I am glad that one of the sponsors of that disgraceful motion—the Manufacturing, Science and Finance Union—has already eaten its words and last week concluded a single union deal with a Japanese company.

I am sorry that the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras did not see fit to congratulate the MSF on overturning its policy. Perhaps that has something to do with the fact that the MSF sponsors only 12 Labour Members of Parliament. Clearly, they must now disown the Trades Union Congress's policy on inward investment. But what of the other 136 Labour Members of Parliament who are sponsored by other trade unions? Are we going to hear them speak out at last now that the MSF has broken ranks?

The thousands of people in this country who work for Nissan, Sony, Honda and all the other overseas investors which have created jobs for British people in the past 10 years utterly reject the philosophy of trade union leaders who say, "If we can't have jobs on our terms, we'd rather not have jobs at all". That was the philosophy which destroyed 1,000 jobs at Dundee because of a petty quarrel between two trade unions. Until the Opposition are prepared to stand up against such behaviour by their trade union pay masters, their claim to be concerned about jobs will continue to lack all credibility.

Our policies are in sharp contrast to the job destruction policies of the Opposition. The Opposition claim to be concerned about unemployment, but let us spend a moment considering what that means. They claim to care deeply about young people, but what have they done? They have opposed all the Government's youth training programmes since 1979, declaring their passionate opposition to the youth training guarantee at their 1987 party conference.

The Opposition talk about the need for training, but since 1979 they have opposed every measure brought before the House to improve the skills and qualifications of our people.

Mr. Boyce *rose*——

Mrs. Shephard: I shall take no more interventions.

The Opposition work closely with the trade unions, but they have to because so many of them, including all the shadow Cabinet, are sponsored by unions. May we assume that Labour Members of Parliament agreed with the TUC when, in September 1991, it voted to boycott Employment Action before the programme had even begun?

I wonder whether the hon. Member for Gateshead, East (Ms. Quin) agreed with her sponsoring union—the Transport and General Workers Union—when it voted in July 1991 to boycott youth training, employment training and the TECs?

In the unlikely event of the Labour party ever being in power, what measures would it propose for training? Its standard answer to every problem is, "Tax it and regulate it." As an incentive to training at a time of high unemployment, the Labour party before the election proposed a jobs tax. Whereas we give people incentives to train, it proposes to put a levy on employers. Jobs are to be created by putting a tax on them.

Of course, I do not deny that some jobs would have been created. It would be interesting to hear whether the Labour party still adheres to that policy in the manifesto. There will be jobs for civil servants and accountants. Civil servants will be needed to administer the tax and accountants will be paid to avoid it.

For young people, worse would be in store. Young people would be allowed to work only if they had a training contract. Despite the demonstrable success of present policies—twice as many young people enter full-time education or training now as was the case in 1979—compulsion would again be the order of the day.

Our aim in employment protection legislation is to balance the rights of individuals against the needs of those who provide them with work. Too heavy legislative requirements will destroy job opportunities and damage the very people they are supposed to help—the most vulnerable in society.

Labour made its commitment to job destruction absolutely clear when the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras, speaking in the House on 17 November, reaffirmed with a bit of coaxing his commitment to a statutory national minimum wage which would destroy the very jobs Labour claims to protect. How many jobs we do not know—possibly up to 2 million. Even the Fabian Society says 800,000. But that that policy will destroy jobs is not in doubt, as the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East so crisply confirmed.

Over the years, we have got used to the Labour party peddling these antiquated and destructive policies, although after the truly incredible television interview given by the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) on Saturday evening, we wonder whether Labour has any policies, or whether it believes in any of the policies it claims to have.

I have to confess to added disappointment today. I had hoped that the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras would make some contribution to the solution of our problems. I thought that he might have presented some new ideas about helping unemployed people. All we have heard is a web of inaccuracy and half-truths. His speech was shot through with class envy of the usual socialist kind, based on ever-increasing sums of public expenditure. That is the classic Labour solution.

Mr. Dobson: Will the Secretary of State draw attention to any factual inaccuracy in what I have said today?

Mrs. Shephard: Almost every point that the hon. Gentleman made on this country's economic position was inaccurate. What a great opportunity the hon. Gentleman has missed. How sad his performance has been. I wanted to hear a lion roar. The hon. Gentleman has proved that he is really a mouse in sheep's clothing.

Despite the problems of world recession, despite the uncertainties in the European financial markets and despite the unhelpful and destructive attitude of the Labour party, the Government are determined to pursue our strategy for recovery.

I have set out that strategy to the House this afternoon —low inflation, tight public spending, competition and a vigorous supply-side policy. These are the policies, reinforced by spending on capital projects, which will lead to recovery, to growth and to the creation of real and lasting jobs. For we know, as our European partners do, that in the real world there are no quick fixes or easy options. They exist only in the mind of the Labour party.

While we work with business to bring Britain out of recession, we know that one of our first duties as a Government is to help those individuals and communities facing unemployment and redundancy. We will spare no effort to ensure that they receive the best and most effective help that we can provide. Unlike the Labour party, we believe in Britain and her people. That is why our policies deserve the support of the whole House tonight.

5.23 pm

Dr. Lynne Jones (Birmingham, Selly Oak): A few weeks ago, I had the pleasure of presenting the prizes and certificates at my old school. In my day, it was a grammar school. It is now an excellent comprehensive school which produces with a comprehensive intake results as good as those in my day when there was a grammar school intake. When I presented the certificates and prizes to the young women who had left school, I started asking them what they were doing now. I soon gave up because so many of them sadly said that they were looking for a job.

When I left school in 1969, unemployment was 2 per cent. We did not worry about getting a job. We were concerned only about getting a job that we wanted. Sadly, that is no longer the case. Unemployment across the country is more than 10 per cent. and it has been rising every month for the past 30 months. Unemployment in this country has been rising twice as fast as in the rest of Europe in the past six months, during which we have held the presidency of the European Community.

Some 750,000 under-24s are unemployed, the highest figure ever recorded and twice as high as the national average. If ever there was an argument against the Government's case that employment protection and wages councils undermine employment, these figures are that argument, because it is young people whose rights were removed in 1986. They had their protection under the wages councils and their right to minimum wages removed. Yet their unemployment rates are twice those for other workers.

The studies quoted by the Government in parliamentary answers, far from backing their case that wages councils and minimum wages destroy jobs, show that the increased ineffectiveness of the wages councils, as a result of there being fewer wages inspectors for example, has contributed to the decline in employment.

In July, the Secretary of State announced that there would be new measures to underwrite the youth training guarantee. We have been trying to get figures for the number of 16 and 17-year-olds who are waiting for a youth training place. Last week, the Secretary of State finally had to admit that 19,000 young people who left school last summer are still waiting for a youth training place. When they get a place, they are unlikely to be successful in getting work at the end of the process. I do not have the figures for youth training and I hope that, after her announcement last week, the Secretary of State will begin to give the figures month by month and district by district for those waiting for youth training places and for those who are successful in getting work. We should like to see those figures.

Only 9 per cent. of the 2,693 people leaving employment training in Birmingham got jobs and 72 per cent. remained unemployed. From an answer to a question I tabled last week, we learned that there are only half the number of job vacancies notified for the whole of Birmingham as there are unemployed people in my constituency. Selly Oak is not one of the Birmingham constituencies that suffer most from high unemployment, bad as it is at 17 per cent. for male unemployment.

We are not satisifed with the assurances that the Secretary of State has given today. The budget for the measures is 30 per cent. less than it was in 1987. Her assurances today are highly dubious. We look forward to seeing some improvement in the abysmal figures I have quoted.

In October 1990, John Major said——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hesitate to interrupt, but I point out that the hon. Lady referred to the Prime Minister as "John Major". That is not in order.

Dr. Jones: I apologise, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

In 1990, the Prime Minister said on taking office:

"It will take time—it always does—to change the economy. It is like turning the Titanic round."

Some of us believe that the Titanic is well on its way to hitting the iceberg. However, there appears to have been a change of heart in the past month. After the Government's central policy, based on membership of the exchange rate mechanism floundered, the Government suddenly announced that they were turning the Titanic in a different direction. Last Thursday, the Prime Minister said that

"The only way to create long-term sustainable jobs is to create the right policies"—

create the right policies? What has the Prime Minister been doing for the past two years?—

"that produce long-term sustainable growth. That is precisely what we are putting in place."—[*Official Report*, 3 December 1992; Vol. 215, c. 390.]

The Government have been in power for the past 13 years and we presume that the policies that they claim they are putting in place, which will lead to recovery, are those announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in the autumn statement.

However, when the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Fabricant) asked the Secretary of State for Employment last week to make a statement about the employment prospects of the proposals in the autumn

[Dr. Jones]

statement, the right hon. Lady was evasive at first. When pressed about the precise number of jobs that would be created, she said:

"Priority has been given to protecting programmes with significant employment implications."—[*Official Report*, 1 December 1992; Vol. 215, c. 135.]

That is hardly about growth, creating employment and getting the economy off the rocks or the iceberg that we are sadly approaching.

Despite the best talking up of the green-shoots tendency by Conservative Members, the autumn statement will simply, it is hoped, prevent this country from moving from recession into slump. The autumn statement is not enough to create the long-term sustainable growth and reduction in unemployment that the Prime Minister talked about.

We should take a leaf from Japan's book. Japan already has a predicted growth rate of 1·8 per cent. this year. The Treasury does not believe in the green shoots that are to come from the autumn statement. The Treasury forecasts a rise in growth of only 0·75 per cent. in this country next year.

Japan's growth rate is already much higher than ours and it has 2·2 per cent. unemployment. However, the Japanese Government realise the danger of recession and they are planning to invest the equivalent of 60 billion ecu —more than the entire EC budget—in infrastructure and investment for the future. That is the kind of approach that we need in this country if we are to reduce unemployment.

My colleagues in local government in the west midlands have submitted a package of measures that they would like to see implemented in the west midlands. The package includes infrastructure projects and an agreement to go ahead with the midland metro; further derelict land grants; removal of toxic waste from canals; and a new station for Birmingham.

We are also aware that there is a dreadful problem of homelessness and bad housing in this country. The Institute of Housing and all respectable housing forecasters claim that we need at least 100,000 social housing units a year. However, there will be only 32,000 this year. There is surely scope for greater investment in housing. However, despite the talking up in the autumn statement, investment in housing is likely to be cut. In addition, programmes for housing associations, other than for buying up houses on the open market which we certainly welcome, are also to be cut.

Mr. Tim Smith: Does the hon. Lady agree with the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) that public spending next year should be higher than £244·5 billion? If so, how should that be financed—by increased taxation or increased borrowing?

Dr. Jones: I agree that expenditure must be increased if we are to save expenditure in the long run. The Secretary of State for Employment has already told us the cost of unemployment. If we do not tackle the issue now, unemployment will continue to rise. We must invest in infrastructure and housing. However, if we need to increase taxation, let those who have benefited most from the Government's mismanagement—those who have seen their tax cut by 200 times that of ordinary people—make a contribution to help us get out of the recession.

There is a desperate need for greater investment in housing. However, the Government offer us more of the same. They give with one hand and take away with the other. They are withdrawing support to local government. About £200 million will be lost to local government in England—£35 million of that to my local authority in Birmingham. There will be more job losses as a result of that. There will be cuts in the urban development programme and the much-vaunted city challenge programme will be abandoned.

On 26 November, the president of the European investment bank said:

"If asked we would increase the speed of financing for infrastructural projects. We are ready to do this."

While we have the presidency of the EC, surely we should take advantage of that offer. Later this week, I hope that we will talk with our European partners about getting Europe and this country back to work.

When the President of the Board of Trade was a Back Bencher in 1987 he said:

"Government cannot pretend that it is not involved in decisions about the future of the key platforms of industry or that it is up to the companies alone to ensure that they are able to compete effectively in the managed marketplace of the world. There are industries such as the steel industry, the car industry and the air frame industry which cannot be allowed to fail if Britain is to remain an advanced economy. Ideally the Government should not own them, but it has an ultimate responsibility to determine if they have a role in the economy."

Last month, in response to a question from an hon. Member about whether he should do more to ensure that we diversify our high-tech industries, the President of the Board of Trade said:

"Diversification will take place in British industry as a result of the entrepreneurial skills of industry managers, and no one else."—[*Official Report*, 4 November 1992; Vol. 213, c. 269.]

Those industry managers do not agree with that.

I end by quoting Samuel Johnson:

"We frequently fall into error and folly, not because the true principles of action are not known, but because for a time they are not remembered."

The President of the Board of Trade should remember his earlier words before it is too late.

5.37 pm

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): In following the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Dr. Jones), I want to refer to the point that she made in respect of the wages councils. In defence of the wages councils, she said that the reduced role of the wages councils over the past four or five years and the inadequate number of wages inspectors had led to the destruction of jobs. I simply do not believe that.

I am a rare animal in this place because I am an employer. No doubt, if the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) was in the Chamber, he would deride the fact that I have two jobs. I still run a family company and I have run it through extremely difficult times more than once, but the present times are as bad as any I have known.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State was right to say that confidence is desperately needed to rebuild all our businesses. I suspect that there will be a slow starting, but gradually accelerating, spiral upwards as the recession recedes and recovery begins. I look forward to that.

As an employer in a very low-tech business in a service industry—all the things that are derided by the folk on the Opposition Benches—I must tell the House that the

working time directive, minimum wages and the kind of social on-costs for labour envisaged by Opposition Members would not help me.

I was astonished by the cheek of the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson), but then I always am. I was also somewhat regretful that he did not give way to me, because I had a simple question for him. I was going to ask whether he would vote against the private Member's Bill of the hon. Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell) to bring Sunday trading back to the position under the Shops Act 1950. That would destroy thousands of part-time and full-time jobs for those who work on Sundays. The hon. Gentleman did not give way, and I shall not give way to enable him to answer my question. I shall wait until next time for him to tell us.

The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras talked about training. He said that the Labour party's great nostrum to solve our unemployment problem is training. I remember that the last effort of a Labour Government —it is not simply historic, but almost pre-historic—was the introduction of the youth opportunities programme. The programme was called YOPS for short. Some of my hon. Friends who remember that programme will agree that it was the ultimate cheap labour scheme.

The hon. Gentleman made much of manufacturing, as did many other Opposition Members. I regret the loss of our manufacturing base and many industries. My constituency in the Medway towns is much more like one of the northern industrial towns which depended largely on heavy engineering for their employment. But those days are gone, and heavy engineering has been replaced by different businesses. High-tech, light engineering and avionic businesses are the backbone of manufacturing in the Medway towns. Manufacturing is also carried out by companies such as CAV Lucas, which I visited not long ago. During that visit I understood for the first time exactly why manufacturing employment has gone to the wall. I was shown an all-dancing and singing machine which did 27 different things to metal. That means that 27 different jobs have been taken over by a machine which was manned by one minder. With three shifts a day, 78 manufacturing jobs have been lost. It is no surprise that our manufacturing employment base has declined if that is typical of the sort of manufacturing on which we made our great days.

The hon. Gentleman talked about investment, as do other Labour Members. Most investment that goes into manufacturing industry today is aimed primarily at doing away with labour, not with creating it. Most investment does not create jobs; it does away with them. That is not surprising, because there is not an employer in the country who is not examining his labour costs to see whether he can reduce them.

Mr. Leighton: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that the country that has made the most investment in high technology is Japan, which has the lowest level of unemployment?

Mr. Couchman: I accept that entirely. It is something which we want to learn from the Japanese. That is why I welcome the settlement of three Japanese companies in my constituency.

I shall say something in a moment about inward investment. I think that we should take the remedies of the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras with a pinch of salt, because, unless he acknowledges what has happened to manufacturing industry, he acknowledges nothing.

If the 19th century was the British century and the 20th century was the American century, the 21st century will be the century of the Chinese and the Pacific rim. From my recent visits to the far east it seems that we should seek inward investment from companies in Japan, Taiwan, Korea and Hong Kong. We should welcome such companies. Those countries want to create a European base, and they have chosen the United Kingdom as the place in which to do so, for four good reasons. First, if they speak anything other than their own oriental languages, which we do not understand, they speak English. That is a powerful reason to come to the United Kingdom.

Secondly, such countries like our industrial relations. The successive employment measures that the Government have introduced since 1979 have provided good industrial relations in the United Kingdom. Thirdly, they like our corporate tax regime. The United Kingdom has the lowest corporate tax rates in Europe. Those countries like that very much—and who would not like it if he wanted to make a profit?

Fourthly, those countries like to settle in the United Kingdom for the reason that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State mentioned—we have not accepted the social on-costs of labour which are such a burden to German, French and Italian companies. It is the reason why we have not taken on the social chapter. I hope that we will never take on the social chapter, because it would be a powerful disincentive to come to the United Kingdom.

I want to refer to one successful industry—the pharmaceutical industry—and sound something of a gipsy's warning to the Secretary of State. Before doing so, I must declare an interest, because I advise a large pharmaceutical company in Kent. I draw the attention of the House to a recent statement of the Secretary of State for Health who suggested that she would curb the drugs budget once again by increasing the number of therapeutic categories that would be limited for prescription.

The pharmaceutical industry contributes £1·2 billion each year to the trade balance. It has research and development of £1·3 billion, which is 18 per cent. of the industry's turnover in the United Kingdom. The industry is immensely successful. It is another example of inward investment taking place in the United Kingdom because large American companies have chosen to do their European R and D for the pharmaceutical industry in this country. The American companies like the quality of our scientists. That is very important. We must cherish that quality, and we must do everything we can to build it up.

I am worried by the recent warning of the Secretary of State. I have already said that we will substantially damage confidence in the pharmaceutical industry if we take hasty, short-term measures to curb the drugs bill. I ask Ministers to examine the matter carefully before introducing such a restriction because there is huge over-capacity in pharmaceutical manufacturing in Europe. Once we pass 1 January and enter the single market, the pharmaceutical industry will take steps to rationalise manufacturing. Manufacturing gives us the trade surplus of £1·2 billion, and it employs many people. I am sure that my right hon. Friend will take on board those words and will speak to our right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health.

[Mr. Couchman]

We are unlikely to see a substantial return to the heavy engineering, low-tech, metal-bashing industries which made this country's manufacturing base during the 19th century. However, we shall need to cherish the new industries which come in through inward investment or are generated in the United Kingdom by our own entrepreneurs.

I accept everything that the Secretary of State said about the factors for recovery being in place. The only missing ingredient is confidence. Every step that the Secretary of State and other Ministers take should be designed to bolster confidence, not to do it down.

5.48 pm

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): The hon. Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman) mentioned his desire to see the abolition of the wages councils. He suggested that the continuation of the councils would be an impediment to employment. He will not be surprised to know that I do not agree with him. Winston Churchill established the wages councils for a good reason—the protection which they offered employees.

The hon. Gentleman then referred to the Sunday Trading Bill proposed by the hon. Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell). I recall that it was also Winston Churchill who said that Sunday was the greatest British institution and, therefore, should be prized beyond all others. He recognised the importance of Sunday as a day of rest for workers and a time when people could be with their families. If additional shop work were made available, I for one should like to see it shared with those who are unemployed at present, rather than forcing many shop workers, against their wishes, to be employed on a Sunday.

I wish to take up two comments that the Secretary of State made. She talked a great deal about improved industrial relations. We are all happy that the days of wildcat strikes and secondary picketing are behind us. I supported the measures that the Government took in 1980 to stop secondary picketing and their introduction of the secret ballot. But the Secretary of State will agree that fear of unemployment is one of the reasons for the improvement in industrial relations.

In the longer term, rather than relying on fear we should encourage a climate based on co-operation and partnership—two words which the Secretary of State used in her speech. We should look to the German model of industrial partnership, co-operation and profit sharing—the three Rs of rights, representation and reward.

I took slight exception to the Secretary of State's suggestion that anyone who raised the plight of those who were out of work talked Britain down. She implied that there was a lack of patriotism in even daring to mention the number of people out of work. She said that we should be interested not in statistics and figures but in the individuals who lie behind them. No one in the Chamber would disagree with that. The figures reveal the scale and the effect of unemployment on the human personality and the families and communities in which they live.

Rather than trading remarks across the Chamber, I hope that we can build on the Secretary of State's suggestion this afternoon that we need real partnership and co-operation to tackle this curse of unemployment. It is disingenuous to suggest that any Opposition Member who expresses concern about the unemployed talks Britain down. By all means, highlight success in the Department of Employment or in the country—everyone is happy to hear about success stories—but we should never forget those who are not so lucky.

Living in and representing a city such as Liverpool brings one face to face with the calamitous effect of long-term, institutionalised unemployment. This week the Liverpool Research Group in Macroeconomics, the accountants Ernst and Young and the Liverpool *Daily Post* published their biannual report on the prospects of our local economy.

The remarks made by Professor Patrick Minford conflict with some of the comments made by the Secretary of State today. He said:

"the prospects for reviving employment on Merseyside are poor. Instead, what we are forecasting is a continuation of falling employment in virtually all sectors accompanied by a steady outflow of the labour force and population."

That is a depressing picture for those of us who have seen a massive decline in the numbers of people living and working in the Greater Liverpool area in the past 20 years. A nation of Dick Whittingtons has been created in which a policy of national mobility has sucked people away.

Ms. Angela Eagle (Wallasey): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that it is a bit rich to hear strictures from Patrick Minford about our economic success, or lack of it, when he was one of the leading lights of the mad, fundamentalist economic movement known as monetarism which so afflicted the first part of the Conservative period in office? Does he agree that that ideological dogma has had a great deal to do with the persistently high rates of unemployment experienced by Liverpool, Wallasey and other parts of the country in the past decade?

Mr. Alton: The hon. Member for Wallasey (Ms. Eagle) obviously missed the irony of my remarks. I quoted Professor Minford because the Government have consistently quoted him in the past 13 years in support of their monetarist approach. Instead of dragging out of the cupboard quotations from the Kingfisher group, as the Secretary of State did earlier, I thought that it would be interesting for the House to hear from someone who has been a supporter of the Government's policies in the past 13 years—the Government would not deny that—and is a well-known monetarist.

Professor Minford's forecast for the Merseyside economy does not bear out some of what the Secretary of State said. I hope that his forecasts and the soothsayers will be proved wrong. I do not want to talk down the prospects for recovery on Merseyside any more than I want to talk down the prospects for recovery in Britain, but we must listen to what people are saying and look at the reality of life in areas like Merseyside.

On Merseyside more than 17 per cent. of the people are unemployed. We have had the bleak news this week of further redundancies at Cammell Laird. I am sure that the hon. Members for Wallasey and for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) will speak further about those redundancies, if they catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The prognosis is not good for Merseyside and the Government's fatalistic and defeatist approach will be of little comfort to individuals, families and communities who face the curse of further unemployment and the possibility of literally 50 years on the dole.

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): Surely the reality is that the trade union barons have brought Liverpool almost to its knees. Has not their dogma, stupidity and irresponsibility over many years made it so difficult for Liverpool to attract inward investment?

Mr. Alton: I stand second to none—the hon. Member for Birkenhead would probably stand in my company—in saying that we have fought Militant and other extreme groups about which we have heard this afternoon. We have seen such groups trade on unemployment in Merseyside. However, it would be wrong to deduce that we have a workshy labour force or that people on Merseyside do not give as much value for money as the next people. That is not true. Many companies in Merseyside operate just as successfully as companies elsewhere. We now have one of the highest productivity records in the country.

One needs only to visit a place such as Liverpool freeport to see business which is booming, with record profits and levels of trade last year. Where the trade unions work in partnership, they can be a positive force. So let us not be simply anti-trade union or anti-workers. We require a partnership such as the Secretary of State referred to earlier. Measures such as the abolition of the wages councils will not facilitate the creation of such a partnership.

In Liverpool, 40,000 people are without jobs. In the north-west region, 254,000 men and 75,000 women are without work. In our country, 2·8 million people languish on the dole queues. In October this year a further 24,000 British people joined the other 17 million Europeans who are currently unemployed.

Communities that have depended on traditional forms of work have fared especially badly. Shipbuilding and coal mining communities are simply the latest and most graphic examples of that. In such communities there is an acute sense of abandonment, desolation and hopelessness.

If we are without work, the issue is direct and immediate. It brings into question previous jobs, provision for the family, coping with old age, what to do each day, how to pay back loans and mortgages, what other people —including our marriage partners and children—will think of us and what the future holds. Other tragedies such as alcoholism, depression, marital breakdown, homelessness and even death are all associated with job loss. For young people, with no prospect of work, there is often bitterness, alienation and apathy.

I was especially worried by the way in which the plight of young unemployed people was casually brushed to one side this afternoon. Most of us know the truth of the old saying that the devil will always find mischief for idle hands. One only needs to see young people hanging around on street corners, with nothing to do and nowhere to go, to understand their plight. It is not an excuse for lawlessness or committing crimes and it is not the only reason for crime. However, there is a connection between the listlessness, frustration and boredom of being out of work and the one crime committed every two seconds and high levels of drug abuse—0·5 million people have taken Ecstasy and 100,000 are addicted to drugs generally. Being unemployed means having nothing to do, and that can rapidly come to mean having nothing to do with the rest of us.

Most of us view unemployment from the outside and we are frightened by it. It is a threat to affluence, status and our place within the community. We are right to be frightened, because a substantial proportion of no-job families remain locked into poverty and worklessness. In Britain today 2 million children live in families afflicted by poverty; 30,000 families live in hostel accommodation; 150,000 16 to 19-year-olds experience homelessness. Frequently those are also the people without jobs.

What are we to do? I wish to mention three things—the sharing of jobs, new job creation and better training. First, we should abandon fatalism and defeatism, which suggest that nothing can be done. Markets can be reshaped and institutions can be restructed in ways which give a strong and positive value to employment.

In Liverpool, the city's coat of arms bears the mildly ironic Latin words,

"Deus nobis haec otia fecit"—

God has provided for us this leisure. Instead of long-term and enforced leisure for 15 per cent. of our population —the figure is rising—we should devise ways in which to share the available work.

Some areas and families are job-rich, and others have no jobs. Many parents would willingly take a sabbatical away from their career to help to bring up their children or to care for a disabled person or an aged relative. They would do so if the tax and benefit systems recognised the value of such a commitment. That would free work for others and help to prevent the high costs of vandalism, crime, work failure, low educational achievement and statutory personal supervision, which so often stem from family breakdown.

Earlier retirement and sabbaticals for training or time out for further educational development also free work, while enhancing the quality of the work force. At present we have a crude system of work sharing. It is called unemployment—90 per cent. have a job and 10 per cent. have not. Surely we can do much better than that.

In Britain, we need to re-learn how to share, but we must also learn to create new work, and that is my second point. All around us tasks are waiting to be done. Surely it cannot be beyond our wit to find creative ways to harness the abilities and talents of hundreds of thousands of unemployed people. Energy conservation schemes make particular sense, since they can be targeted at low-income households as well as providing jobs.

Construction jobs represent a low inflationary way to put people into work and an investment in infrastructure, which is falling apart. Often our public services are a disgrace and in many areas the local environment is tacky and tatty. The condition of many people's homes is deplorable: 2·4 million public sector homes are in need of repairs of more than £1,000 each; 909,000 homes are unfit for human habitation; and 463,000 homes lack basic amenities. Work is waiting to be done and we are paying construction workers to remain idle on the dole. If construction workers lived together in communities and were easily identifiable as such, I am sure that the people of Cheltenham and elsewhere would have been on the streets marching in the same numbers that we saw when mining communities were faced with 30,000 redundancies. There is work waiting to be done and skilled people waiting to do it.

Anyone would think that it costs us nothing to keep people out of work. Apart from the social costs that I have mentioned, there are economic costs. This year it will cost more than £20 billion in benefits and in lost taxes, which would otherwise have been received by the Exchequer if

[Mr. Alton]

those people were in work. That is the cost of keeping people on the dole and it is a tremendous waste of national resources.

Someone asked how one would finance schemes to provide work. It is not merely a question of running up the public sector borrowing requirement, although goodness knows it is lower than in many of our competitor countries and there may be room for some additional borrowing to finance schemes. In addition, there should be a small increase in taxation to pay for them. Above all, the cost to the Exchequer of keeping people out of work is surely justification enough for translating those resources into creating jobs rather than keeping people unemployed.

In unpublished evidence to the Select Committee on Employment on 21 October, the Secretary of State suggested that the annual cost of keeping one person unemployed was about £9,000. The other side of that coin is that, in 1991, the average income generated by every extra 100,000 people in employment would have been about £1·7 billion. That figure might be an overestimate, because many unemployed people might not be able to get the most highly paid or productive jobs, but the implication of such a loss of revenue contributions holds good. Unemployment is not an efficient way to lubricate the economy.

Thirdly, in addition to sharing and the need to reallocate resources to job creation, we need to consider training and future employability. A dirigiste and often meritricious approach to education has left us with 25 per cent. of our work force—that is 6 million people—illiterate and innumerate. Our failure to educate properly leaves people unemployable. Only 35 per cent. of our 16 to 18-year-olds go into full-time education or training, compared with 79 per cent. in the United States and 66 per cent. in France. We also secure fewer graduates: 132 per 1,000 of 21-year-olds, compared with 236 in Japan, 230 in America and 202 in France.

As the Confederation of British Industry has urged, we must be more ambitious about increasing the number of graduates. The Secretary of State referred to the additional people who will join the training and enterprise councils. She said that places for about 1·5 million people would be found. It would be absurd not to welcome that, but as I told the Minister who will reply to the debate last week during Employment Question Time, not everyone receives a place on a TEC course. The real challenge for the TECs is what they do about people who have come straight from school and who are illiterate or innumerate. What will they do about disabled people on projects such as the Greenbank project which has lost its funding and which I mentioned to him last week?

The Minister of State, Department of Employment (Mr. Michael Forsyth): The hon. Gentleman may be interested to know that part of the package that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has put together includes help for people suffering from problems of literacy and innumeracy, which I agree is an element of some of the problems faced by the long-term unemployed.

Mr. Alton: I am glad to hear that and will give the package a fulsome welcome. Otherwise that group of people will become the long-term unemployed, for whom no one will be able to find places. It is all too easy for TECs to take in the cream—people who leave school relatively well qualified. People who have no qualifications will be the challenge and I welcome the Minister's intervention.

Training, sharing and job creation are all the business of Government. Sadly, inflation has dominated the political debate and unemployment has been treated as a residual concern. Caring about both is not stirring oil and water. Any economic system that ignores its impact on people, idolises the market and elevates the cult of the individual is doomed to failure. Our failed economic system has left people unable to find jobs. Businesses have closed and inadequate funds have been made available for public expenditure. Community and family life are often in tatters. That is a long, bitter and unflattering record.

The emptiness and failure of present policies should serve to stimulate a long overdue change, and I am grateful to the official Opposition for providing us with the opportunity to mention such issues this afternoon and for enabling us to contribute to that debate.

6.7 pm

Mrs. Cheryl Gillan (Chesham and Amersham): The hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) mentioned wages councils in his opening remarks. He may find himself on his own in supporting them. In an earlier debate I challenged the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) on whether he would reintroduce them should—God forbid—there ever be a Labour Government. He chose not to respond to that question.

Ms. Joyce Quin (Gateshead, East): I am interested in the hon. Lady's remark, because she and her hon. Friend the Minister have misrepresented our views in that way on a few occasions. I hope that she will accept that there is a world of difference between a party which wants to abolish the wages councils, full stop, and one which wants an effective system of wage protection, which might include such councils or another system. The gulf between the two main parties on that issue is very wide.

Mrs. Gillan: The hon. Lady is entitled to her interpretation of the record of the House, but I commend her to re-read it. It was clear that the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras refused to answer my intervention in the affirmative.

I should like to declare an interest as I am a director of Kidsons Impey, a firm of chartered accountants, and I am also an employer and so I hope that I can bring to the House a businesswoman's approach to employment and unemployment.

The motion on the Order Paper typifies the way in which Labour Members view the country today. At a time when all agree that we require confidence, it is couched in words which would not inspire confidence in anyone listening to the debate or watching from outside as a potential inward investor.

Labour Members always look at the bottle as being half empty. It is time that they discovered that it might be half full. I wish tonight to examine the matter from a constructive standpoint, looking at the bottle as being half full. For a start, let us examine some of the jobs that have been created, some of the work practices that are expanding employment opportunities and the positive steps that we have taken to support our businesses and industries.

No Government want high unemployment. In a democracy, the power to govern comes from the votes of the citizens, and an unhappy and unemployed citizen is far less likely to vote for a party which presided over his or her misery. And misery it is, for I have several friends who in the last year or so, through no fault of theirs, have become unemployed and unable to find work. They want support and ideas, but they do not want tea and sympathy. They want action, and that is what the Government have taken.

Governments do not directly create jobs, except in the public sector. The wealth-creating private sector creates jobs. Even so, Government must create the conditions in which the private sector can flourish. Those conditions must include low inflation, low interest rates, low unit wage costs, low taxation, good industrial relations and opportunities to reskill and retrain. That is the environment for growth that the Government have created, despite the recession, in which all the main world economies have hit rock bottom more or less at the same time.

Business is beginning to respond to those conditions, and I want the House to consider some of the good news stories of the past week. Today, Rover announced that it is calling in workers for the first time to work on a Sunday. That is being done in response to increasing orders for the Rover 800. DHL International, the courier company, has announced that it is planning to increase its work force by 23 per cent. QPL International, the microelectronics company, is creating 280 new jobs at INMOS, International Metal Oxide Semiconductors.

In the last week, the House of Commons Library has been tracking articles containing announcements of new jobs, and several thousand jobs are listed. They are appearing in the national press, revealing the intentions of industry and business, responding to the environment that the Government have created.

The small and medium-sized business sector does not get well reported and is often not properly identified, even though it comprises much of our business and creates jobs on a daily basis. The number of jobs created in the last week alone is a story that speaks for itself. Unfortunately, that story does not make the headlines. That is a crying shame because we need to demonstrate such results to restore confidence.

Opposition Members claim that we have squandered our European presidency. I strongly disagree. On 4 December, the employment Ministers unanimously adopted a resolution underlining the importance of increasing efficiency and the need to support new businesses. Under the British presidency, we have started to move the Community away from rigid directives that would strangle business and growth.

The social chapter and the working time directive are examples of this. What would Labour Members tell the shift workers at Alcan in my constituency who have arrived at an arrangement with management to work 12-hour shifts Monday to Thursday so that they can have Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays with their families? That arrangement suits the workers and the management. Would Labour Members tell them that the working time directive would not allow them to work those hours, so that they would not have an improved quality of life and time with their families?

Europe is starting to take a lead from the United Kingdom. They are looking with interest at a country which, except for Denmark, has the highest proportion of its adult population in employment, has one of the lowest unemployment rates for the under 25s and has working conditions that have attracted the largest proportion of inward investment from countries outside the Community. In difficult economic circumstances, we are making great strides, and business and industry are pressing ahead, particularly in their flexible working arrangements, which are being adopted to reflect the changing needs of the working population.

Since 1979, many changes in working patterns have taken place. As of June of this year, compared with June 1979, there had been a 65 per cent. increase in male part-time employment and a 20 per cent. increase in female part-time employment. Adopting changes such as job sharing have made that possible, and job sharing is now practised widely, notably and successfully in the House of Commons Library, which provided the statistics that I am using.

Industry has been quick to grasp other ideas that have made employment fit more aptly the needs of people who are concerned with the quality of their lives. Flexitime, home working, the provision of creches and working on Sundays are now options available to many who work.

Sadly, there are no jobs for life. We need look only at Japan—several hon. Members have referred to the situation there—which prided itself on a system supposed to guarantee work until retirement. The economic slowdown revealed that utopia for what it was—social engineering that fell at the first hurdle in a recession. Perhaps Japan will begin to look more closely at the United Kingdom working environment, in which self-employment has risen by 58 per cent. since 1979.

Sanyo Electric, which is planning to reduce its work force in Japan by over 2,000, is offering early retirement to employees over 50, saying that that will enable them to start something different before it is too late. Society in Japan is changing, and it is clearly changing towards our pattern. So perhaps in the way in which we learnt some of the good points of Japanese business, they will benefit from our good employment practices.

Having told the House of some of the new jobs that have been announced and some of our work practices, I move on to some of the positive steps that the Government are taking. The autumn statement was a milestone, carefully targeting areas of weakness in the economy. It was designed to boost employment and help the unemployed back to work. We have already heard in the debate of many favourable responses to the autumn statement.

Our withdrawal from the ERM, no matter what one's view, gave us the opportunity to reduce interest rates. That has been of direct benefit to the employment-creating sector of the economy—the private sector.

Ms. Eagle: Did the hon. Lady agree with the Government's policy to join the ERM in the first instance, even though interest rates thereafter increased dramatically? She is now praising the fact that we were forced out of the ERM.

Mrs. Gillan: We are discussing employment—a subject that is supposed to be close to the hearts of Labour Members—not Europe. I would be happy to debate European matters with the hon. Lady on another occasion.

[Mrs. Gillan]

No matter what one thinks about our withdrawal from the ERM, it gave us an opportunity to reduce interest rates. The businesses with which I deal have appreciated that reduction, which has helped them at a time of recession.

My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade has been working hard at the Department of Trade and Industry and his announcement about one-stop shops was designed to help small and medium-sized businesses, which are so important in job creation.

Mr. David Hanson (Delyn): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Gillan: No, I have given way enough.

In her opening speech my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State gave many examples from her Department, which the Opposition may notice is called the Department of Employment, not the "Department of Unemployment". Those benefits and measures add up to significant Government action to encourage the economy and our businesses and industries.

The economic report by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development in the United Kingdom in 1991 described the Department of Employment's activities and reforms, such as deregularisation, privatisation and the reform of employment law, as "impressive" and said that they had helped to reverse the United Kingdom's relative economic decline.

The Government's formula for business will put people back to work and their policies will create an environment for success. We believe that a partnership between Government and business will create real jobs. It is now up to business to build on and add to that framework. Unlike the Opposition, we are backing British jobs and business. There is no sign of leadership, business acumen, reality or confidence-giving from the Opposition.

My right hon. Friend described the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras as a mouse in sheep's clothing, but I must admit that he has surpassed himself in size by following dinosaur policies that are outmoded and outrageous and, thankfully for business, industry and jobs, he is out of power.

6.22 pm

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): I shall not follow in detail the speeches of the four speakers who preceded me, but I wish to pick up themes from their speeches.

The Secretary of State is not only a good but also a highly intelligent person. I want her to imagine what it would be like for somebody who had been asleep for 30 years to wake up and listen to her speech. Would that person recognise the country as we see it or would he think that her speech was relevant to a Britain of 30 years ago? We thank her for most of the measures that she announced in her speech, such as job clubs. Although they are all important, they are totally inadequate as a strategy for dealing with the ever-growing number of people deprived by unemployment.

The Secretary of State gave it away at the beginning of her contribution by talking about the "distress" of unemployment as though it were like suffering from a heavy cold. Unemployment is not merely distressful. There is an anger and despair felt by a large number of our constituents. They feel a hopelessness about the situation and we must continue to represent that feeling in this debate. It is crucial that that is the cornerstone of building a policy to move this country back to full employment.

The motion mentions the high level of redundancies, so I wish to discuss the issue of Cammell Laird. As the House knows, last week the owners of Cammell Laird threw in the towel. They threw up their hands in despair and said that they could see no alternative for our yard but closure. I had a brief opportunity to tell the House then that the workers and the people of Merseyside would not accept that scenario because unemployment is already too high in our area. In my constituency and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Wallasey (Ms. Eagle) the official unemployment rate is 14 per cent. The grandparents, parents and offspring of some of the families whom we represent are currently unemployed. Our newspapers carry reports of whole streets in our area in which not one person is at work.

To be told that the owners of Cammell Laird intend to destroy the livelihood and skills centre in Merseyside is not acceptable to us because we have seen what the future is like if there is no work. We are not merely holding out a begging bowl. Cammell Laird is a priceless asset of this country. Its closure should be not simply a local issue but a national one if we are to survive as a great trading nation. We shall therefore fight against its closure. It will be a national fight and we shall not simply sit idly by or make speeches in this House about the criminal loss of skills and the skills centre. I hope that the country will support us in our fight because we know that, without such a skills centre, Merseyside has no future. If Merseyside is closed skills centre by skills centre, the same future will envelop the whole nation.

The fight goes well beyond Birkenhead and beyond the Merseyside borders, because it concerns the country's manufacturing base. If we are to say that some of the most highly skilled and precious members of the work force can be discarded because the employers are at the end of their wits, and do not know what to do, it is a grim scenario not just for us but for the nation.

For those reasons, I am happy to spell out in more detail why we shall not accept that closure and why the Government should not stand idly by and accept what Vickers Shipbuilding and Engineering Ltd. has handed down as a death sentence to Cammell Laird. The Government are closely involved in the position that has been reached and with the future of the workers in Merseyside. The fact that the Government sold that taxpayers' asset for £1 excites local constituents more than anything else. How could something so valuable have been valued in that way and now be so easily discarded by those whom the Government trusted with ownership?

The Government are VSEL's only supplier, so they have an enormous interest in its behaviour. As we now know—it will become known because we intend to repeat it—they hold a golden share in VSEL. At this stage, we are asking the Government not actively to intervene but to keep an active watching brief. Our first and crucial fight is to wrestle away from VSEL the title deeds and dowry to that yard so that we can go our own way. When that task is complete, we shall look to the Government for practical and positive help. It will not be on the scale of the intervention of the 1960s. We know that if we are to survive we must play a part in mapping out the sort of

positive employment policies that the Government must pursue if they are to beat back the rising tide of unemployment.

I am happy to note that the Secretary of State for Employment has returned to the Front Bench, for which I am grateful to her. I am now able to say to her that I hope that we have heard for the last time the sort of speech that she gave today. Every one of the measures that she mentioned was proper and important, but her speech did not match the urgency felt by the millions of people in this country who are today drowning in a sea of unemployment. Our task today is partly to convince the Secretary of State of that.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) on being brave enough to talk about full employment and placing that once again on the agenda. I have some ideas to pass on to my hon. Friend to use in his fight in the party. It is noticeable—I shall say this before anyone else does—that full employment is not mentioned in our motion. If policies for full employment are not contained in the Labour party manifesto at the next election, the Labour party will face its fifth election defeat, and deservedly so. When my hon. Friend fights his corner in the shadow Cabinet, I hope that he will take back this message with the urgency that we shall deploy in today's debate to show the importance of having both the political and intellectual courage to begin a debate on full employment.

The issue of the wasted opportunity of our presidency of the European Community has been raised, but our presidency is not yet over. The summit at Edinburgh has yet to take place and it is not impossible for the British Government to start to give a lead in showing what is necessary if we are to return to full employment. We cannot have full employment in one country; we must have full employment in surrounding countries, too. To achieve that, we must acknowledge the power structure in Europe.

Given that the Government are usually realistic about power politics, I am surprised that they seem unable to acknowledge the power structure in Europe. Both Front-Bench teams wish to link this country to a Europe dominated by a super-power. Ever since men and women have formed tribes, let alone nation states, no tribe or nation state has willingly surrendered sovereignty to weaker groups around it. The starting point for our policies must be the power-house that Germany represents in Europe.

We should give up our extraordinary attempts to blame the Bundesbank for defending German interests—it would be surprising if it did not. We must accept that policy in Europe must be shaped by acknowledging Germany's power structure in the Community. Therefore, if we were seriously thinking about the importance of the German economy and of the Bundesbank reducing interest rates, the autumn statement would have broken ground and talked about the autumn statement for Europe. It would have mentioned, not merely public investment here, but what could be done by the Community to promote European investment into former East Germany. If we could lower the burden that is falling on former West Germany, we could restart the motor force in Germany, reduce interest rates in the Bundesbank and benefit from the results.

One idea to take to Edinburgh at the weekend is that the British Prime Minister can provide leadership, and we can begin to think about forming a full employment policy in Europe. However, in order to do so we must start by considering the power structure in Europe—centred around Germany.

Another idea that we could take to the summit would be to look at the markets beyond Germany—those countries that have traditionally bought from this country—and press for a Marshall aid plan for central Europe and beyond, not just on humanitarian grounds, although it is important enough to ensure that people do not starve, but to ensure that those countries have enough money to buy goods. They will use that money to buy from markets from which they have traditionally bought—this country and western Europe. We can provide leadership to the western world on the scope of the Marshall aid plan for central Europe and beyond.

We should not stand on our dignity but try to learn from what other countries and their constituent parts are doing to try to achieve full employment. In another debate in the House last week I was able to mention that German trade unions are not discussing a wage or salary freeze, but have something much more important on the agenda. They are beginning to discuss, both among themselves and with German employers, what the employers' response would be if the unions held back on wage increases and productivity increases were used, not to bring wage increases, but to expand the job base. That is an important idea which should commend itself to us, particularly given its source—a German trade union movement that is keen on success.

We could give to Europe an idea that worked well in the 1930s in this country. When the then Government felt that unemployment was almost overwhelming the country, they said that they were prepared to go back to the drawing board, and they asked for ideas about how to return to full employment. They set up the Economic Advisory Committee so that those with ideas could advance them for use in the Government's scheme and the public debate.

We learnt yesterday that the Chancellor of the Exchequer has a small group of economists who are to advise him on whether his predictions for growth are right. I hope that the Government will build on that modest proposal, admit that the challenge is defeating them and that they are prepared to open their doors to reasonable discussion as they are anxious to learn. I hope that the Government will admit that the old ideas that they thought acted as their map and compass as they went about daily life can no longer be used as their means of steerage. They need a new language to encapsulate the new ideas if they are to achieve full employment.

Mr. Ralph Howell: The hon. Gentleman talked about new ideas and I agree with much of what he has said. However, I disagree with him when he talks about full employment. He seems to suggest that if we have better management—whether by one party or another—we can achieve full employment, but that is not on. We need a fundamental rethink greater than the one we had when Beveridge introduced his report 50 years ago. Would the hon. Gentleman support the idea of establishing the right to work? Until we get down to that, there is no way that we can achieve the full employment of which he talks.

Mr. Field: Labour Members used to introduce a right-to-work Bill every year. Therefore, I have no

[Mr. Field]

difficulty in accepting the hon. Gentleman's argument. The other issue that he raised reflected the tenor of my speech. If we are to return full employment to the agenda, as my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras said that the Labour party should, we must not allow ourselves to be laughed out of court by people stating that it was a fluke of history in the 1940s and 1950s. We must think new thoughts in order to achieve our objective. The debate will be difficult and tortuous, and people will accuse us of disloyalty and misrepresent what we say, but unless we start that debate—and do so in the Chamber—we shall misrepresent the views of the growing number of unemployed people outside the House. It is their views that we should bring to today's debate.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): I apologise for missing the opening moments of the hon. Gentleman's speech. Before talking about the Bundesbank looking after its own interests, he said that the first task was to wrest from VSEL the title deeds to the yard. I appreciate the importance of the Cammell Laird shipyard to his constituency and to the north-west, but surely VSEL owes a duty not only to its shareholders but to its other employees based at Barrow? I do not see how the hon. Gentleman can expect Laird to ignore the £20 million of liabilities that it incurred along with the purchase of the yard for a nominal sum of £1 and to present that as a dowry to his constituents, given these other responsibilities. It is important to the economy of the north-west that the great skills of the work force at Cammell Laird be used to the benefit of the whole economy, but I find it difficult to see how the hon. Gentleman can expect the shareholders and other employees of VSEL to make this sort of sacrifice just for his constituents.

Mr. Field: The House has been tolerant and has allowed me a great deal of time to develop my ideas, but it would take me just as long again to answer the hon. Gentleman's points. All I can say is that, if he wants answers, he had better watch this space. Answers will be given to his important points—they will not be brushed under the carpet.

I repeat the sheer folly of our believing that we can sit idly by while a death sentence is handed down to one of our most important skill centres. Of course there are balances to be struck, and VSEL has certain duties. The Members who represent the constituencies in question have to push those matters; they are not my responsibility.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I always listen carefully to the hon. Gentleman's speeches or read them when I have the opportunity. He is held in high regard on both sides of the House, but I must tell him, not in a carping way, that, having listened to the speech by the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) and the speech by him, I have not heard a single proposal on how full employment might be achieved. All we have heard are calls for debates and for listening to people. We should like to hear the specific actions that the hon. Gentleman wants the Government to take. He will find an audience which is more than willing to consider positive proposals.

Mr. Field: I almost despair of my ability to put a message across clearly. I have said that we have to think in a European context; we cannot think of Britain as an island unto itself—at least, when it comes to employment policies. I have also said that it is crucial that the Government have the European canvas on which to paint during their presidency. That presidency is not yet at an end.

I have also put forward two proposals which would give us, if not magically full employment, then the building blocks to begin the process of reaching full employment. The first point was that, given the transitional problems that Germany has gone through since unification, it will naturally put its own economic interests before the wider economic interests of Europe. Secondly, I argued that since Germany is such a powerful and dominant economy in Europe, it is in our interest that it should make the transition successfully. I said, thirdly, that it would have been sensible, to move Europe back to full employment, if we had spent the past six months thinking of measures to help the German economy make the transition. The resources of a wider Europe might have been deployed to that end. Just discussing such measures might have brought about a different attitude on the part of the German Government and Bundesbank.

I also spoke about what used to be our big markets in central Europe—they are now largely drying up for lack of finance. I proposed thinking about a Marshall aid plan on as imaginative a scale as the Americans offered western Europe after the second world war. I said that we should bring in such a plan for humanitarian reasons and for sound economic reasons.

In what I had hoped would be a 10-minute contribution I have not managed to set the world to rights or been able to tell the House all the necessary policy measures to move us back to full employment, but I did want to register the point that this is the first time I have ever heard our Front-Bench spokesmen use the phrase "full employment" to signify one of our objectives. I do not mean to downgrade what my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras said, but it is easier to say the phrase than to work out policies to achieve it. That is what we must now do.

It would be a mockery if the hon. Member for Birkenhead, speaking about the need to return to full employment, did not end on the note where he began—the possible destruction of yet more jobs at Cammell Laird. I hope that I have convinced the House and others who may be listening outside it that we are utterly serious in our campaign to get the title deeds back and to find the money to ensure that Laird has a future until such time as this House takes a more relaxed view of debates on returning to full employment.

6.45 pm

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): The hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) spoke with characteristic passion about the plight of his constituents who are to be made redundant by Cammell Laird. It is natural in such circumstances to look for political solutions. I know nothing about the title deeds or the other details, but the hon. Gentleman also talked about wider issues, including economic policy in a European context. He seemed to suggest that we might have done more to help the Germans through a difficult transitional period. My guess is that most British voters would probably feel that they had already done enough, given the high interest rates that we have had to put up with for the past couple of years,

largely as a result of German reunification. Those rates were not anticipated by those of us who supported Britain's entry into the exchange rate mechanism in October 1990, but they became painfully more clear as the months passed.

It is tempting to assume that there must be some kind of a political solution, and politicians themselves are occasionally guilty of giving voters the impression that there must be some kind of political solution. But huge changes have been taking place for several years in European economies, and my guess is that the change at Cammell Laird is one of those. I know nothing about the yard's order books, but I do know that if a business runs out of orders it does not matter how much finance is put into it: if it cannot generate sales or orders, in the end it is not a viable business. People would be better off accepting that fact and not despairing. They should look at the examples provided by the areas of Britain which have been through this trauma before.

My hon. Friend the Member for Corby (Mr. Powell) has been a constant advocate of the interests of Corby town, which went through the same sort of trauma because it depended heavily on the steel industry. Today it has diversified into many other industries, and I see no reason why Merseyside should not do the same. I know that there is a feeling that Members who represent southern constituencies do not understand the problems of Merseyside, but six or seven years ago I visited Merseyside at the invitation of its churches to see for myself. I have also been there many other times because when I worked in industry I travelled all over the country. Once I even got up at 7 am to address a group of dockers on the options available to them under the Social Security Act 1975. They asked me, "Why are you coming here, guv? You're the bloke who's supposed to know about pensions." We were consulting the work force as we were required to by the legislation.

Mr. Andrew Miller (Ellesmere Port and Neston): Does not the hon. Gentleman appreciate the difference between this and previous recessions? It is not that smoke-stack industries are being wiped out; highly skilled jobs which are an integral part of a successful economy are being lost. I recently spoke in the House about similar job losses in British Nuclear Fuels Limited, where some of the most skilled engineers in the north-west have lost their jobs. My hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) has mentioned a similar group. Recently I made a speech about Shell workers. All these workers hold highly skilled jobs, and the comparison with Corby no longer holds good.

Mr. Smith: My impression was that those working in the steel industry at Corby were also highly skilled people and the sad fact is that, however much training we may have, if there is no demand for those skills we have to consider ways in which we can adapt. That is a harsh fact, but because of the pace of economic change there may be a need to persuade people of the need to change in mid career. That is not easy to do. I am the first to accept that but it is the current situation. I mentioned Corby as one example but there are many other examples. South Wales is an area highly dependent on industries such as steel and coal. Today, through the successes of the Government in attracting inward investment, the area has diversified hugely to the point where it has lower unemployment than Greater London.

Mr. Llew Smith (Blaenau Gwent): Will the hon. Member comment on the report recently published by the University of Wales which commented on Government plans to regenerate south Wales, particularly the valleys initiative? That report came to the conclusion that it was little more than a publicity stunt and that not one penny of new money could be found. We who live and work in such communities know that the jobs attracted did not replace those in coal and steel but were very often low paid, part time and almost inevitably non-union. Has the hon. Member read that report and, if so, will he comment on it?

Mr. Tim Smith: No. I have not read the report to which the hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Smith) refers, but I stick to my assertion that unemployment in Wales is now lower than it is in Greater London and that Wales and the Welsh Development Agency have been successful in attracting inward investment.

Mr. Frank Field: Does the hon. Gentleman not think that the form of intervention we have seen in Wales is the type of interventionist policy that should be seen in the rest of the country?

Mr. Smith: There may be a case for that kind of intervention elsewhere. The Welsh Development Agency and the Scottish Development Agency have both been successes and if other regions would benefit from that kind of policy I would certainly support that.

I want to make some comments about the European scene. We have heard much about the need to have some kind of integrated European policy but at present, far from the economies of Europe coming together, they are diverging in the way that they are developing and it is noteworthy that at present the German economy, which is often held up in this House as a great example of success, is moving into recession and German manufacturing industry finds itself in a very difficult position because it is not easy for employers to make the adjustments—the reductions in their labour force—which they may need to make. They are saddled with very high industrial costs. The result of this is striking because motor manufacturers in Germany are now looking outside that country to obtain their components. One of the most important side effects of Japanese inward investment in this country is that not only have the Japanese brought new standards of management and higher productivity to the companies in which they have invested, but they have insisted on much higher standards from their suppliers. We now see companies like Turner and Newall and GKN reaching new standards of quality.

There was a story in the *Financial Times* in October which said:

"Mercedes Benz, the German car manufacturer, says sterling is undervalued and the British economy underrated. The company nearly trebled its purchases of UK-produced motor components last year and expects them to grow further. Two other German companies, BMW and the Volkswagen/Audi group—now embracing SEAT of Spain and Skoda of Czechoslovakia—are also expanding their purchasing of components made in the UK and say they, too, expect further growth. All three say this growth would take place even without the devaluation of sterling following its withdrawal from the European exchange rate mechanism last month".

[Mr. Smith]

This is a remarkable transformation for the British motoring industry, and for the British motor components industry, and if we continue with this record of success we shall find, for the first time for many years, that in 1995 we shall have a positive balance of trade in motor cars and motor components.

There are other reasons why investors now see this as a more secure and more stable environment.

The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) talked about the rise of extremist parties and referred to Spain, Italy, Germany and France but notably, he did not refer to the United Kingdom. The simple reason is that we have policies designed to ensure that we have good community relations—as we have—because we have had tough immigration policies for many years. I do not think the picture that has been painted by some hon. Members is as gloomy as some would suggest.

My hon. Friend the Member for Chesham and Amersham (Mrs. Gillan) said that this was not a one-way street. Many jobs are being lost but at the same time many jobs are being created and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State referred to the remarkable story that appeared last week about the MSF. That union has done a double U-turn and has not just signed with a Japanese company but signed a no-strike agreement with a Japanese company and both those policies were anathema to MSF only 12 months ago. The good thing is that its decisions will lead to the creation of 400 new jobs in Mansfield in Nottinghamshire and I am sure that the hon. Member for Mansfield (Mr. Meale) will welcome that, as will other hon. Members.

It is good news because it is inward investment and it is coming from Japan, Germany and the United States. I would like the very welcome policies set out in the autumn statement reinforced by a further assertion of the importance of manufacturing to the United Kingdom because if I have one regret about the 1980s it is that the impression somehow got around—I am not sure who was responsible and there is not much point in pointing the finger in a particular direction—that manufacturing was unimportant. We should make it clear that that is not our view; that manufacturing is important, and that we welcome the establishment by the Confederation of British Industry of the National Manufacturing Council; that we hope that the Government will look very carefully at the recommendations addressed to them—only a third of the recommendations are, since many are addressed to manufacturers or the City.

I would like to see the appointment of a Minister for manufacturing industry to make clear that the Government are totally committed. The CBI report underlines the importance of manufacturing. Although the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras said that there were 4·5 million people in manufacturing, the report suggests that the figure is 5 million and that another 5 million are dependent on manufacturing. It is important to this country. It is still a great trading nation and manufactures are largely traded. We have had some remarkable successes over the 1980s, with 50 per cent. of consumer spending being on manufactured goods and 70 per cent. of exports being manufactured, while £7 billion of corporation tax is paid by manufacturing industry.

The record over the past 10 years has been remarkable because productivity in manufacturing has risen by 58 per cent. and, contrary to what the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras asserted, that Britain's share of world trade is continuing to fall, according to the CBI, the United Kingdom's share of main manufacturing countries' exports has risen from a low of 7·6 per cent. in 1985 to 8·7 per cent. in 1991. There is a good story to tell on manufacturing exports. Even throughout the recession exports have continued to grow and manufacturing productivity, according to the CBI report, even over the past 12 months, has grown at twice the speed at which it has grown in Germany. There is a great deal of catching up to do and that is why it is important to place a new emphasis on the importance of manufacturing.

If we do, we shall see a resurgence of economic activity in manufacturing and a growth in jobs—which is what everyone wants. There is a new emphasis on growth. The hon. Member for Birkenhead wants full employment. We shall achieve that only if we have an industry that is competitive and has high productivity. Ironically, sometimes that will mean the loss of jobs, as companies invest and displace jobs—but it is the only way. There will then be more jobs in the service industries that depend on manufacturing. We will create full employment by having low interest rates, low inflation, and high productivity. That is what I would like to see, and I am sure that most right hon. and hon. Members support that.

7 pm

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): We hear every day of hundreds or thousands of new redundancies. The whole country is submerged under a tidal wave of unemployment. The Government do not have a clue what to do, and neither do they care. That was graphically shown recently when Ministers blithely and abruptly announced the colliery closures to the House. An extra 100,000 people were to lose their jobs without any consultation, even with the Department of Employment. The Government apparently proposed to blight the lives of 100,000 people and to throw them on the scrap heap, at a time of multi-million unemployment on a rising trend. The Government's solution was to pour petrol on the flames.

The Government seemed surprised that the vast majority of the British public recoiled, were shocked by, and protested at that decision. Perhaps that is explained by the fact that the Conservatives have been in office for so long that they think that they can do anything they like.

We now have close on 3 million unemployed claimants. Horrendous and scandalous though that figure is, it is a gross understatement. The statistics have been massaged and fiddled, and on a 1979 basis the figure is more like 4 million. A Department of Employment press release issued on 12 November recorded an increase of 391,000 claimants over the previous 12 months, but a 658,000 decrease in the employed work force. Therefore, hundreds of thousands of those thrown out of work do not show up in the official statistics—and many of them are women.

It is self-evident that we can never have a good and decent society that is at ease with itself, and a country that functions properly, with mass unemployment. We will never have a proper welfare state with mass unemployment, because we could not afford one. The cost of the dole queue is ruining public finances. Each unemployed person costs the Exchequer about £9,000. At a time when

the Government's revenue is being slashed by the recession, they will soon have to pay about £30 billion to finance unemployment. That is why they are borrowing tens of billions of pounds every year—not to invest, but to pour down the black hole of unemployment.

A good society and a country at ease with itself is one in which everyone who wants to work can work and is properly paid for doing so. Why is that not possible? After 13 years of Conservative rule, we have a vile and unjust society of mass unemployment. The Government say that our social system has no use for millions of our countrymen and women—that they are surplus to requirements and will be discarded and thrown on the scrap heap. Their lives will be blighted by misery and suffering through no fault of their own, but because, we are told, our country has no use for them and there are no opportunities for them to work. Such a society is immoral, and a Government who tolerate it should be turned out.

Exactly 100 years ago Newham, in the east end of London, elected and sent to the House of Commons the first Labour Member of Parliament, Keir Hardie. In his maiden speech on 7 February 1893—and I doubt whether it would be allowed today—he moved an amendment to the Loyal Address, in which he made a moving and passionate attack on the evils of unemployment and on the poverty, hardship, and moral degradation that often followed unemployment in those days. He said:

"There is no more pitiable spectacle in the world than the man willing to work who, day after day, vainly 'begs a brother of the earth, To give him leave to toil'."—[*Official Report*, 7 February 1893; Vol. 8, c. 730.]

In the century that has intervened since Hardie uttered those words, many things have changed and improved, but one evil that we thought had been vanquished has been brought back by the Government—the evil of mass unemployment.

There were no statistics in Hardie's day, but he estimated that 10 per cent. of the working population were unemployed. In Newham today, there are 20,000 unemployed, which is equal to 20 per cent. of its potential working population—which is twice as bad as in Hardie's day. What a commentary that is on 13 years of Conservative government.

We are dealing with not just statistics but human beings. Each human being thrown out of work represents an acute personal crisis, with the loss of the individual's confidence, identity, and self-esteem. A person is largely what he does, and if he does nothing, he begins to think that he is nothing. Soon, the anxieties, debt, despair, humiliation, and social and domestic problems pile up. The individual may find that he is threatened with homelessness. He soon realises how fragile was his previous comfortable existence, and that it depended on his wages or salary—and that once they were taken away he had nothing left.

The individual will soon learn also of society's prejudices—of the people who think that there is plenty of work if one is willing to do it, or that there is something wrong with anyone who remains unemployed for any length of time. His self-esteem suffers, and the frustrations, pressures and tensions are so easily brought home to the family. That often leads to marriage breakdowns. Unemployment today is the main cause of poverty and social ills—of home repossessions, divorce, suicide, ill-health and crime.

One person who has spoken most movingly about unemployment is the Prime Minister, who told us how he was unemployed for nine months at the age of 19. He received unemployment benefit of £2.17s.6d a week, but the unemployment pay of a man and wife with two children is 40 per cent. less today in real terms. However, the Chancellor of the Exchequer said that that is a price well worth paying.

I want to mention crime. The Conservatives were largely elected on a law-and-order ticket, but since they have been in power crime has doubled. That is the fault not of the police but the Government, who have destroyed the hopes and livelihoods of millions of people. Senior police officers know that rising crime is linked to rising deprivation. In his final report as Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis, Sir Peter Imbert stated;

"The notion that there is a link between crime and social deprivation is a compelling one."

Any Conservative Member who pretends that is not so must ask why there is more crime in deprived areas and why, as deprivation has increased under this Government over the past 13 years, crime increased. Anyone who doubts the truth of that should ask insurance companies, who know that crime rates are higher in deprived areas, which leads them to charge higher premiums there.

Every year 400,000 young people leave school. One quarter of those, 100,000, will join those who have never had a job; they are without work, and the 16 to 17-year-olds are without benefits as well and many are even without a training place. They live on estates with unemployment at levels of 20, 30, 40 or 50 per cent. Children are being born into families who have never been to work, where the parents have never had a job. These are people with no hope, no money, no prospects, no stake in our society; they are shut out and owing nothing to our society, completely alienated. They are people with no escape from their plight. They are people who never have a holiday. The nearest thing they have to a holiday is taking part in a riot or joyriding.

What stops people committing crime is not the police; it is what might be called social control—concern about what other people, in particular people at work, will think. But what if they do not have a job, what if they have never had a job, what if they are never likely to have a job? Then, what the hell, what does it matter? That is why crime has doubled in the period of office of this Government. That should be recognised.

Some people ask what happened in the 1930s when there was mass unemployment but not rising crime. There was a perception then that everybody was in the same boat. Then, no one had a car, no one had a television set; there was a commonality of poverty. Now, however, people live in areas surrounded by streets full of cars, surrounded by people who have holidays and houses full of consumer goods, but they are shut out.

Kenneth Newman spoke in 1987 about

"the volatile vapour of social discontent hanging over the city, looking for a spark to set it off."

In those circumstances, it is completely unrealistic to expect the police to screw down the lid. That is why we have the doubling of crime, because we have the huge increase in unemployment. It is pointless to deny that.

The Government must face their responsibilities and set a priority to full employment—and I am extremely pleased to see my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) on the Front Bench. This cannot be

[Mr. Ron Leighton]

left to the market. We have a market failure in Britain. We need public action. If we look around our towns and cities today, we see that there is work that needs to be done. We need something like Roosevelt's New Deal. During the war we had full employment to produce weapons of destruction. Is it really beyond our wit to bring about full employment now, to make the things that we need so desperately in the country at the moment?

We need a counter-cyclical boost of public expenditure to aid recovery. We should be encouraging that across Europe, if possible. But what do we have? I am closing on this note, because the European dimension has been raised by a number of hon. Members. We have the outdated and outmoded Maastricht treaty, the whole thrust of which is deflationary. It ordains huge cuts in public expenditure right across Europe.

If we in Britain were to get our public borrowing requirement down to 3 per cent. of gross domestic product as the treaty ordains, we should have to make cuts of £20 million, prolonging and deepening the recession. So I trust that when the Bill is in Committee we shall have a full examination of the employment effects of the treaty and that this matter will be fully dealt with, because in my view a strategy to bring back full employment will entail junking the Maastricht treaty.

7.13 pm

Mr. Barry Legg (Milton Keynes, South-West): We have had a wide-ranging debate this evening and a lot of unanswered questions are still to be addressed. A number of Opposition Members have referred back to halcyon days in the 1950s and 1960s when they left school and there was full employment. They seemed to be searching for the holy grail that will take us back to those times. They have talked about full employment, and if we look at the periods of great economic success that the world has experienced, we see that the first requirement for prosperity, success and growth of employment is growth in trade. That is particularly what we had during the 1950s and 1960s.

I am pleased that Britain is taking a lead in Europe on the issue of trade, and particularly on the GATT round, because addressing that problem and sorting it out will be of great benefit not only to Britain and Europe, but to the world as a whole. Growth in world trade will deliver prosperity and jobs.

The other important factor that needs to be taken into account in considering how to generate jobs, wealth and stability is productivity. We hear very little about productivity from the Opposition Benches. If we look at the successful economies in the world, we see that the economies that are gaining strength, a greater share of world trade, greater employment and prosperity are those that are achieving gains in productivity.

The world has been through a very difficult recession. Britain has experienced a difficult recession, which it is now coming out of, and I shall be saying more about that later.

We have just seen some very good figures from the United States on growth and employment. In the United States, unemployment has just fallen from 7·4 to 7·2 per cent. and 100,000 new jobs have been created in the last month. What do we find lying behind that growth in employment and that success in the United States? We find two things. The first is monetary easing and lower interest rates. Over the past 18 months the Americans have steadily reduced their interest rates and that has given their consumers another $65 billion to spend, because that is the amount of money they would otherwise be spending on servicing domestic debt.

We have seen from Her Majesty's Government in the last few months welcome reductions in interest rates, which will help to provide a similar boost here in the United Kingdom.

The second factor in growth in employment in America is the very good figures on productivity growth and unit labour costs. In the past year, unit labour costs in the United States have risen by 0·5 per cent., the best record in the last nine years.

That is the sort of growth in productivity that we need in this country. Furthermore, reducing labour costs is not a route to poverty, as one might think from listening to some Opposition Members, but a route to wealth. At the same time as the United States produces figures showing how well it is containing labour costs, other figures show that income in the United States has risen by 1 per cent. in one month. Those are some of the trends that we need to see in the British economy to carry forward our recovery here.

Again, we see that the successful economies in the Far East are taking a greater share of world trade and their people are becoming more prosperous. Looking at the underlying reasons, we find that those are deregulated economies in which the price of labour is very competitive.

If we move back to the European scene, we find that Europe as a whole, particularly continental Europe, has not done very well over the past decade in terms of world trade. In the past seven years, Europe's share of world trade has declined by some 7 per cent. Some very worrying trends are apparent in the structure of labour costs, particularly in Germany, to which the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) referred earlier. Nearly 50 per cent. of German labour costs are now accounted for by non-wage costs. They are accounted for by social costs, and the German economy has been becoming more and more uncompetitive. In Germany, the average hourly labour cost is currently running at about $21; in Britain, it is running at about $12. We have achieved that significant gain by avoiding the heavy social costs that Opposition Members are only too keen for us to sign up to, in the form of the social chapter.

We can take a lead in Europe, on GATT and on the social chapter. We should encourage our European partners not to opt for a route that, rather than improving employee welfare, will spread poverty and unemployment. Let us examine the unemployment records of some continental countries. In Germany, unemployment is rising rapidly: 50,000 more people were made unemployed there last month, and some 3 million are currently unemployed. That figure is far too large. In France, some 2·9 million are unemployed; in Italy, the figure is about 2·8 million. In Spain, some 17 per cent. of people are unemployed, while the figure is nearly 20 per cent. in Ireland.

The figures for unemployment among people under the age of 25 are even more horrifying. In France, the rate is 21 per cent.; in Italy, it is 28 per cent.; in Spain, it is 31 per cent. Those are damaging figures, and I think that they

have some bearing on the remarks about the growth in extremism that were made earlier by the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson).

The economies that I have mentioned are experiencing a number of problems. Europe has not had an easy time over the past two years, but France, Italy and Spain all operate a minimum wage policy. The Labour party thinks that such a policy would benefit Britain, but minimum wage policies do not help the people at the bottom—they hurt them by keeping them out of work. Employers do not want to take on people whose skills are not as great as those of other workers, and they do not want to take on people who will need training. If they take on such people, they do not want to pay them more than the market rate. A minimum wage policy would in fact produce more unemployment, as the Labour party knows only too well.

None of the recipes cited by Opposition Members, today and on other occasions, will help employment; on the contrary, they will increase unemployment. I shall wait with interest to see how Labour will develop the policy of full employment that the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras had the audacity to mention today.

My constituency, like many others, has had a difficult time during the recession. Opposition Members tend to come up with figures relating to job losses, doom and disaster, but, despite the difficulties experienced by my constituency, I intend to highlight some of the good things that are happening in Milton Keynes, which is a typical English town. In the past 12 months, some 6,515 new jobs have been created there. That will not capture the headlines in the national newspapers, as did the announcement of the loss of 15,000 Post Office jobs over five years through natural wastage, because it is essentially the result of small, successful local businesses expanding their work forces.

In the past year, 222 new working establishments have been started in Milton Keynes. That, too, will fail to make the headlines, but it is all about extra jobs. Milton Keynes has a diversified economy: we are very dependent on small businesses, which make up about 65 per cent. of our economy. Those small businesses are succeeding and taking on new employees, although I concede that times are difficult.

Mr. Dobson: Will the hon. Gentleman confirm that unemployment in Milton Keynes has trebled in the past two years?

Mr. Legg: As I said earlier, Milton Keynes has had a difficult time. I could have concentrated on the fact that unemployment in Milton Keynes has risen from 3 to 8 per cent. over the past two years; I could have detailed the job losses there. Instead, I recognised that Britain is now coming out of recession. Unemployment is a lagging indicator of recession. The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras will be interested to learn that unemployment in Milton Keynes has now flattened out, settling at 8 per cent. We are creating new jobs, and Milton Keynes—like the rest of Britain—will go forward under the Conservatives.

7.26 pm

Mr. David Hanson (Delyn): As hon. Members will expect, I shall not follow the line of route initiated by the hon. Member for Milton Keynes, South-West (Mr. Legg). Unlike Conservative Members, Opposition Members fully support the minimum wage policy, and we are proud to have fought the last election on that basis; when the opportunity arises, we will introduce the minimum wage in the interest of justice and fairness. Sadly, the motion sums up all that the Opposition consider relevant about the current level of unemployment. At least we believe that it offers a glimmer of hope to the millions of people who are unemployed.

Having sat through the debate since 3.30 pm, I have been particularly struck by the staggering complacency of Conservative Members. They have not accepted an iota of the Opposition's argument that we face a national crisis in manufacturing employment, and that action should be taken at a national level, with the Government accepting responsibility for generating investment, wealth and creating jobs. That abdication of responsibility is one of the strangest aspects of the debate.

It may have escaped the notice of Conservative Members that, since the Prime Minister took office about two years ago, 1·1 million people have lost their jobs. Every day since then, 2,500 people have become unemployed. I am not here to doom-monger—I want to talk positively—but when 29 people are chasing every job vacancy, Government action is clearly needed.

What do we get from the Government? We have had a Gracious Speech and an autumn statement, which addressed the wrong issues; we have rail privatisation and coal privatisation; we have the abolition of the basic floor provided by wages councils; we have reductions in Government spending; we have the opting out of schools; we have tinkering with investment on the edges of the economy. We do not have a Government who are committed to the central agenda of creating employment and improving the lot of the millions—both Labour and Conservative voters—who want a better Britain to be provided through job creation.

I sometimes think that the Government are not living in the real world. I do not claim that my constituency is the worst affected in Wales or in the United Kingdom. Indeed, there are many good things in my constituency, and I would be the last person to run down Delyn. It has many factories which are creating wealth, employment and jobs. However, it would be foolish of me to ignore the fact that much has gone wrong in my constituency, which needs support from and action by the Government to promote employment.

In October there were 5,971 unemployed men and 1,641 unemployed women in the Shotton, Flint and Rhyl travel-to-work area which encompasses my constituency and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones). Those figures represent a 9 per cent. unemployment rate in my constituency and a rate of 10·5 per cent. in Clwyd. My hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside is as concerned as I am about the level of unemployment in that travel-to-work area. I shall shortly discuss some of our proposals to help reduce those figures.

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): My constituency shares boundaries with that of my hon. Friend. Today we heard that Northwest Airlines said that it would abandon its order for 74 airbus aircraft. LIke me, my hon. Friend might want to know the consequences of the loss of that order for the British aerospace industry and for the 4,000 people employed at the Broughton works in my constituency where the airbus wings are made. Does my

[Mr. Barry Jones]

hon. Friend agree that the Government should aim to put at the top of their agenda measures to help British manufacturing industry?

Mr. Hanson: I fully agree with my hon. Friend. I recently visited the aerospace works in his constituency because many of the workers are my constituents. They are crying out for an aerospace strategy to help create jobs and employment. Today's news that the airbus order might be cancelled is of particular concern to my part of north-east Wales.

In the Delyn borough council area there are 2,283 people out of work. In some of the wards in my constituency, 40 per cent. of males are unemployed. This is the 30th consecutive month in which unemployment has risen in Delyn constituency, where the total number of unemployed is 2,806. Although that is not the greatest number in Wales, it means that 2,806 people want to work and deserve the opportunity to do so. Government support could create valuable jobs.

In my constituency only 416 job vacancies are currently registered and in Flint—the largest town in the borough of Delyn—only 45 vacancies are registered with the jobcentre. With such a level of unemployment and lack of vacancies, we need solid action by the Government.

I draw again to Ministers' attention a fact that has been mentioned by many of my colleagues. It costs £9,000 to keep a person unemployed. That means that taxpayers in Delyn are spending £25 million this year on wasteful unemployment when we could undertake many projects to create wealth and jobs and to build a better society. The hon. Member for Chesham and Amersham (Mrs. Gillan), who is no longer present, said that public money does not create wealth, but many employers and business people in my constituency would welcome portions of that £25 million being spent in the private sector to provide the services that we need and to retain private sector jobs.

On Friday I attended a business lunch in Mold in my constituency with business men, none of whom, I suspect, voted for me in the general election but all of whom stated categorically that the Government were off the track and were not providing the necessary resources for the private sector through public investment. Most of all, they wanted public sector investment to help create private sector jobs. What do my constituents have to look forward to? Unfortunately, the answer, as for the rest of the United Kingdom, is, "Not a great deal".

Although the issue of travel-to-work areas is not part of the Minister's responsibility, I wish to raise it now. As my hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside is aware, the Flint, Shotton and Rhyl travel-to-work area, which has been in operation since 1984, is in the Government's proposed review. Deeside fears that the assisted area status, the accompanying Objective 2 status and the special development area status, which were put in place because of massive job losses in the steel and textile industries, will be lost when the review is completed.

There are still some of the 40 per cent. black spots in my constituency and along the coast which existed when the original Objective 2 status area was agreed. We also face the prospect of further job losses through colliery closures, which should add to the urgency with which the Government should tell north-east Wales that they believe that its assisted area status should be maintained. The Minister is shaking his head. Does he disagree with that point, is he not especially interested, or is he doing his crossword? I and many colleagues believe that assisted area status is valuable to our community and, if it is not maintained after the review, we shall return to the previous level of unemployment. At the moment, the enterprise zone and assisted area status is due to be withdrawn. My hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside and I wish it to be continued.

It is absolutely amazing that the Government can consider such a step, especially as my constituency faces the closure of the Point of Ayr colliery in the north of my constituency. When discussing unemployment, we must mention the Government's responsibility to create jobs, as well as that of the private sector.

The Point of Ayr pit is perfectly viable. It sells 80 per cent. of its coal to a power station down the road and the other 20 per cent. to businesses on the Wirral in the constituency of the Secretary of State for Wales. It has a market for its coal, and hon. Members may wish to refer to early-day motion 970 which mentions the world-beating coal produced in that pit. However, we now face the potential loss of 527 direct jobs and a total of 1,047 jobs there because of Government policy. Closure is proposed despite recent investment in the pit and despite the fact that it has the ability to produce coal at competitive prices. It is an absolute scandal.

The colliery and its on-site contractors provide an immense resource for a local skill base. What surer way is there to continue unemployment and the downward cycle than to remove from the local economy a major skill base from my constituency and other affected areas?

The Secretary of State for Employment referred to the potential cost of retraining redundant miners. In Wales that cost is estimated at £2·6 million. That includes the retraining of miners who might lose their jobs at the Point of Ayr colliery. Would not it be better if that money were invested in the colliery to ensure its productivity and if we had a proper energy policy which ensured that coal had a valuable role?

Delyn borough council recently did some excellent work on estimating the cost of replacing the 1,000 jobs that would be lost if the Point of Ayr colliery were closed, although I hope that it will not come to that. The council estimated that about £150 million of taxpayers' money at a local level would be needed to replace those jobs. Do not hon. Members accept that it would be better to find positive ways in which the Government can spend the £150 million and to put jobs on the agenda instead of using those resources to respond to a closure which need not occur? Valuable resources have been invested in the pit in the past few years.

I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Smith) will mention south Wales if the opportunity arises. Bearing in mind all the problems facing my constituency and those of my colleagues, surely the Government could have tabled a better amendment than the waffle that they have produced. The Government are complacent about what is happening. Perhaps Ministers and Conservative hon. Members are not aware of what is happening outside the House. Many people who are natural Conservative supporters are suffering tremendously in the recession. They are looking to the House for leadership and for quality jobs.

Mr. Heald: The hon. Gentleman makes the point that people from all walks of life are suffering in the current recession. Does he agree that it is a Europe-wide problem and that the results of unemployment in this country are by no means the worst in Europe? The hon. Gentleman should consider the figures quoted by my hon. Friend the Member for Milton Keynes, South-West (Mr. Legg). In Spain, which has a minimum wage policy, the unemployment level for young people is 33·7 per cent. The hon. Gentleman will recall that figure. In a European context, what are your proposals for dealing with the problem——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. I remind the hon. Gentleman that he should address me. His intervention has now gone on long enough.

Mr. Heald: I apologise, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Hanson: I find it interesting that a Conservative Member asks an Opposition Member about Government policies and about what our position in Europe should be when Britain has the presidency of the European Community and when the Prime Minister has the opportunity to feed in policies. Perhaps the hon. Member for Hertfordshire, North (Mr. Heald) would care to speak to the Prime Minister and to ask him what his policies for Europe are. We shall ask that because we do not appear to be getting Government support or co-ordination on those points. We can discuss the minimum wage at another time. I regard the minimum wage as vital to our community and especially to Wales, which is the lowest-paid region in the United Kingdom.

Conservative Members have mentioned the depressing side of our arguments and the fact that we have concentrated on job losses. I want to be positive about our community. As I have said, Delyn has much to offer prospective employers, as does north Wales and especially north-east Wales. I should like to hear support from Conservative Members for our positive proposals for job creation. There is much that we need to do. I could cite a number of examples in my own constituency of things that could be done to create employment in Wales and elsewhere.

Let us consider transport. As I said, it would cost £150 million to replace the jobs that may be lost at Point of Ayr colliery. It would cost £40 million of Government money to improve the Crewe-Holyhead rail link. My hon. Friends from all parts of the United Kingdom could mention projects that would create employment, would help the infrastructure and would bring jobs and support, especially to north Wales. The third Dee crossing is a major road infrastructure project which is close to the heart of my hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside. It would create jobs, it would put construction workers back to work, it would get people off the dole and it would improve the infrastructure of north Wales. It is a valuable capital project.

The retention of Objective 2 area status for north Wales, including the Shotton, Rhyl and Flint travel-to-work area, is now entirely in the hands of the Government and of Conservative Members. The retention of that status would ensure, as it would in other parts of the United Kingdom, the retention of support to areas that have been hard hit since 1979 when the Government took office.

On energy policy, I make no apology for repeating the fact that my community is in dire need because the Government may close the Point of Ayr colliery. Many people's jobs depend on that colliery. It would be simple for the Government to make a statement and to consider a positive energy policy to help to reduce the burdens on the community.

An aerospace strategy has been mentioned, as has a tourism strategy which would support the parts of my constituency that depend on tourism. We need a housing strategy to put the many building workers in my constituency back to work and to help to meet the needs of the 2,650 people who are currently homeless in Delyn. All of those are positive policies that the Government could propose to help to create employment in the community. However, the Government choose not to do so which is a scar on their reputation and on Conservative Members who do not seek to invest in jobs in our community.

Our motion sums up our concern for jobs and for employment. The one message that I shall take back to my constituency at the weekend is the frightening level of complacency that Conservative Members who have spoken tonight have shown about our economy and about the level of jobs in our communities. Above all places in the United Kingdom, the House should say to people in our communities, "We know why you are suffering, we know how you are suffering, and we have a strategy to build our way to recovery." Conservative Members have shown that they have no strategy and no plans for recovery. That is why the Government will fail in due course.

7.44 pm

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): One of the disappointing aspects of the debate has been the rather poor attendance of hon. Members of all parties. The hon. Member for Delyn (Mr. Hanson) should also take the message to his constituents that few of his hon. Friends bothered to turn up to listen to their own debate on unemployment. That is an indictment of the Labour party.

I can well understand that Labour Members did not turn up because they did not want to listen to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson). That is fully understandable. However, it is a shame that we do not see more Labour Members present for such a debate.

The hon. Member for Delyn asked about the Government's European policy. One thing I know about Labour's policy on Europe is that it seeks to increase the money provided through the social fund and through the cohesion fund, which the Maastricht treaty seeks to introduce. The reality is that any extra funds that go into the two funds will find their way to the poorer, southern countries of the European Community rather than to the regions of this country. Labour Members should be slightly cautious about calling for more funds in those areas.

The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras made a disappointing and poor speech. On three or four occasions, he responded to interventions by saying that we should have to wait until later in his speech and that he was not able to deal with interventions at that stage. He was rather insulting to the unemployed when he suggested that they would all commit crimes because they were unemployed. That comment was unfortunate.

The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras talked about right-wing, fascist extremists. The reality is that

[Mr. Graham Riddick]

there is a problem with right-wing, fascist extremists in Europe. They are not a problem in this country. They are a problem in Germany, in Italy and in France, but not in this country.

The only job creation scheme put forward by the Labour party which has ever worked is the one in Monklands district council where 22 wives, sons and daughters of a small group of Labour councillors have been employed. I ask Opposition Members when they will express sympathy for 51-year-old Tom McFarlane, who was made redundant because he and his wife dared to question the internal procedures of the local Labour party and its corrupt control of the local council. To date, we have heard nothing about that saga from the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith), the Leader of the Opposition. He has been totally silent. It is time that he put that right and it is time that he condemned the practices in Monklands district council.

Unemployment is a curse on our society: of that there is no doubt. All hon. Members accept that. Unemployment leads to all sorts of desperate difficulties for individuals who have lost their jobs and for their families. The strain that unemployment puts on families sometimes leads to the break-up of those families and sometimes even leads to people losing their homes. Conservative Members care about the real problems that face ordinary people—our constituents who become unemployed.

It is misleading to suggest that there is an easy answer to the difficulty. The quack solutions that we have heard from the Labour party today demonstrate why it was that the British people did not entrust Labour with government last April. The propositions put forward by the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras were glib and facile on the whole, and demonstrated, once again, that the Labour party is wedded to state intervention as its preferred option. We heard that the Government must take action on jobs. The hon. Member for Delyn said that we need an industrial policy and a package of measures. However, Opposition Members never tell us how those measures are to be paid for.

So long as Labour advocates a national minimum wage and pushes for Britain to sign the European social chapter, Labour does not deserve to be taken seriously in respect of unemployment. Those two proposals would cost hundreds of thousands of our fellow citizens their jobs.

The scourge of unemployment will be tackled properly only when the process of wealth creation is set solidly on track. The fundamentals are what counts. For a year until golden Wednesday on 16 September, interest rates in this country were too high. They were at a level inappropriate to Britain's domestic requirements. We all know that that stemmed directly from Britain's membership of the exchange rate mechanism—a policy that was supported wholeheartedly by the Labour party. However, now that the Government have been able to reduce interest rates by three points to 7 per cent., British exporters are more able to sell their products overseas and a recovery will take place. The fundamental requirements for recovery are now in place.

I know that Ministers are wary of trumpeting recovery for fear of heralding a false storm once more. However, as a humble Back Bencher and a humble Parliamentary Private Secretary, I am prepared to stick my neck out and say that I believe that a good recovery will take place in 1993. I believe that it might be considerably stronger than the 1 per cent. forecast by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer in the autumn statement.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that the recovery may already have started—at least in the north of England where people are less highly geared. Yorkshire folk are very sensible and canny and they did not borrow up to their eyeballs in the heady days of the 1980s. As they have fewer borrowing commitments, they will be able to take advantage of the lower mortgage repayments and of the favourable economic conditions that now exist.

I spoke recently to a medium-sized manufacturer based in Halifax who does a great deal of exporting. He told me that his order book has exploded since the devaluation of the pound. He has taken on a greatly increased number of orders and that is good news. He is also looking to employ people.

Only a week ago, I spoke to a stockbroker based in Huddersfield. He told me that he saw green shoots of recovery all over Yorkshire. I do not want to get carried away, but there are some encouraging signs. Some companies' order books are increasing and there is more confidence about the future.

I spoke to a friend of mine who sells furniture. He told me that his sales have increased markedly in Yorkshire and, funnily enough, particularly in the north-east of England. That anecdotal evidence, allied to figures showing the recent growth in the money supply and in retail sales, provides encouraging signs for the future.

Putting that evidence to one side, my real cause for optimism is that we now have in place the economic and monetary policies conducive to recovery. I believe that that recovery will take place. Recovery in the wealth-creating sectors will bring in its wake the new jobs that we all so desperately want to see. That will not come about through the quack solutions of the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras, who advocates state intervention here and state spending there.

Between 1985 and 1990, unemployment fell by more than 1 million because of the new jobs being created in the real industrial world. We created the right economic conditions of low inflation, minimum regulation, moderate personal and corporate taxation, less of the nation's wealth being swallowed up by the state and a climate for enterprise. Those are the conditions that we will have to recreate—and which I believe that we are creating—for the 1990s. There are no facile, quack solutions.

The Labour party does not understand industry. Labour Members advocate that politicians should have a hands-on approach to industry and that politicians should have an industrial policy. However, the reality is that hardly any Labour Members have ever worked in industry. It is fair to point out that practically none of the spokesmen in the shadow Employment, Treasury or Trade and Industry teams have ever worked in industry.

I was interested to note from his biographical details that the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras worked at the headquarters of the Central Electricity Generating Board for 10 years. That was certainly a nationalised industry in those days, but I am not sure what his job entailed. I suppose that it was at least close to industry so I must not denigrate it.

The fact that the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras can refer to business men in this country as "stinking, lousy, thieving, incompetent scum" demonstrates his contempt for people who run businesses in this country.

Ms. Quin: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Riddick: The hon. Lady is now going to try to defend the indefensible.

Ms. Quin: Far from defending the indefensible, I would like to repeat the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson). He made it clear that he was referring to employers who pay poverty wages.

Mr. Riddick: Whatever the circumstances, one should not refer to business men as "stinking, lousy, thieving, incompetent scum". One simply does not do that, particularly if one claims to hold a responsible position within the shadow Cabinet as the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras does. The comments of the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras demonstrate his contempt for industry and for business in general. We hear that kind of approach from the Opposition far too often.

The negative knocking of industry by the Labour party achieves nothing and it certainly does not help to create a climate of confidence. We all know that confidence is terribly important. Out there in the real world confidence is fragile. The Labour party could help by being less negative and more positive about opportunities and about the future.

When companies make announcements about redundancies, that is also bad for confidence. It certainly does not help to restore confidence. Last week, the Post Office announced 16,500 job losses. When I heard that, I thought, "My God, that's appalling. That will be disastrous for confidence." However, when I read the small print in the newspapers the next day, I realised that the jobs were to be lost through natural wastage over five years.

The fact that those jobs are to be lost is regrettable. However, they are being lost not so much because of the recession, but because of improved technology which is being introduced in the Post Office. An interesting article by Anatole Kaletsky appeared in *The Times* on Monday. He pointed out that too many companies are making big redundancy announcements when they have no intention of losing so many people. He reported that there is a cult of management machismo. If that is the case, it is most unfortunate. Industrialists should stop making such announcements unless absolutely necessary.

Mr. Kaletsky pointed out that "redundancy costs can often be reported as an 'extraordinary item' in a company's accounts and do not therefore affect the earnings per share from continuing operations". I understand that the practice will cease in the middle of next year—and about time, too.

The Government's economic policy is now on the right tracks. Interest rates have come down and inflation is low. The autumn statement responded to the representations of industry, contrary to many of the statements made from the Opposition Benches. Recovery is in sight and with recovery will come renewed job opportunities. The small businesses will create the jobs of the future. The big companies are shedding jobs because of improved technology that they are introducing into their factories.

My old company, Coca Cola and Schweppes Beverages, is able to produce as many cans of pop by employing 200 people in its new factory in Wakefield as it took 1,800 people to produce only a few years ago. I do not particularly welcome that; it is simply a fact of life. It demonstrates the difficulty of creating new jobs in the United Kingdom. The small businesses will create new jobs, so we must create the right economic conditions in the United Kingdom. That is exactly what the Government are doing. The Labour party's quack solutions involve an extension of state intervention and power, which represents the policies of the past. Private enterprise competing with a free market will create the jobs of the future.

7.59 pm

Mr. John Hutton (Barrow and Furness): I have been fortunate to listen to most of the speeches in the debate. Unlike the hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick), I have not heard any of my right hon. and hon. Friends knock British industry. I assure the hon. Gentleman that I will not knock British industry because I am a strong and passionate supporter of industry, especially the engineering industry.

I should like to talk about the current level of unemployment in my constituency and its effect on the fabric of life in my community. I should also like to talk more widely about the current difficulties in British manufacturing industry.

Before doing so, I express to my hon. Friend the Member for Wallasey (Ms. Eagle) the immense feeling and regret in my constituency about the closure of Cammell Laird at Merseyside. Cammell Laird is a great shipyard. It has a great and strong history. The people in my constituency feel real regret that it has been announced that the yard will close. I place the responsibility for that closure not on the management of Vickers Shipbuilding and Engineering Limited but on the policies being pursued by the Government. Since 1979 the Government have consistently failed to support the British shipbuilding industry.

Today there was a lobby of Parliament from people in my constituency. It is unusual for my constituents to lobby Parliament, because my constituency must be one of the most difficult to get to and from. However, many of my constituents made the effort to come to Parliament to meet hon. Members and Ministers and to remind them of what has been happening in one of the great centres of the British engineering industry.

Since 1990 and the publication of "Options for Change", 8,500 redundancies have been declared in my constituency. More redundancies have been declared in Barrow and Furness than in any other British constituency. Those redundancies are a devastating blow to my constituency. About 4,500 people are registered as unemployed, although the true extent of unemployment in the constituency is substantially higher. I have just learnt that 5,500 of my constituents claim sickness benefit, the vast number of whom will be unemployed. If the number of my constituents claiming sickness benefit is added to the

[Mr. John Hutton]

number claiming unemployment benefit, the real level of unemployment in my constituency is probably nearer 20 per cent. than the official figure of 10 per cent.

My particular worry is the effect that the redundancies and job losses have had on young people. Since 1990, 1,000 engineering apprentices have disappeared from my constituency. Every year the VSEL shipyard recruited about 300 young people aged 16 years. Most of them were boys, but many were young women. That recruitment of apprentice trainees has finished. Vickers accounted for a high proportion of the total number of engineering apprentices in the United Kingdom. The loss of the recruitment programme is a serious blow not only to my constituency but to the engineering industry of the United Kingdom and our future as a trading nation. That level of apprentice lay-offs is a devastating blow to my community and the country as a whole.

Unfortunately, we know that there will be heavy job losses in Barrow in the next two years. The programme of shedding workers and redundancies at Vickers is far from over. The worst expectation is that as many as 4,000 extra redundancies could be made in my constituency in the next two to three years. The combined effect of those redundancies will be that every family in my constituency will have been directly affected by unemployment. Whole families have lost their jobs at the shipyard. Many parents are worried about the employment prospects for their children. Therefore, in my constituency and in the constituencies of my hon. Friends—and, I suspect, the constituencies of Conservative Members—an entire culture of service to the nation and an entire tradition of skill and work are at risk.

The hon. Member for Colne Valley spoke about the feelings of many Conservative Members about those who are out of work. I was glad to hear him say that, because the impression I gained from listening to the debate is that there is not a great deal of concern among Conservative Members. I welcome the hon. Gentleman's reassurance.

When we talk about unemployment we are not whingeing. We are not knocking British industry or running the country down, as many Conservative Members would like the House to believe. We are simply reminding the Government and Conservative Members of the consequences of their economic policies. For many communities in Britain, those economic policies have been devastating in the past few years.

The root of the present difficulties in my constituency lies with the Government's failure to support manufacturing industry, especially the engineering industry. The shipbuilding industry has been badly hit by the recession. Indeed, that industry has been in a process of structural decline, certainly since the late 1970s. In response to some of the comments that I have heard tonight, I should point out that Britain's shipbuilding industry and, indeed, the shipbuilding industry of Europe is not a smokestack or old-fashioned industry. It is a high-tech and highly skilled industry.

The contribution of my constituents to shipbuilding and the quality of engineering in my constituency are second to none in the world. In particular, the engineering work on the Trident programme is without parallel; it is some of the highest-quality work that any British shipyard has ever produced.

A Conservative Member referred to engineering as a low-tech, metal-bashing industry. That is nonsense. The shipbuilding industry of Britain, especially the shipbuilding facilities in the Devonshire Dock Hall in Barrow, is the finest in Europe—I would argue that it is the finest in the world. Because of the Government's inaction and their pursuit of ideology, there is a serious risk that we shall once again surrender huge tracts of our engineering industry to foreign competition. When the worldwide demand for merchant shipbuilding is set to double in the next 10 years, why are we still pursuing a range of policies that will mean that British shipyards will not be able to compete for that work?

It is inconceivable that any other European Government will allow such an important industry to be sacrificed on what I can only describe as a rather outdated and pathetic high altar of free market forces. We are pursuing policies to spite ourselves—to cut off our noses—and there is no economic, political or social logic in such policies.

Other shipbuilding industries in Europe are taking advantage of an increase in orders for merchant shipbuilding. I ask the Government to recognise the contribution that our marine engineering industry can play in revitalising our manufacturing base. As a maritime nation with an immensely proud history and tradition, it is extraordinary that the United Kingdom does not have a policy for its marine engineering industry. How have we ended up in such an extraordinary and ludicrous position?

I am not here simply to highlight the problems in my constituency, although I believe that those problems are very serious. I want to offer the Government some positive advice and guidance about what they should do to tackle the growing unemployment in my constituency and other shipbuilding communities in Britain. The Government need to reconsider their position on the seventh EC directive on aid to the European shipbuilding industry. In particular, they need to reconsider their view that the naval shipyards of Britain should not qualify, and will never qualify, for intervention funding.

Looking back at the past 10 to 12 years, it might have been logical in the 1980s for the Government to take that view, because the order books of our naval yards were buoyant and the cold war was still in full force. Many of the naval shipyards of Britain were able to look forward to decades or more of secure employment. That was certainly true of the VSEL shipyard in Barrow.

We looked forward to building a large number of hunter-killer submarines and a full complement of 2400-class Upholder boats. All that finished when the Secretary of State for Defence announced substantial cuts in the submarine procurement programme. At a stroke, my constituency lost £3 billion worth of envisaged submarine procurement. The same is true to a smaller extent of other yards in Britain. The naval construction programme was substantially pruned.

It is not possible for constituencies such as mine, which have been historically dependent on work from the Ministry of Defence, suddenly to change on their own. The naval yards that had looked forward to secure order books found themselves with none. They found themselves in much the same position as many of the merchant yards in the 1970s and early 1980s.

British warship yards have experienced a substantial and material change of circumstances. That declining volume of work and expected work from the Ministry of

Defence should compel the Government to reconsider their view of the seventh directive and argue the case at European level for intervention funding to help our warship yards.

Our warship yards are just about all that we have left of a once mighty industry. For example, the industry once produced more than half of all the ships built on the planet. We are now reduced to a tiny fragment of that. Given the range of skills and the level of investment in some of our yards, it would be criminal for the Government not to continue to support the British shipbuilding industry by seeking amendments to the seventh directive. They should seek to develop an eighth directive that will enable the warship yards to qualify for merchant shipbuilding work. It is essential that the Government do that.

It is imperative that my constituency attracts assisted area status and development area status. I have noticed —I am sure that other hon. Members have also noticed —that the budget for the Department of Trade and Industry for the next three years is set to fall. In my constituency we have invested a great deal of hope in attracting assisted area status. But where is the beef? Where will the cash come from to give my constituents and those of other hon. Members the hope and confidence that they want for the future? The Department of Trade and Industry should be one of the great Departments of state. It should lead and fuel the engine of British engineering industry. Yet it is set to cut the support that it provides. That is an alarming development.

We have heard a great deal during the debate about training. It is important to bear it in mind that most of the training and enterprise councils are gearing themselves up for further cuts next year. Unlike the hon. Member for Colne Valley, I see little empirical evidence of recovery in the British economy. He may give anecdotal evidence that unemployment is levelling off in his constituency. I am delighted to hear that, for the sake of his constituents, but there is no sign that unemployment is levelling off in my constituency. We expect unemployment to double in the next two years. That is a horrifying prospect for my constituents.

The Government say that a commitment to high-quality training underlies their supposed concern about unemployment. We do not see that in my constituency. Cumbria TEC faces substantial cuts in its training budget for next year, at a time when we know that unemployment is set to rise substantially in my constituency.

Plenty of issues give rise to anxiety and it is appropriate for hon. Members to express that anxiety, as I have done, without being accused of whingeing or of knocking British industry. I am not knocking British industry. Industry has played an historic role in my constituency not only in defending the country—we are proud of that—but by being a resource which is of use to the nation. We have the skills, the engineering excellence and the base.

Opposition Members do not knock British industry. We support it. We wish sometimes that the Government would do the same. Like many other shipbuilding communities, my constituents have given real service to Britain in both war and peace. They are not being properly rewarded. Indeed, they are not being rewarded at all.

The Government should display the imagination and provide the support that other nations give to their shipbuilding industries. That would have a substantial beneficial effect on unemployment in all the shipbuilding communities of Britain.

Taking a wider view, Opposition Members see with alarm what is happening to the British economy. Many statistics have been traded about the state of the British economy. However, it is appropriate to examine some of the statistics that have not been mentioned so far tonight. Unemployment stands at almost 3 million. It has risen for 29 consecutive months—a cumulative rise of more than 1·2 million. Vacancies have fallen to 95,000—the lowest level since 1981. We have the third highest level of unemployment in the European Community.

Manufacturing industry is dear to my heart and essential to the well-being and prosperity of my constituents. Manufacturing investment was 5 per cent. lower in the first six months of 1992 than in the same period in 1991. It fell by 16·5 per cent. between 1989 and 1991 and is now lower than in 1979. Investment in the whole economy fell by 2·5 per cent. between the first and second quarters of 1992, having fallen by 10 per cent. in 1991. Those are pretty grim statistics.

Let us examine our gross domestic product compared with that of other countries in the European Community. From 1990 to the present day, the United Kingdom GDP has fallen by 2·5 per cent., while that of Germany has grown by 5·3 per cent., that of France has grown by 6·1 per cent. and the EC average is a growth of 4·5 per cent. In the same period, United Kingdom manufacturing output, which is of direct interest to my constituents, has fallen by 5·25 per cent. while that of Germany has risen by almost 8 per cent., that of France has risen by 5·5 per cent. and that of Spain has risen by 7 per cent. Those are the real indicators of the Government's achievements in managing the British economy. It is a pathetic and embarrassing record.

Ministers continue to believe that government is part of the problem. That is not true; government can be part of the solution. It is depressing to hear Conservative Members continue to run down and neglect the role of the Government in fuelling activity in the economy. We need the right balance between macroeconomic policies and supply-side measures to produce low-inflationary growth in the economy. There is no sign that Ministers or Conservative Members are thinking along those lines. In that case, unemployment will continue to rise.

There will be no hope for those who are unemployed until the Government change course and recognise that unemployment is an injustice which must be put right. That is why I shall support the motion in the name of my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the Opposition.

8.16 pm

Mr. Oliver Heald (Hertfordshire, North): In my constituency we share many of the problems of unemployment described by the hon. Member for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Hutton). It may seem odd to say that north Hertfordshire and Barrow and Furness have anything in common, but we have always relied on the defence industry for employment. We have been hit hard by the cuts in defence spending in the past two years. Unemployment has increased by 143 per cent. in that period.

[Mr. Oliver Heald]

I accept that unemployment has caused distress to the families of my constituents. It causes great anxiety and often it is a tragedy for them. I have met many of them. Conservative Members understand the anxiety and distress that people feel in those circumstances. However, the point that Conservative Members make is not that the Opposition criticise the Government in a shallow way; our point is that Opposition Members fail to consider the full background to the problem. It is wrong to view a policy for full employment as a realistic aim, in the short term at any rate, when across Europe 12 million people are registered unemployed. It is said that we need 2·5 per cent. growth merely to stand still.

The background of high unemployment in Europe has not been addressed in the speeches that we have heard today. When my learned Friend—I mean my hon. Friend; old habits die hard—the Member for Milton Keynes, South-West (Mr. Legg) gave the statistics on youth unemployment it was noticeable that there was no answer to the point that Spain has 33·7 per cent., France has 22·1 per cent., Ireland has 28 per cent. and Italy has 29 per cent. youth unemployment. Those countries have minimum wage policies but seem unable to develop successful policies to deal with youth unemployment. In this country, youth unemployment is well below the average in the rest of the European Community. It would be wrong to consider that issue without taking into account the background of unemployment and the task that Europe faces in trying to deal with it.

When the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) attacked British companies, saying that they were not fit to be in the Group of Seven and were not among the best, I felt that it was a complete misdescription of British industry. We have 27 of the top 50 companies and six out of the top 10 big companies in Europe. There are successes, which Opposition Members are simply ignoring.

In north Hertfordshire the rate of increase in unemployment has levelled off and has fallen in recent months because of local companies' response to the problems. Our largest employer, Johnson Matthey plc, based in Royston—a precious metals business and manufacturer of auto catalysts—has announced improved results for the first six months of 1992 because it has excellent products, high levels of efficiency and has invested heavily in the products that it manufactures. It has done a good deal of research and development with considerable assistance from Government funds. As a result, that great company has been able to regenerate at one end of my constituency.

At the other end of my constituency, a large number of people work at the Vauxhall motors plant at Luton. Sales of cars have improved in recent months, which has been good for employment in the constituency. Many smaller companies have entered the BS5750 quality management improvement scheme and seem to have had successes resulting from that. Many small companies have made use of available Department of Trade and Industry schemes, road shows and local advisers to improve their export performance. They found that the British Overseas Trade Board's new approach of trying to identify markets for British goods has been a success.

Our chambers of commerce are trying to spread best practice throughout the constituency. New business opportunities for companies have resulted from the inter-trade fairs that have been arranged. The Letchworth Business Club must be an example to the country—500 companies take part in its activities to improve quality, to export more and to try to improve the local position.

The training and enterprise council in Hertfordshire has had to face a large blow because of defence industry cuts. It has set up a task force for Hertfordshire and co-ordinated efforts to improve inward investment, training and the regeneration of local business, to some effect. It also pioneered training credits and customised training schemes. That is a model of what should be happening throughout the country.

From the evidence given to the Select Committee on Employment, it is noticeable that training and enterprise councils provide a good focus for regeneration in areas where jobs have been lost. Some union leaders, such as Bill Jordan, were noticeably enthusiastic about the ways in which TECs could be used, while others were not. It would be a good thing if hon. Members on both sides of the House agreed that TECs are the way in which we are going to deliver training and stimulate enterprise and if we all put our support behind them.

The submission on pit closures by the north Nottinghamshire TEC to the Secretary of State was interesting. Against a difficult background, it has been able to persuade 500 local companies to become members of its scheme, and it got about 40 new corporate members every month. Perhaps the Manufacturing Science Finance union was able to reach a no-strike agreement with the Japanese company Toray Textiles Europe in that area because it has a good training and enterprise council and because the local unions are getting the message. The attitude of Roger Lyons, the new general secretary of the MSF, is in stark contrast to that of his predecessor, Ken Gill. Mr. Lyons comments on the new agreement are worth quoting—

"Day 1 of MSF was September 1 1992. I'm not going to be held responsible for statements or comments made personally by my predecessor."

The deal marks a watershed for the MSF by taking a predominantly white-collar union into blue-collar representation. The Amalgamated Engineering and Electrical Union was so delighted at the change of attitude that Paul Gallagher said:

"I'm surprised but delighted that MSF have stopped seeing inward investment as alien."

Mr. Paddy Tipping (Sherwood): Does the hon. Gentleman accept that north Nottinghamshire workers are pragmatic and hard working? The record of Nottinghamshire miners, and of miners throughout the country, speaks for itself—during the past five years there has been a 150 per cent. increase in productivity. The hon. Gentleman mentioned the north Nottingham TEC and some of the things that it does. Surely one needs to invest in infrastructure to bring new jobs, investment and prosperity to north Nottinghamshire. To invest——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That is a long intervention.

Mr. Heald: I understand the concern of the hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Tipping). Obviously it is important that an area such as north Nottinghamshire should be able to regenerate the jobs that have been lost and those which may be lost with pit closures—we do not know at this stage. To do so, a range of measures will need

to be taken in the locality. As the hon. Gentleman will know, Lord Walker has the job of considering a range of measures that may be necessary to regenerate the local economy in areas where pits are closed.

In an area like Mansfield, which I understand is some distance from main road and rail links, it may be necessary to consider what major investments will be needed. Alternatively, workers in Mansfield might be able to move nearer to road and rail links to obtain work. The important thing is that TECs can play a pivotal role in regenerating areas where there are substantial job losses and that has been proved in Hertfordshire. I hope that the hon. Gentleman and other Opposition Members will put their full weight behind the TECs and that they and the trade unions will not make the sort of ill-conceived criticisms that they have made in the past.

Mr. Alan Milburn (Darlington) *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Ms. Angela Eagle.

Ms. Eagle *rose*——

Mr. Heald: I had not finished my speech, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I was giving way to the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Milburn), who wished to intervene.

Mr. Milburn: I wish to defend the honour of Roger Lyons, who as my general secretary will be delighted by the hon. Member's support. Would he care to comment on the fact that there was a cross-party argument not so much on the role of TECs but on the resources being made available to them? Is it not a fact that this year a near majority of TECs have had their funding cut compared with last year and that they have had to cut about 500,000 employment training weeks from their budgets as a result of the Department of Employment cuts in funding?

Mr. Heald: The Department of Employment has had a real-terms increase in its budget for next year, and I understand that a further £118 million will be available.

As I was saying, the trends in north Hertfordshire and in areas where the TECs are giving a lead are especially important. In addition, the initiatives of the Department of Trade and Industry in support of our exporters are about to be expanded, and that is to be welcomed.

In addition to all of that, we are, under Conservative rule, cutting down on bureaucracy. About 24,000 Government forms have already been scrapped and steps are being taken to try to improve the VAT regulations. The measure introduced recently to allow small companies to pay VAT on receipts rather than invoices is working well and, for example, Hitchin chamber of commerce has described it as a successful step. We want other measures to reduce the dominance of large trading companies over their smaller counterparts, and the recent Green Paper on that subject is to be welcomed.

It is interesting, when examining the role of trade unions with single union agreements and inward investment—some unions have supported the concept, while others have not—to note that, in its evidence to the Select Committee on Employment, the TUC praised the efforts of trade unions and the valleys programme in helping to attract inward investment. That conflicts with what some Labour Members have said about the programme being a failure. Indeed, the TUC said:

"It is through government, employers and trade unions working in partnership in this way within our communities that real progress will be achieved."

Britain has the lowest interest rates in Europe, a competitive exchange rate, low taxes and an excellent work force with good industrial relations. That is a winning ticket with which Britain can go forward and succeed. If we add the measures taken in the autumn statement to revive the housing market, improve business investment, reduce car tax and help export credits, we are better placed than the rest of Europe to face up to the problem of unemployment. That is why I shall support the Government amendment.

8.32 pm

Ms. Angela Eagle (Wallasey): I might describe my attempt to intervene in the speech of the hon. Member for Hertfordshire, North (Mr. Heald) as the shortest contribution I have ever made in the Chamber.

I wish to speak generally about the Conservatives' record on unemployment, going back initially to 1979 and then examining their policies that have led to high rates of unemployment. I reinforce some of the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) and thank my hon. Friend the Member for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Hutton) for his remarks about Cammell Laird.

One of the main features of post-1979 Conservative Governments has been the high, increasing and persistent rates of unemployment resulting directly from their policies. Much has been said today about recession in the rest of Europe and throughout the world. Conservative Members have failed to point out that we in Britain are into our second recession. We went into recession earlier and have remained there longer. Indeed, we are now in an even more persistent recession, the worst Britain has experienced for 60 years. So while there may now be world recession problems, that was not the case when the Conservatives, with their odd policies and peculiar ideological obsessions, plunged us into recession in 1980-81.

Mr. Heald: Britain is now poised to come out of recession—[HON. MEMBERS: "When?"]—while countries such as Germany are predicted to have unemployment levels rising to about 6 million within two years.

Ms. Eagle: Time will tell whether we are about to come out of recession and whether the hon. Gentleman's predictions will materialise. After all, we have been on the starting blocks, the green shoots showing, for at least 18 months, yet we are still bumping along the bottom.

It is important in a debate about unemployment to consider the Conservative record going back over the years rather than to dwell only on the present state of affairs, especially as that record includes persistent and high rates of unemployment, reaching levels that nobody thought possible prior to 1979. It was not thought at that time that such unemployment levels could be politically sustainable in a democracy. The Government have presented the situation today as a sort of natural phenomenon that descended on Britain in the last 14 years. They claim that there was little, if anything, they could have done about it.

There are two clear effects of the dogma adopted by the Conservatives in the years immediately following 1979. Still showing through their policies is the ideological belief that it is no role of Government to do anything to deal with demand in the economy. They seem to think that they

[Ms. Eagle]

need only remove government from as many areas of life as possible and all will come right because market forces will provide.

The second clear effect is the appalling incompetence demonstrated by the first Tory Government in 1979, when they launched themselves on their frenzied monetarist phase, which destroyed one third of the then British manufacturing base. We have not yet recovered from that.

We must return to those early years of Conservative government to recall how bad the situation was. The monetarist dogma has been discredited by its very practice. It has been shown to be absolute nonsense. Not only has it not worked, but it has been damaging to the nation. The House need not take my word for that. Monetarism proved to be a disaster for employment, and we are living with the consequences of it today. I quote from a recently published book—I shall identify the author shortly—on the subject:

"Thatcherism largely consisted of 19th century individualism dressed up in 20th century clothes. Economic dogma was at its core."

The author went on to say that Thatcherites adopted a particularly dogmatic form of classical economics and that no other Government had become such fundamentalist devotees of the Friedmanite scriptures. The Conservative party, of all the leading right-wing European democratic parties, had then become

"far and away the most dogmatic."

It is clear from today's debate that that dogma still exists. The author continues:

"The attempt to control the money supply helped to produce an exceptionally large, rapid and enduring rise in unemployment."

That was not written by a Marxist or trendy lefty polytechnic lecturer. The author was Lord Gilmour in his book "Dancing with Dogma."

Mr. Michael Forsyth: If monetarism and what the hon. Lady described as Thatcherism was such a disaster in the 1980s, perhaps she will explain why we got an extra 1 million self-employed people and more than an extra 1 million jobs in the economy during that period.

Ms. Eagle: I had intended to deal with that issue later and to examine the quality as well as the quantity of jobs created. The structure of employment in Britain has changed in the past 14 years, away from secure and skilled jobs to more insecure, low-paid and part-time jobs.

Apart from the obsession with monetarism in the early 1980s, Conservative ideology believed that the superiority of market forces would provide, so that the Government could sit back and wait for the market to provide perfect solutions to every problem.

We are now in our second recession. We have lost massive chunks of manufacturing industry, and only 4 million of the 50 million people who live in this country now work in manufacturing. Great swathes of skilled people have been put on the dole and many healthy industries have gone to the wall simply because, as Lord Gilmour said, the Government's reaction to what is happening in the economy has been much more dogmatic than that of the Christian Democrat Governments in Europe, all of whom admit that there is a role for intervention.

Intervention has a role not only in events in a sector of the economy but also in affecting demand. The level of demand in the economy seems to be taken as something that is handed down from Heaven and on which the Government can have no effect. The Secretary of State said that the Government can simply provide supply-side polices to retrain and provide skills so that people can better be matched to jobs. She did not say how the Government could increase demand in the economy to create more jobs.

I therefore looked at whether the autumn statement contained anything about creating demand. I must admit that it contained a small dash of intervention in the form of construction projects, which the Chancellor of the Exchequer hopes will create employment. But many of them do not start until 1996. I wonder whether that is a clue to the date of the next general election or simply my musing about what might be on the Prime Minister's mind.

The autumn statement was presented to the House in the aftermath of the most humiliating and expensive economic debacle that we have seen for a long time, when we were forced out of membership of the ERM. We then had the spectacle of a Government in search of an economic policy. The autumn statement is meant to be it. It contains just a little touch of expansion but also a public sector pay freeze. It is not clear to me—it has not been mentioned by Conservative Members—whether the autumn statement's overall effect will be deflationary because of the spending power that it will take out of the economy, and whether that will make unemployment worse. Time will tell.

The Government have been pursuing their own ideological dogmas and have been content to let unacceptably high unemployment persist. I want to discuss how that affects my local area. It is apposite that I discuss that matter after last week's announcement of the final closure date for the Cammell Laird shipyard, which is to be next July if the Government and Vickers Shipbuilding and Engineering Ltd. are allowed to proceed. As my hon. Friend the Member for Barrow and Furness pointed out, he is in a similar position. Birkenhead and Wallasey have been built up around one industry. When that industry is threatened with closure, the results are catastrophic for the surrounding area.

I applaud and join my hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead in his determination to ensure that the yard does not close. We shall do our level best, with the help of the community, agencies and, I hope, the Government to ensure that it has a future as a shipbuilding yard, out of VSEL's control, to maintain skills and jobs in that important area.

Wallasey and the Wirral were much weakened by the monetarist experiments of the 1980s. Indeed, 15 per cent. of the manufacturing industry in that area disappeared during that period. We now have another turn of the screw, which will ratchet down unemployment even further in an area already weakened by the Government's economic mismanagement. If the yard goes, almost 1,000 direct jobs will go immediately. Up to 6,000 other service jobs will go as an indirect result of the closure. Some 600 local firms that have supplied the yard will be at risk. During its history, Cammell Laird has been notable for always going to local firms for supplies. Consequently, the effect of its closure on the local community will be all the more devastating because of its acceptable and responsible purchasing pattern.

The local borough council estimates that £30 million of spending power will be taken out of the local economy.

One in seven people is out of work in the area. The official unemployment figure for Wallasey, where many of the people who work in Cammell Laird live, is almost 14 per cent. In addition, because of the cost of unemployment, retraining and other issues that have been mentioned, it is estimated that the closure will cost the public purse £111 million in the first year. It is economic madness to close the yard and put out of work one of the most skilled work forces in the country, given that the industry is likely to be revived in the world market within a couple of years. We have some of the best shipbuilding facilities in the world. Because it is so mad, the Government will probably decide to let it happen.

The Wirral area has 19,000 people on the dole before the potential economic holocaust that the closure would unleash. Wallasey has above average unemployment, with 18 per cent. male unemployment, 7 per cent. female unemployment and an overall level of 14 per cent. There would be a 2 per cent. increase immediately if the shipyard went. Moreover, 37 per cent. of that unemployment is long term—people who have been on the dole for more than a year. I meet constituents who have been out of work for most of the decade and have little prospect of a job.

Another disturbing aspect of unemployment in the area is the large number of youths unemployed. People in their mid to late 20s have never worked since they left school. It is easy to imagine why we have one of the worst drug problems outside Edinburgh and London. It must be connected with the despair and hopelessness that accompany years of unemployment with no prospect of getting out of it. That should concern hon. Members on both sides of the House. We must reintegrate people who feel that they have been forgotten and neglected, that the Government do not care about them and that the political system excludes them. Unless we do, we are simply racking up problems for the future and must deal with the economic and political whirlwind that will come about if we ignore it now.

When the Government first came to power, the then Prime Minister, on the steps of 10 Downing street, used a quote by St. Francis of Assisi. I remind hon. Members of what she said:

"Where there is discord may we bring harmony. Where there is error may we bring truth. Where there is doubt may we bring faith. Where there is despair may we bring hope."

That is none out of four. Unless the Government do something to deal with those serious and persistent issues and social problems caused by the high unemployment that they are creating, that quote will remain the sick joke that it represents to most people who are on the dole or live in fear of it and the problems that it brings.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): I understand that the wind-up speeches are to begin at 9.20 pm. There are four hon. Members hoping to catch my eye, and I hope that each speaker will bear that in mind.

8.50 pm

Mr. Michael Bates (Langbaurgh): I am grateful for the opportunity to speak in this important debate. I can assure Opposition Members that no Conservative Member underestimates the human tragedy of unemployment. I hope that we can have a constructive debate—we all recognise the tragedy that we are discussing and want to find the best way to reduce unemployment. I have no doubt that the 5,324 constituents of Langbaurgh who are unemployed are my top priority. We are debating the best ways of getting those people back to work.

I am interested by the motion, which states that it

"condemns the Government's Autumn Statement for its total failure to tackle the jobs crisis".

That does not square with what the Confederation of British Industry, chambers of commerce—including that in my district—the Federation of Small Businesses, and all the small business men to whom I have spoken have said. They think that the autumn statement will be good for business and for jobs.

What, exactly, is the Labour party condemning? Is it the fact that we are maintaining low inflation—at 3·6 per cent? Is that what you are condemning? Are you condemning our commitment to capital spending, which was heavily cut under the last Labour Government? Is it the provision of the Jubilee line extension at a cost of £1·9 billion? Do you condemn that? Is it the maintenance of the house building——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I do not condemn anything.

Mr. Bates: I beg your pardon, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Does the Labour party condemn the housing spend—the 35 per cent. increase in the Housing Corporation capital resources amounting to £2·3 billion? Does the Labour party condemn the £900 million that will be released by the change in capital rules for local government? Does it condemn the £2·1 billion worth of capital projects or the £95 million to benefit the inner cities? Does it condemn the cut in interest rates to 7 per cent.—the lowest level for 15 years? A 1 per cent. cut in interest rates saves British business and industry £1 billion. Does it condemn the £7 billion or £8 billion of investment in business?

Does the Labour party condemn the maintenance of our commitment to uprate benefits for the casualties of the international recession? Does it condemn the increase of unemployment benefit in line with inflation? Does it condemn the increase in child benefit and state pensions in line with inflation? Is that what the motion condemns?

Does the Labour party condemn the Government policies for their popularity? Popularity has never come easy to the Labour party. We can mention many fine achievements, but the Labour party considers other aspects and condemns them in its motion. Such factors include the abolition of car tax which, it is estimated, will provide demand for an extra 70,000 units next year. The Labour party condemns the increase in capital allowances—40 per cent. for the first year—a policy which has gone down well with small business men. It condemns the £750 million in extra export guarantees introduced in the autumn statement.

The autumn statement was popular, but was short of one item. When I travel around my constituency and the north-east of England, business men tell me that they are short of confidence. People need confidence to go out shopping and to invest. I believe that confidence is the only ingredient missing from the British economy.

The Labour party's contribution to today's debate will do nothing to enhance confidence—if anything, it will continue to run down the country. That is nothing new. I have lived in the north-east all my life, and I have lived cheek by jowl with the Labour party and the effects that it

[Mr. Bates]

has had on the north-east, such as unemployment. I know how the Labour party has managed to run down the north-east.

The Labour party says that the north-east needs Government investment, but it does not mention the £3·5 billion Government spending and investment since 1979. Does the Labour party mention the £216 million already received, or about to be received, from European funding between 1991 and 1993? Does it mention the Northern Development Company or explain how that company has played its part in attracting £2 billion since 1985, creating or safeguarding 35,000 jobs?

The call from the Opposition is that we should do more. I believe that we have. Let us consider the jobs that the Government have relocated to the north-east of England. Some 1,700 jobs in the Department of Social Security were created at the Longbenton complex in Newcastle, which already employed 7,000. What about the 400 jobs created by the Government's location of the Inland Revenue in the north-east? What about the 250 tax jobs in Sunderland? What about the 350 jobs at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, which has been moved to the Newcastle business park? What about the licensing branch of the Department of Trade and Industry, which has been located at Billingham in Cleveland, with the creation of 61 jobs? Some 50 jobs were created at the Department for Education when it moved to Darlington in County Durham, bringing the total number of jobs at that site to 800.

However, we need more jobs. The work of the urban development corporations has been important. The Government sponsored them with £80 million in the current year. They have attracted £500 million worth of private business to the north-east. Is that enough? Apparently, it is not. What about the training and enterprise councils? Teesside TEC, funded by the Government, helped to set up 500 new businesses during the past two years, which is welcome. That shows what the Government are doing to help create jobs and alleviate unemployment in the north-east of England. What about the inward investment that has been attracted to the north-east of England? Clearly, across the water in America and Japan, people have a higher regard for us than have some Labour Members.

What about inward investment? Nissan UK has invested in a plant in Sunderland, with 3,000 jobs and a further 1,800 jobs planned. The Fujitsu plant represents £600 million worth of investment, creating about 1,500 jobs. Hashimoto Formings, the Japanese car component manufacturer, is investing £10 million in the north-east.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Does my hon. Friend recall that the former Leader of the Opposition described Japanese investment as "alien jobs"?

Mr. Bates: I am grateful for that intervention. I am sure that such comments go down a storm in Sunderland, Washington, Newcastle and Middlesbrough, where so many people depend for their livelihoods on jobs that come from Japan—and we are grateful to receive them. The Japanese certainly appear to have investment confidence in the people of the north-east; it is time Opposition Members showed some of the same confidence.

We will not sit back and see our region run down by the Opposition. I want to tell the House about Sommer Industry, the French car component manufacturer, which is setting up business in Washington and creating 100 new jobs. Sterling Research Group, of the United States of America, is expanding its pharmaceutical research centre at Alnwick, with 160 jobs. TRW Thompson, a German-based car valve manufacturer, is to create 225 jobs at a new plant in Washington. Lite-On, of Taiwan, is coming to Ashington with 150 jobs. Synpac Chemicals of Taiwan is to take over part of the Glaxo site, creating 200 jobs.

It is not just overseas manufacturers who have confidence in the north-east, however. We take pride in the work that we do there for these companies, and for companies from this country as well. British Airways has moved to Newcastle business park, with 700 new jobs to be in place by 1994. MTM, the Cleveland-based chemicals group, has invested £100 million in Teesport, creating 600 new jobs. Bioprocessing Limited, of Consett, has invested £2·5 million in a new factory, thereby creating 100 jobs. Glaxo has opened a new £9 million production unit at Barnard Castle; it provides 1,500 people with employment.

Another engineering firm has set up a new offshore manufacturing unit which will provide 600 people in the north-east with employment. The MetroCentre, with its multi-million pound investment and 3 million sq ft of shopping space, includes jobs for 6,000 permanent employees. Then there is the development of the multi-million pound Doxford international business park at Sunderland—a development which will go ahead over the next five years at a cost of £250 million, generating up to 3,000 jobs. The development of the new Newcastle business park will create another 5,000 jobs. Investment in the park has topped £150 million.

This is the news from the north-east, the face of the north-east that we want to show, not to the businesses of this country—they know why they come to the north-east by the coach-load—or to the companies of Japan, America, Germany or France—they have confidence in us—but to the Opposition. They could do with some confidence in the north-east. Instead of running us down, they should be selling the benefits of locating there.

I want to end by coming a little closer to home, to Teesside——

Mr. Tipping: Is not unemployment in the north-east the highest in this country? What message is going out to the long-term unemployed there? What about the fact that there is no capital investment in the north-east? What about the message of no hope? And what do the hon. Gentleman and his colleagues intend to do about it? Absolutely nothing.

Mr. Bates: That just proves that Opposition Members cannot see a silver lining without spotting a big dark cloud wrapped around it. The hon. Gentleman comes straight out of the Opposition school of management which believes in attracting business by running down the product. The Opposition might aspire to that view, but our international competitors do not buy it. So, while business is coming to the north-east, creating jobs and giving people some hope of a livelihood, it might perhaps be just as well if Opposition Members kept their thoughts to themselves for the moment.

To return to Teesside, there was a publication by the *Evening Gazette* there, with the headline

"The region with a £4 billion smile".

That was just last month. It was an excellent publication which I commend. There is a £32 million development at Preston Farm; and a £50 million development at Teesdale business park with an £80 million development at Teesside Park and the new Enron power station. There is a £50 million development by MTM and further developments of £16 million at Belasis technology park and of £1·2 billion by Amoco.

That is the evidence of what British business and international business think about the north-east and about this country. We have the fundamentals in place. The autumn statement was a success and we need to say that, because we have concern and compassion, the best thing we can do is to send out the message that we have confidence in British business and in the north-east and will back it to the hilt.

9.6 pm

Mr. Jim Cunningham (Coventry, South-East): The Opposition are condemning not the ingenuity of British people but the Government's handling of the employment situation. Let us be clear about that. In particular, when Conservative Members ask what we condemn let me tell them what I condemn. Jaguar motor cars in Coventry have systematically, over the past two years, started announcing redundancies, with 200 only last week. I condemn the fact that companies like Rolls-Royce and GPT have introduced systematic redundancies and Cadbury is struggling to maintain its labour force at present levels. Lucas is also struggling to maintain its labour force. I also condemn the answer to me last week from the Minister for Industry, when I asked about the output comparisons over the years. He told me that between 1981 and 1992 output has risen by only 0·05 per cent. What an indictment of the years of Thatcherism and of the present years of John Major's stewardship.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman referred to John Major. He must not do that. He must say "the Prime Minister".

Mr. Cunningham: I apologise, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I should have said the Prime Minister. I hold the Prime Minister and his predecessor responsible for the situation.

If Conservative MPs were to talk to business people and the Confederation of British Industry about the autumn statement they would get a different reply. They see the consequences as not giving much confidence to business people. Do hon. Members realise that small businesses are going to the wall at the rate of 10 per cent. a year? Since the autumn statement it has been disclosed that unemployment in the west midlands has gone up by 3 per cent. since September.

Those are the real facts, not the Walter Mitty world in which Conservative Members seem to live.

Mr. Mike O'Brien (Warwickshire, North): Last Friday I attended a meeting of Coventry and Warwickshire CBI, which was attended also by some of the national leadership. They were asked, not by me but by a Conservative MP, what they thought of the autumn statement and if they regarded it as wonderful. Their response was that the autumn statement was irrelevant. Those were their words. It had created no confidence in the leadership that there was any hope of recovery.

Mr. Cunningham: That reinforces what I was saying; the business community very much has that opinion.

Equally I condemn the fact that there are just under 300,000 people unemployed in the west midlands and that is rising. In answer to the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Bates), I condemn equally this Government's cuts of more than £7 million in local government spending in Coventry. Hon. Members should look at the effect of that on employment and on small businesses. Government policies in the west midlands are repeated throughout the country and will not help employment. Members of the Government Front Bench seem to find that amusing, but I do not think that unemployment is amusing.

Conservative Members said that training and enterprise councils should be supported, but many people can tell them that the problem with TECs is that they are underfunded. I know people who went to a jobcentre and were told to take a TEC course, only to discover that the courses advertised were not available. That is the kind of experience that the unemployed are suffering as a result of the Government's training policies, particularly in relation to the young.

Generations of young people have either never had a job or will, because of the abolition of wages councils, be working for slave wages. Those are the real issues that the hon. Member for Langbaurgh should address, rather than try to denigrate members of my Front Bench over what they might or might not have said. He should not try to imply that my right hon. and hon. Friends were in any way downgrading Britain. We are downgrading the Government, but we praise the British people for putting up with a Government who, having inflicted unemployment on this country, seem powerless to do anything about it.

The Government also stand condemned over the peace dividend. The Soviet Union no longer exists, and the Government had 14 years of negotiations in which to provide for the switch from defence industries to those having a peaceful purpose. They did nothing about that. The Government stand condemned in the eyes of not only this country but Europe.

9.12 pm

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): It was interesting to hear the speech of the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Cunningham), but his contribution did not quite reach the standard of his predecessor, which my hon. Friends and I always enjoyed. I am only sorry that the hon. Gentleman's predecessor did not do slightly better, because that might have let in the Conservative candidate at the general election. No doubt we shall hear more from the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East before we are finished.

I apologise for not being present for the start of the debate, but I shall read earlier speeches in *Hansard* with interest. Last week, I appeared on BBC television in the north-west with the Labour employment spokesman, the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson), and I am glad that he did not make then his accusation about employers being scum, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) made reference.

[Mr. Peter Thurnham]

I had intended to base my speech on Labour still being very much the tool of the trade unions, but I begin to wonder whether that would not be such a bad thing. I am glad that the new investment by Toray Textiles is supported by Manufacturing Science Finance, which said that "things are moving on". I wonder whether that is true of members of the Labour Front Bench.

As the unions are beginning to adopt new attitudes, perhaps it would be a good thing if Labour kept its links with trade unions rather than trying to abandon them, as it seems to be thinking of doing. However, it seems to have a slim chance of doing so when people such as Mr. Tom Sawyer state, "No say, no pay," and while unions contribute most of the money on which the Labour party depends.

I am glad that MSF supports inward investment, because it is so important to this country. Britain is now the most favoured location for inward investment in the world. No doubt that is because we have a strong enterprise culture after 13 years of Conservative government and the advantages of low taxes, our language, and our position in the European Community. All that makes us the No. 1 country for overseas investment outside the United States for the Americans, and for the Japanese and Germans after the United States.

That is shown by the success of Inward, the north-west development agency, which records as much success in the first half of this year as in the whole of last year. The Royal Institute of International Affairs states that the total stock of worldwide direct investment will more than double between 1988 and 1995. There is no recession there.

We are fortunate that this country is the preferred one for investment which is to grow on that scale.—*[Interruption.]* I do not see why the Opposition should laugh and reject the scale of investment by large international companies that is occurring.

Take Glaxo, one of the leading manufacturing companies in the world. The Opposition seem to think that manufacturing is not profitable, but Glaxo is extremely profitable. It exports medical drugs all over the world. The Japanese may make more motorbikes than we do, but we certainly make a lot more pharmaceuticals than they do; we export to them. Glaxo has just announced that it is creating a new £17 million state of the art manufacturing and packaging base at Speke. This is an example of what can be done with large companies investing in this country because it is so attractive for them.

Regional selective assistance has worked well for the north-west since 1983, when the map was redrawn. I hope that my hon. Friends will think carefully before altering the status at present enjoyed by my own constituency and other areas in the north-west. Unemployment in the north-west in 1983 was 3·1 per cent. more than for Great Britain as a whole. The latest published figures show that unemployment in the north-west is only 0·7 per cent. more than for the country as a whole. That shows that regional selective assistance has done much to reduce the unemployment rate in the north-west relative to the country as a whole. In my own constituency, 4,433 new jobs were created in small firms employing between one and 25 people between 1987 and 1989 as a result of our policies, which have encouraged small firms.

I draw the attention of the House to a publication that came out yesterday from the National Westminster bank, an economic survey by Mr. David Kern, who is very much respected. I recommend hon. Members to look at the figures which are quoted there for regional trends, which show how well the north-west and the north as a whole have done relative to the south. Making a prediction for 1993, Mr. Kern says that he expects

"the northern regions to again outperform those in the south, although regional growth differences will be less pronounced."

That is more evidence that Government regional policies have borne fruit. The fall in gross domestic product in the south of the country has not occurred in the north.

The number of new firms registered for value added tax shows an increase of 1 per cent. in the north-west for the last full year, 1991, although there has been a decline in the south-east. Mr. Kern is predicting that there will be further increases in the number of firms registered in the north-west. *[Interruption.]* I do not know why hon. Members laugh; small firms provide jobs. I rather think that they are not very keen to hear their Front-Bench spokesman. If they wanted to hear her, they would not be intervening and thus presumably cutting down the amount of time she has to speak. However, I should be very happy to take an intervention if that is what they want.

Mr. William O'Brien: Does the hon. Gentleman not understand that this litany of all the wonderful things that are supposedly happening in this country belies the fact that we are in the middle of a recession and suggests that the Government do not understand that there are real problems with British industry, particularly manufacturing industry? They are destroying not only people's lives through losses of jobs, but the whole basis of Britain's economy.

While the Conservative party continues to voice a litany of minor things that are happening in the economy, it misses the greater picture, which shows that our economy is in desperately serious trouble. Unless this is addressed, Parliament will not start to make policies that will get the economy out of this recession.

Mr. Thurnham: The electorate chose the Conservative party to govern the country because the country really would be in a mess if Labour were allowed to introduce its anti-employment, anti-enterprise policies. There is no doubt that, in that event, we should find ourselves in the predicament that the hon. Gentleman describes. If the Conservatives espoused the policies of the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras—if we were opposed to enterprise, and called employers scum—we would have reason to worry about the future; but the present Government have introduced policies to help companies to expand, and, in particular, have helped new companies to take on employees. An example is the success of Bolton Business Ventures. The difference between the figures relating to Bolton and those relating to Bury reflect the good work done by Bolton's enterprise agency. Perhaps more should be done to set up new firms in Bury.

Mr. Lewis: Bolton Business Ventures, of which I was one of the first directors for two years before I became a Member of Parliament, was created by a Labour council.

Perhaps the hon. Gentleman would like to describe to the House the presentation given by the Central Lancashire Engineering Employers Association to

Members of Parliament from the area only last week. He managed to stay for about 20 minutes; his Conservative colleagues did not get there at all.

Mr. Thurnham: I shall not digress to discuss what the Engineering Employers Federation said in a paper which was prepared before the autumn statement, and which is therefore completely out of date. I have been asked to keep an eye on the clock, so I shall confine myself to saying that there is evidence that regional selective assistance works. I hope that the Government will bear that in mind when looking at the map.

9.21 pm

Ms. Joyce Quin (Gateshead, East): This has been a wide-ranging debate. Opposition Members in particular have expressed considerable concern about the extent of unemployment, and the economic problems that we face.

Most Conservative Members have supported the Government's policies, although we have heard one or two coded criticisms. I was glad to hear the hon. Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) refer to the undervaluing of manufacturing in recent years: Opposition Members strongly agree with that. I was disappointed, however, when the Secretary of State again trotted out the weary argument that, by talking about the level of unemployment, Opposition Members were somehow talking the country down. It sometimes seems that the Government would like to use that as an excuse for engaging in no debate about the economic situation and unemployment. We cannot pretend that jobs are not being lost, but let me emphasise that Opposition Members are not talking the country down; rather, the Government have brought the country down through their disastrous economic policies.

The gravity of the position has been borne out strongly by the figures that have been cited, especially by Opposition Members. Apart from unemployment, the small number of job vacancies is disturbing: about 29 applicants are chasing each vacancy. A couple of weeks ago, one of my local papers—*The Journal (Newcastle)*—stated that a staggering 3,000 people were chasing jobs in a new supermarket that was being opened in Whitley bay, Tyne and Wear. The company concerned soon ran out of job application forms, which is a sad reflection on the provision of job opportunities not just in that part of the country, but in almost all other parts.

A striking feature of the current unemployment level is that it clearly affects all areas, not just those that have been traditionally saddled with the scourge of unemployment. My hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) cited Basildon; let me cite Colchester, in whose travel-to-work area unemployment has increased by 171 per cent. in 18 months. It is estimated that it will grow by a further 19 per cent. by December next year, which is a higher rise than that predicted for Britain as a whole. The Essex men and women who voted Tory at the election—fortunately not all did—must rue the day that they helped the Government back into office.

It seems that the Government have cured our deep-seated regional problems by presiding over an economy in which all regions are now experiencing economic decline. That came home to me dramatically this week when I, a Tyneside Member of Parliament, received a plea to support assisted area status for East Sussex. As parts of East Sussex and Kent scramble for assisted area status, I wonder how long it will be before the entire country asks for it. The sad fact that all areas of the country are experiencing unemployment does not mean that the Government are absolved from producing an active regional policy. My colleagues and I believe that such a policy is still important.

I was glad that the hon. Member for Beaconsfield mentioned the work of the Welsh Development Agency, but I was rather surprised that the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Bates), when referring to the Northern Development Company, did not explain that the Government were originally hostile to that initiative. It was formed by the local authorities, businesses in the north and the trade unions. It was only as it became successful that the Government decided to support it. Regional policy is important, and I pay tribute to the other development agencies which have done much valuable work. The Government should follow our advice on regional policy by expanding the agencies' work and should bring about economic decentralisation, which is badly needed.

It has been pointed out today that all sectors of our economy have been losing out badly. Unlike the deep recession experienced in the early 1980s, all parts of the country and all sectors are now affected. The job losses which have already occurred in the banking sector and those which are predicted in that sector in the next couple of years will total about 250,000, which is a huge number in a sector on which, we are told, we would be relying for the future.

What remains of our manufacturing and industrial base is also being savagely hit. That was made evident in some of my hon. Friends' speeches, for example, those of my hon. Friends the Members for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) and for Wallasey (Ms. Eagle) who spoke in some detail and with great feeling about the plight of the Cammell Laird shipyard—sentiments with which I wish to associate myself. It is a tragedy that the yard is closing at this time. The Government should intervene to allow the work force to put into practice their ideas for the continuation of the yard.

What my hon. Friends said was backed up by my hon. Friend the Member for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Hutton) who also discussed the problems facing his area and the defence industry, on which his town is almost wholly reliant. I believe that VSEL at Barrow and Cammell Laird and companies such as Swan Hunter would benefit considerably from Government intervention on their behalf. There are practical measures which the Government could take to help such companies. They could, for example, reopen with the European Community the issue of whether warship yards can get access to intervention funding. We should like the Government to take that step.

Some hon. Members—Conservative and Labour—referred to the coal industry and mentioned their fears for the future. Of course, that issue is very much on our minds at present.

Mr. Jack Thompson (Wansbeck): Is my hon. Friend aware that coal mining areas will not only lose 100,000 jobs and that we shall have to depend on wives working to keep the homes going but that the wives are also losing their factory jobs?

Ms. Quin: My hon. Friend is entirely right. Perhaps the Minister will give us an estimate of the total number of job

[Ms. Quin]

losses if the pit closure programme were to go ahead. We know that not only the 30,000 jobs but many related jobs and jobs belonging to the families of miners and the communities in which they live will also be lost. We should like the Government publicly to apologise to the miners whom they were prepared to see made redundant with only two days' notice. Do the Government understand how that decision shocked public opinion, not only here but in parts of the European Community and even in the United States where the decision was widely reported?

The constituents to whom I have talked have a gut reaction about the decision on the coal industry. They ask how the Government can possibly allow such a valuable national resource to be thrown away. They ask whether the Government really care about the unemployed when they were prepared to add 30,000 people to the dole queue in such a cavalier and dismissive manner.

Hon. Members have referred to the plight of particular groups of the unemployed. They have referred to the long-term unemployed and to the alarming rise in their number. Although I was glad to hear the Secretary of State announce some measures for the long-term unemployed, I should like her to increase her efforts in that respect. Long-term unemployment is a terrible scourge in our society. There are ways in which the Government and the various agencies could prevent unemployed people from becoming long-term unemployed. The Government need to respond in detail to some of the initiatives proposed by bodies such as the Council of Europe.

Many hon. Members mentioned the alarming problem of youth unemployment. I quote a figure given to me by Tyneside training and enterprise council. The council says that 26 per cent. of people aged between 18 and 24 have no previous work experience. That depressing figure shows how difficult it is for youngsters to get work experience in the middle of a recession when so many companies are sacking people rather than taking them on.

Another aspect of unemployment is the position of older workers who are trying to gain employment. It was depressing when I talked last week to a constituent, a lively and skilled man in his early 50s, who has written literally thousands of job applications. He has often not even had a response. In the days of the citizens charter it should perhaps at least be incumbent on employers to respond to people who send applications to them.

My hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras referred to women in the labour market. Women are also losing out badly in the recession. As my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) said, we must remember that the official statistics underestimate the number of women who are unemployed. The Government should take the position of women in the labour market firmly into consideration. It would help if the Secretary of State and employment Ministers talked to people at the Equal Opportunities Commission in Manchester which, I understand, they have not visited in recent months.

Mr. Tim Smith: Has the hon. Lady seen the results of the 1991 census which show a huge increase over 1981 in the number of adult women now in the work force?

Ms. Quin: We know that there has been a big increase in women's employment, especially in part-time employment and, unfortunately for many women, in low-paid employment about which it would be nice to hear some concern from Conservative Members.

Many of my hon. Friends have mentioned working conditions. Indeed, we could have a whole debate on that worrying subject. If Ministers look at all the various early-day motions on the Order Paper, they will see that many express hon. Members' concern about the poor working conditions in Britain today. It is depressing that the Government seem to want to compete in Europe on the basis of poor working conditions and poor wages. I do not believe that that is the way forward and I believe that the Opposition's message has been clear. We want unemployment to be halted, but we also want the best future for Britain in high-quality and high-skill jobs, and not in low-paid jobs in sweatshop conditions.

Mr. Tim Smith: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Ms. Quin: No, I will not give way again to the hon. Gentleman. I am short of time because many speakers wanted to take part in the debate. That has left my time rather short.

I refer the Government to the interesting debate in another place on unemployment. There was an impressive degree of unity on all sides of that Chamber about the measures needed to tackle unemployment. Contrary to what some Conservative Members have said tonight, the Opposition have proposed many measures that we feel would help tackle the current unemployment problem.

It was clear in the other place that a boost to the construction industry was the most hopeful way forward. That point was echoed in Labour's alternative autumn statement. We proposed a boost to the construction industry far in excess of the rather timid measures proposed in the Government's autumn statement.

A boost to the construction industry is considered to be a better way forward than other ways to revive the economy upon which the Government have tended to rely in the past—for example, consumer spending. It is hard to imagine that consumer spending will get us out of the recession. Too many people who bought on credit have had their fingers badly burnt. Given the poor state of our industrial base, a consumer revival would also tend to be spent on imported goods.

It is also unrealistic to expect the private housing market to pick up and provide a boost. In the midst of a recession and at a time of record housing repossessions, people are hardly in the business of purchasing new houses. A programme of public works, construction and infrastructure referred to by many Opposition Members is very important for the future. The Government should do a great deal more in that respect.

The Government should also join their European colleagues in providing a similar boost to construction and infrastructure in Europe as a whole. My hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead said that he thought we should have a renewed Marshall plan in Europe. When I consider the problems in eastern Europe and, in particular, the tremendous environmental degradation in those countries, I would like to see an environmental Marshall plan in which many countries join together in a trade-and-aid package to improve the environment of eastern Europe.

Companies in Britain would be in a good position to take advantage of such a plan. It is unrealistic to expect eastern European countries to have the hard currency to buy products, but such a trade-and-aid package would be useful in future and is something that we should consider very seriously.

The Secretary of State referred to discussions in the European Council of Ministers and admitted that, for the first time, there was serious discussion about unemployment at the Social Affairs Council just a few days ago. We believe that that is an incredible admission. The British presidency should have been pushing unemployment from the moment that we assumed the presidency in June.

The Minister of State, Department of Employment said in June that

"our first priority must be to ensure that there are measures to create jobs".—[*Official Report*, 9 June 1992; Vol. 209, c. 133.]

It is now December and precious little seems to have been achieved. We can only hope that the Edinburgh summit will produce something in that respect.

Mr. Riddick: Will the hon. Lady give way on that point?

Ms. Quin: I am afraid not, because time is short and the Minister needs time to reply.

My colleagues made a great deal of the great social cost of unemployment. They referred to the strain on families and the soul-destroying effect on communities. The relationship between unemployment and crime was also mentioned. As usual, Conservative Members pooh-poohed that and tried to claim that we were equating the unemployed with criminals.

It was refreshing that in a recent debate in the other place, the Government spokesman stated clearly that there is a strong link between unemployment and crime. I am far from suggesting that the unemployed are criminals, as I see too many unemployed people in my constituency who are victims of crime rather than perpetrators of crime. However, I believe that crime can and does flourish in conditions of unemployment, poverty and desperation.

Having listened to the contributions of Conservative Members, I am far from convinced that the Government appreciate the sheer scale and acute gravity of the situation that faces us. It is very difficult to see the Government's economic strategy or their strategy for tackling unemployment. Their previous economic theories have failed and have been replaced by uncertain and tentative measures of the kind outlined in the autumn statement. The slogan "There is no alternative" has been replaced by "There is no direction." However, there has been some stealing of Labour's clothes. Perhaps it is the Government's new strategy to steal Labour's clothes. It is the only strategy that I can find in the current circumstances.

The Minister may have seen the current issue of *Scottish Business Insider* in which various fund managers talk about current economic policy. Mr. Maclean, the managing director of Scottish Value Managements, made this point about the stealing of Labour's clothes: "They"—the Government—

"already seem to be raking over the Labour manifesto knowing . . . that there's going to be a tremendous social and fiscal concern as redundancies rise . . . I think what we may see is a Government that's incorporating a lot more of Labour's policy into its programme over the next few years."

The general public will believe the genuine article rather than the pale imitation.

Even more tragically, the Government could have invested in our country when they were running a huge surplus. If they had invested in infrastructure and so on in the years when we were running a budget surplus, we would be better able to withstand the recession and the economic and social effects of it. If we had taken the necessary measures in more prosperous times, when we were running a budget surplus and had the profits from the North sea, we would not be in the difficult position that we are at present. The Government did not take the necessary measures when they should have done, and for that they will not be forgiven.

The Conservative party's election promises on the economy, which were made only six months ago, have been shown to be an absolute sham, and the Government have been totally discredited. The Government should admit their failure, apologise to the electorate and preferably go to the country again before they do any more damage.

9.41 pm

The Minister of State, Department of Employment (Mr. Michael Forsyth): I agree with the hon. Member for Gateshead, East (Ms. Quin) about the difficulties of giving youngsters the opportunity for placements in a recession. I also agree with what she said about the discrimination that exists against older workers. My only disappointment is that while she was in the European Parliament she was unable to get the European institutions which still place age limits in their advertisements for recruitment to change their policy. Frankly, to see the European Commission and other institutions advertising for all sorts of people at all levels, saying that people over the age of 35 need not apply, is not only distressing for those of us over the age of 35 but completely unacceptable.

The hon. Lady's speech was interesting because it revealed a new type of snobbery on the Labour Benches. Opposition Members are part-time snobs who sneer at part-time jobs. Part-time jobs are every bit as good as any other jobs. The vast majority of people with part-time jobs say in survey after survey that they would prefer to have part-time jobs. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) is muttering. He complained about Conservative Members having more than one job, and falsely accused my hon. Friend the Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim). If the hon. Gentleman is worried about any hon. Member having two jobs, he should put his own backyard in order and deal with those hon. Members who are still Members of the European Parliament.

We have heard much from hon. Members on both sides about unemployment. Families all around the country—those in work and those out of work—are gravely worried about the present position. I very much share the strength of feeling and the sympathy that has gone out to those who are affected. I understand the pressures, uncertainties and unhappiness that unemployment can bring.

Unemployment is a problem which Governments across Europe face, and it arises from a recession which is world wide. The Government are clear about what we must do. We must help our companies to compete in world markets. That means getting inflation down, controlling public expenditure and creating a stable economic

[Mr. Michael Forsyth]

framework and opportunities for unemployed people to improve their skills and get back into work. We start from a firm base.

I know that Opposition Members cannot bear to hear good news about the economy. Let me give the hon. Members for Wallasey (Ms. Eagle) and for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Cunningham) a few facts. The United Kingdom has a higher proportion of its adult population in work than any other EC country except Denmark. Employment has grown in the United Kingdom by 1·8 million during the nine years that I have been a Member of Parliament. But I heard no references to that striking growth in job opportunities in any of the speeches made by Opposition Members.

In the decade which was dominated by the last Labour Government, self-employment stagnated. In the Conservative decade of the 1980s, it grew by more than 1 million. None of that happened by magic. It happened because the Conservative party knows that jobs are created by the initiative of business and the commitment of those who work in those businesses. Jobs can come only from incentives, competitiveness, efficiency and enterprise.

The Opposition pretended tonight that they could create jobs if only they were in government. They would tax; that would destroy jobs. They would increase interest rates; that would destroy jobs. They would regulate and interfere; that would destroy jobs. The only jobs that they would create would be jobs for the boys, which the Leader of the Opposition has discovered in his constituency, as my hon. Friend the Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) said.

Our way is to work with business and to work for individuals. We fought to remove the burden of outdated and unnecessary legislation and regulation which is so corrosive of opportunities for employment.

Mr. Henry McLeish (Fife, Central): What about the donation to Tory party funds from Thames Water?

Mr. Forsyth: When Thames Water was a nationalised concern it was inefficient. It is now so successful that the Opposition plan to tax it to pay for the promises that they make every day of the week.

We had to put in place effective and innovative ways of helping unemployed people back to work. We are not and we shall not be complacent. That is why my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment has announced half a million more opportunities to help those who are unemployed.

Mr. McLeish: Where is the cash?

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Gentleman asks where is the cash. Opposition Members are always interested in cash. They are interested in the input, but never in the output. We are concerned about what comes out at the end. I am talking about half a million new opportunities through job clubs, training and assistance to start up in business. That is direct help, yet it was not even acknowledged by the Opposition tonight, with the honourable exception of the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field).

The Opposition's record does not bear examination. How many places did they provide for young people? They provided just 9,000 training places for young people at a time when, because of the 1960s baby boom, more youngsters were entering the labour market than at any time in recent history. We provided 290,000 places. So let us have no more lectures from Opposition Members about what we need to do.

Of course, losing a job is a traumatic experience. But most people remain unemployed for a relatively short period—[HON. MEMBERS: "Not true".] I do not know how Opposition Members expect to build up the confidence of people who have lost their job by making remarks like that. The fact is that two thirds of those who become unemployed leave the register within six months. That is thanks to the excellent work carried out by the Employment Service throughout Britain. What a pity that no Opposition Members felt it appropriate to pay tribute to the excellent work that those people do.

Some people have real difficulty in finding work. They are entitled to expect extra support and help. Some have particular difficulties with literacy and numeracy. As I confirmed to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton), help with literacy and numeracy is part of the package introduced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

For the long term, the Government's education reforms offer hope for the next generation. That hope would have been extinguished if the Opposition, supporting the teaching unions, had had their way. We face increasing worldwide competition from not only our traditional competitors but the expanding economies of South America and the Pacific rim. Worldwide competition needs to be beaten by a working population with ever-increasing levels of skill and maximum adaptability.

My hon. Friend the Member for Chesham and Amersham (Mrs. Gillan) rightly highlighted the importance of small businesses as the engine of job creation, and the fact that interest rate reductions brought about by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer have been of the greatest importance to them. I agree with her criticism of the European Community which has concentrated on adding to the burdens on business as part of its social affairs programme instead of focusing on the needs of the unemployed and the means for creating jobs. During her presidency of the Council, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has changed that, and I am sorry that Opposition Members felt unable to give her credit for that singular achievement.

The hon. Member for Mossley Hill emphasised the importance of the maxim, "The devil makes work for idle hands." That is why it is so important that young people are either in work, training or education and that they are not able to claim benefit, with nothing to apply themselves to, as Opposition Members have argued.

My hon. Friend the Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman) told us of his experience as an employer and confirmed that wages councils destroy jobs. He also highlighted the importance of the pharmaceutical industry. My hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, North (Mr. Heald) drew attention to the fact that there are fewer employment opportunities for young people and women in EC countries that have enforced policies favoured by the Labour party.

The hon. Member for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Hutton) spoke of his concern for employment and the importance of work for the shipyards. I could not help thinking how relieved he must have been that a Labour

Government did not take office as the fourth Trident, on which so many of his constituents depend, would have been cancelled.

Mr. Hutton: Does the Minister not agree that it was the opinion of my constituents that their best prospect for secure employment would be the return of a Labour Government in April, because they elected a Labour Member of Parliament?

Mr. Forsyth: I recall the hon. Gentleman bouncing into the headlines during the election campaign, by contradicting the shadow Foreign Secretary and saying that it was rubbish that Labour would cancel Trident, so I am not convinced by his protestations.

The hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Dr. Jones) called for tax increases to fund increased public expenditure, but last month the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) said:

"We are not proposing to raise income tax or national insurance at this stage. Further increases at this time would be a mistake."

The hon. Lady should sort out her position with that of the Labour Front Bench. I agree with the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East in his assessment of how disastrous tax increases would be, but I sympathise with the hon. Lady who cannot see where the money to pay for the hon. Gentleman's promises will come from. Perhaps she shares the views of the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore), who in *The Guardian* accused the shadow Chancellor of not understanding the elementary laws of arithmetic. I shall leave the hon. Lady to sort that matter out.

Dr. Lynne Jones: It is right that Labour should continue its policy of advocating an increase in taxation for those who received the highest tax benefits as a result of past Government policies. However, I understand that that issue is to be considered by the Commission for Social Justice and then we shall return with our policies on the issue.

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Lady's problem is that she supports one tax policy while the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East supports another, but she should not be too concerned about that, as it has been a traditional position in the Labour party for four successive general election losses.

The hon. Member for Birkenhead welcomed the Labour Front-Bench's commitment to full employment but said, rather honestly, that that was the easy part and that the party had to work out the policies to deliver that or face a fifth election defeat. I fear that he may be disappointed. He spoke movingly of the desperate problems in his constituency and of the situation at Cammell Laird, the details of which I shall pass on to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence.

Only once in one lifetime of 70 years have a Labour Government managed to leave office without having doubled unemployment. It is rather like Haley's comet —one gets to see it only once in a lifetime. Since 1979, Opposition Members have opposed every training programme we have introduced and criticised every measure that we have taken to help the unemployed get back to work. They opposed employment training, youth training, employment action and now they appear to be opposed to training for work.

Every new training initiative since 1979 has been greeted by a chorus of condemnation at trade union conferences, and when the organ grinder cranks out the familiar tune, the monkey leaps into action. The trade union that has invariably taken the lead has been the Transport and General Workers Union, the biggest union in the country and the union which sponsors the hon. Member for Gateshead, East.

What policies do Opposition Members claim to have to reduce unemployment? When Opposition spokesmen appear on television, they talk airily about an industrial strategy. What do they mean? They are afraid to tell us, but we know what they mean. They mean a return to the massive, wasteful subsidies of the 1970s, subsidies paid at the behest of trade union leaders to firms, preferably in the public sector, to persuade them to produce goods and services that nobody wants to buy.

When Opposition Members talk of industrial strategy, they mean interference in the plans of private sector companies, in the spirit that the man in Whitehall always knows best.

That is not all, for it would mean a training levy on all employers, a tax on jobs and a national minimum wage which even the Fabian Society estimates would cost 800,000 jobs—and would cut 2 million jobs if the trade unions ensured that existing pay differentials were preserved.

Of course, Opposition Members are committed to accept each and every proposal for a new job-destroying regulation that comes out of Brussels—the social charter, the social action programme and now the social chapter of the Maastricht treaty. The Opposition would embrace them all, no matter what the price in lost jobs and inward investment. If it advances socialism, no price is too high for them.

There are 17 million unemployed people in the European Community. The Opposition's response is to raise the cost of creating new jobs right across the Community, to impose new burdens on employers and to smother enterprise in a mass of new regulations. The truth is that the Opposition have nothing to offer Britain. That is why they have lost four general elections in a row.

The policies that the Opposition opposed in the past—the sale of council houses and the privatisation of loss-making state enterprises—have all proved successful. They respond not by admitting their mistakes but by threatening to tax the profits of the new successful enterprises and thus threaten their growth and employment.

Opposition Members attack the Government for controlling the spending of receipts from council house sales, receipts that would not even be there if they had had their way.

Their former leader, the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock), let the cat out of the bag during an interview on BBC2 last Saturday. He admitted that the Labour party's promise in the 1987 general election to create 1 million new jobs in two years by a massive programme of public expenditure was "appealing but not believable."

What the right hon. Gentleman did not seem to realise, in common with Opposition Members tonight, was that after the general election in 1987, unemployment fell by more than 1 million in less than two years. It did so without any of Labour's crushingly expensive new programmes. We did it by ensuring that the economic

[Mr. Forsyth]

conditions were right for the creation of new jobs, by keeping taxes and public expenditure down, by deregulation and by reducing burdens on business.

What we have heard from the Opposition Benches in this debate has been simply a relentless and systematic attempt to paint the most pessimistic picture of the current employment situation. It is the privilege of Opposition Members to whinge and moan, but I say in all seriousness that they have done no service to the unemployed of this country by taking such a narrow, partisan approach in the debate.

It is time that the Opposition recognised that the only way to reduce unemployment is through the creation of new jobs, which depend on British companies making and selling the goods and services that people want to buy. New jobs depend on companies overseas investing in this country.

Let Labour Members leave the House with their former leader's judgment ringing in their ears—"appealing but not believable".

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 276, Noes 309.

Division No. 87] **[10 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyce, Jimmy
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dafis, Cynog
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Rayneford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin

Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Tipping, Paddy
Trimble, David
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Warsing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Jack Thompson and
Mr. Jon Owen Jones.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Allison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcl)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shr)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mariand, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'ter V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George

Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*	Willetts, David
Waller, Gary	Wilshire, David
Ward, John	Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*	Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Waterson, Nigel	Wolfson, Mark
Watts, John	Wood, Timothy
Wells, Bowen	Yeo, Tim
Wheeler, Sir John	Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Whitney, Ray	
Whittingdale, John	**Tellers for the Noes:**
Widdecombe, Ann	Mr. Tim Boswell and
Wiggin, Jerry	Mr. Sydney Chapman.
Wilkinson, John	

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments) and agreed to.*

MADAM SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House recognises the need for the United Kingdom economy to remain competitive at a time of world recession; rejects the job destroying policies of Her Majesty's Opposition including the national minimum wage; notes that the United Kingdom has the second highest proportion of its population in employment of any country in the European Community; congratulates the Government on the new opportunities afforded by the Autumn Statement; and welcomes the Government's new package of 1·5 million employment and training opportunities providing more help than ever before to help unemployed people get back into work.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.),

ESTATE AGENTS

That the Estate Agents (Specified Offences) (No. 2) (Amendment) Order 1992 (S.I., 1992, No. 2833), dated 11th November 1992, a copy of which was laid before this House on 18th November, be approved.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

Question agreed to.

Mink Keeping

10.15 pm

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Nicholas Soames): I beg to move,

That the Mink Keeping Order 1992, a copy of which was laid before this House on 25th November, be approved.

The order is made under the Destructive Imported Animals Act 1932. It is concerned with ensuring that mink are kept securely under arrangements designed to prevent escapes. The Act itself provides for the keeping of non-indigenous species of mammals to be either prohibited or controlled by licence on the basis of their destructive habits. It does not provide for the keeping of mink to be prohibited for any other reason.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): What about ferrets?

Mr. Soames: The hon. Gentleman is wrong. This order is not concerned with ferrets, a much-loved national institution, particularly on the Labour side of the House.

The order replaces existing controls for Great Britain which expire on 31 December. If the order were not to be approved, the result would be, not a prohibition on mink keeping, but the absence of any controls on the keeping of mink, including the crucial security requirements.

I hope that it is clear that the welfare of mink is not a subject relevant to the mink keeping order and therefore not relevant to this debate tonight. However, I understand and appreciate that the welfare of fur animals is a subject about which many hon. Members quite rightly have concerns and on which they receive a considerable amount of correspondence, most of which, regrettably, ends up on my desk. I should therefore make the Government's position on welfare quite clear.

In April 1989 the Farm Animal Welfare Council, to whose advice the Government attaches the first importance, published a statement on the welfare of mink and fox, the two species farmed for their fur in this country. While expressing its disapproval of the current methods of fur farming, the council did not recommend that they should be stopped. In August this year the council confirmed that it has not changed its position on this difficult matter. At about this time, the Council of Europe——

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): The Minister just mentioned the Farm Animal Welfare Council. In its report it said that the systems employed did not satisfy some of the most basic criteria for protecting the welfare of farm animals, so what conclusion may be drawn from that? Surely that no mink should be kept for farming purpoees.

Mr. Soames: The hon. Member is correct in believing that the council concluded that it did not approve of this sort of farming, but it did not feel that there was sufficient evidence to ask for it to be banned. If I may, I shall come to that matter in more detail later.

At about this time, the Council of Europe was also examining the question of fur farming. In 1990, it adopted a welfare recommendation on fur-bearing animals under the convention for the protection of animals kept for farming purposes.

That recommendation lays down general requirements for the welfare of all fur species. The requirements cover

such things as the need for sufficient numbers of stockmen, inspections and general provisions for enclosures in which the animals are kept and management practices. Those requirements are supplemented by appendices laying down more specific details for each type of fur animal.

The European Commission said that it will use that recommendation as the basis for a welfare directive that will set standards for the keeping of fur-bearing animals throughout the Community. However, I am the first to acknowledge that that recommendation from the Council of Europe will not alter significantly the husbandry practices currently used. The Council of Europe, as with the Farm Animal Welfare Council before it—to follow the point made by the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks)—found a lack of scientific evidence on which to base requirements for change.

That does not mean that sensible standards cannot be set that improve on the Council of Europe recommendation. It is the Government's clear intention to press for the highest-possible welfare standards for fur farming to be adopted on a Community-wide basis when the Commission's proposals are negotiated in Brussels.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Does not the Minister agree that, while waiting for the EEC to produce a directive, the Government should take action to ensure that mink farms are maintained at a decent standard? My information is that the standards on some farms are appalling.

Mr. Soames: The hon. Gentleman is right. We should and do maintain high standards. The state veterinary service and ADAS inspect fur farms every year to ensure not only that the husbandry is correct but that the animal welfare standards are right. I know that the hon. Gentleman is a positive supporter of Europe, and will agree that in such instances it is better to achieve a pan-European initiative rather than forge ahead alone.

Mr. Andrew Bowden (Brighton, Kemptown): Does my hon. Friend the Minister agree that we are dealing with sentient animals and that it is absolutely obscene to keep them in barren, grotty, small cages? Will he explain why he is not prepared to recommend that mink keeping and mink factory farming should be phased out as quickly as possible?

Mr. Soames: My hon. Friend has a fine record on animal welfare issues, but he ought to know that we are not debating that matter tonight. The debate centres instead on the security required for the keeping of mink. Many people hold views similar to those of my hon. Friend, and we will listen very carefully to them.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): The Minister will confirm that the standards in the Council of Europe report, which I hope will be emulated by the Community at an early date, could serve as the minimum. Nothing in the report prevents the Government from improving on those standards, which were aimed at countries whose standards are perhaps even worse than those found in this country.

Will the Minister, before he sits down, address the question of the adequacy or otherwise of the security requirements? Over the years, a substantial number of mink have escaped, but nobody appears to have been brought to book.

Mr. Soames: I am obliged to the hon. Gentleman. He has done an enormous amount of animal welfare work in the Council of Europe, for which we are very grateful. I shall deal with the security issue at some length, if I am allowed to make progress with my speech.

The hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) is right to say that the standards implied by the Council of Europe are minimum standards and there is nothing to stop the Government building on them. In fact, other Community countries are considering doing precisely that. We shall watch with care what transpires.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): The Minister will be aware of the Swalesmoor farm in my constituency and of the problems which it created for me as a constituency Member of Parliament—and which I was not allowed to mention in the recent court case. Apart from the smells, and so on, a major problem was that the farm was not secure and the animals escaped. They wiped out indigenous animals in whole areas. I appealed to the Minister and to the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, and went through the whole system, but it seemed that no one had any responsibility for ensuring that that hell hole of a farm adhered to the odd regulation that did exist. I know that the Minister has seen the photographs and needs no convincing of what a mess that place was. I know that we will get a fairer hearing in this Chamber than we did in the recent court case.

Mr. Soames: The hon. Lady has considerable experience in this matter because of her constituency interest, but I have to say that the allegations about mink escapes in this country are very much overdone and I have to take issue with the hon. Lady on that point.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): This is perhaps an appropriate point at which to ask the Minister why the Isle of Arran, in my constituency, is excluded from the general prohibition on mink keeping on the islands, in precisely the same way as some 20 years ago. Because a mink farm was established on Arran and the mink escaped, there is a problem already with mink there. It seems to me extremely odd logic to say that, because there are wild mink which people are trying desperately to get rid of, the problem should at some future date be compounded by allowing another mink farm on Arran, whereas it would be impossible on every other Scottish island.

Mr. Soames: It is certainly not an act of personal spite on my part towards the hon. Gentleman, for whom I have a high regard, but I intend to come to the Scottish question a little later. As it is a very important matter, we feel that we should deal with it separately.

Farmed fur animals are protected in the same way as other farmed livestock by the general provisions of the Agriculture (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1968. This makes it an offence to cause unnecessary pain or unnecessary distress to any livestock on agricultural land. In addition, the Protection of Animals Act 1911 makes it an offence to cause unnecessary suffering to any captive or domestic animal. It also requires the killing of fur animals to be undertaken with great care and all possible humaneness.

Officers of the state veterinary service monitor fur farms, as they do all other livestock farms, to check on compliance with legislation. When visiting fur farms, they

[Mr. Soames]

use the Council of Europe recommendations as a guide for their inspections. The Mink (Keeping) Order 1987 prohibits absolutely the keeping of mink on all offshore islands of the United Kingdom which have neither mink farms nor a wild population, and in the Scottish highlands where the same situation exists. The keeping of mink elsewhere is permitted only under licence.

The new order continues the policy which has been adopted by successive Governments since 1962. It seeks to, and does, balance the interests of a small sector of farming activity with the need to protect other farmers and wildlife from the very substantial potential damage which escaped mink could cause.

This order renews the existing powers to control mink for a further five years. Mink will continue to be subject to the provisions of the Mink Keeping Regulations 1975, as amended. These lay down stringent requirements covering such matters as the cages or containers in which mink must be kept, the buildings or enclosures containing the cages and, very important, the perimeter fence surrounding the housed mink.

I now come to the point raised by the hon. Member for Wentworth about the detail of security arrangements. It may be helpful in discussing this order if I draw hon. Members' attention to just how detailed these requirements are. Mink must be kept in cages or other containers constructed to prevent escape within an enclosure or building which also satisfies the legislation. Enclosures must be bounded by a guard fence made of wire netting or welded mesh of a specified gauge and mesh size. It must be at least 1·2 metres high above ground level. The base of the fence must be buried in the ground to a depth of at least 300 mm and turned outwards at the bottom at right angles for at least 150 mm, or be embedded in a trench of the same depth at the bottom of which is a foundation at least 150 mm deep of either concrete or consolidated hardcore of brick or concrete rubble or similar solid and durable material.

Mr. Tony Banks: This is all very interesting, and I am sure that if every farm complied with the regulations there would be no escapes. I have a catalogue of photographs of Swalesmoor—I have shown them to the Minister—which make it clear that all the regulations that the Minister has talked about are being blatantly ignored, yet Swalesmoor is given a licence by his Department. It is all very well for him to give us assurances; in reality, they simply do not apply to places such as Swalesmoor. What is he going to do about it?

Mr. Soames: The hon. Gentleman may say that it is all very well, but I am dealing with the order, as the House expects me to. If the hon. Gentleman wishes to make his own speech—and I have no doubt that he will be called—we shall deal with the points that he raises.

As I have already said, it is a grossly exaggerated assumption that mink farms are constantly experiencing escapes. That is simply not true. The hon. Gentleman was good enough to show me the photographs to which he refers, and he knows very well that I was not happy with what I saw. If he makes his own speech, I shall deal with his points later.

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): The Minister said that the fence should be buried and turned outwards. Surely it should be turned inwards, that being the side from which the mink would normally be coming. A fence should be turned outwards to keep rabbits out of a plantation, so surely it should be turned inwards to keep mink in.

Mr. Soames: The British mink is a crafty little varmint. We put up fences to fox him. Anyway, that is what it says in the brief, and I am not prepared to gainsay the admirable advice given by excellent officials in the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

At the top of the fence there must be flat sheet metal, at least 300 mm deep, attached to the inside of the wire netting and to any fence placed inside the enclosure, to form a continuous baffle leaving no gap between the wire and the sheet metal. These stringent requirements are designed to ensure that, even if mink manage to escape from their cages or containers and evade the cage traps which must by law be set in each building or enclosure where mink are kept—and the House should know that mink are extremely easy to catch—they will be unable to escape into the countryside through, under or over the guard fence.

Thirty years ago, when licensing was introduced to this country, there were about 700 mink farms. In 1987 there were only about 62, with 100,000 mink. Now there are only 27 establishments, with approximately 47,000 mink. Standards of security are high. Mink farmers are obliged under the terms of their licences to report escapes to the Ministry's regional service centres.

Mr. John Gorst (Hendon, North): May I ask my hon. Friend, in all seriousness, whether his statistics give us any idea how many mink are not under lock and key?

Mr. Soames: Let me reply, in all seriousness, that the country already has a substantial feral mink population. Mink are a pest, and it is therefore extremely important for farms to maintain a high standard of security. The technical details that I have read out are not a matter for levity, as the Opposition consider them, but a serious matter which should command the assent and support of the whole House.

Standards are high. As I have said, the terms of their licence oblige mink farmers to report escapes. In the five years since the latest review, only one report of an escape has been received from a mink farmer. *[Laughter.]* It is all very well for the House to mock, but this is a serious matter. The House should listen with care and attention to the origin and nature of that mink break-out. The escape was occasioned by the storms of 1989, not by lax security. Despite all the allegations, there has been no confirmed evidence presented to my Department of unreported escapes from specific farms. Nevertheless, there is a serious potential for long-term and short-term damage from escaping mink. The continuation of licensing, with an inspection at least annually, ensures that mink farms give priority to physical security. That is the point to which the hon. Member for Newham, North-West rightly attaches such importance.

There is one small change from the previous order which affects Scotland and has been approved by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland. The change is to include Harris, Lewis and associated small islands as an area of the country where there is a total ban on the keeping of mink.

The hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) asked why Arran was excluded. There is a natural feral population of mink on Arran—as one would expect from the hon. Gentleman's constituency—so there is no point in applying the regulations. As we do not believe in applying regulations except where they are necessary, the hon. Gentleman will understand the sense of the order.

Mr. Eric Clarke (Midlothian): I am a keen angler and have been fishing in some remote parts of Scotland—the southern uplands, around my own area and the highlands. As I see it, there are no natural mink; they have been imported and they are ecological disasters. I am serious; I am not laughing because I see ducklings and a host of other animals and birds slaughtered by the score. The mink are vicious, but nobody seems to take responsibility for them unless they interfere with game birds. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh".] This is when Conservative hon. Members start getting interested. The best way to cure the problem is to stop them being kept under present conditions.

Mr. Soames: The hon. Gentleman makes a serious point, and I share his interest in angling. It is true that the feral population of mink in this country can and does cause considerable damage. There are proper methods for trapping them, but I do not think that I can deal with the hon. Gentleman's point during the debate on the order. However, I should be happy to discuss it with him on another occasion. I agree that mink are a serious problem for anglers.

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): Does my hon. Friend agree that the most effective and humane way of killing mink in the wild is to hunt them with hounds such as the West Yorkshire mink hound? If many Opposition Members had their way, such hunting would be banned.

Mr. Soames: It would be a bad day if it were banned, but, although I am a keen supporter of mink hounds, I do not think that even the greatest proponent of mink hunting would claim that they are a very effective method of controlling mink. They nevertheless fulfil an important role in the countryside and their right to do so will be defended to the end by the Government.

In 1970——

Mr. Wilson *rose*——

Mr. Soames: I must get on. Would the hon. Gentleman please—oh, very well then.

Mr. Wilson: It is not unreasonable to ask the Minister to deal with the issues because I believe that he is making a factual error. The circumstances of Harris, Lewis and Arran are the same. On Harris and Lewis irresponsible people opened mink farms 20 or 30 years ago and the rest of the community has been left with the problem. On Arran there was a mink farm 20 years ago. I have just phoned Arran and was told that its one benefit was that it got rid of the rats—which no doubt explains my presence! The benefit for the community of saying that there would never be another mink farm there would be undoubted. There may also be an indigenous population. However, surely that is splitting hairs. The problem in Arran is identified as the fact that there was a mink farm there which left the legacy of wild mink.

Mr. Soames: The hon. Gentleman, who is an expert on surface rodents, seems to see the issue in black and white and without a fine regard for the truth. In Harris and Lewis, there is the Harris and Lewis mink control group. It is attempting to raise funds to carry out a programme of trapping. The initial proposal was for a three-year programme costing more than £65,000. However, the group is having difficulty raising funds and is now planning a reduced programme.

We have taken this step for Harris and Lewis because Scottish Natural Heritage has asked us to do so. We are anxious to help our friends in Scottish Natural Heritage and in the Scottish Office on any occasions when we can. If the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North wishes us to consider matters on Arran, we shall be happy to do so. I look forward to having a discussion with him to that end.

In 1970, there were about 70 mink farms in Scotland alone. By that time, mink farming in Harris and Lewis had ceased for some years. In 1987, when the previous review was carried out, eight farms operated in Scotland. Now only two hold licences. Given the passage of time and the greatly reduced number of licences, it seems right now to prohibit mink keeping in Harris and Lewis. As I have said to the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North, during consultation the proposal was put to us by Scottish Natural Heritage in support of efforts being made locally. That course of action has also been warmly endorsed and recommended by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds.

I apologise for detaining the House for so long. I can confirm that the issue of licences, at the discretion of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, will be exercised with the greatest care. Requests for licences from new establishments will be considered in principle before applicants incur expense in preparing for mink farming. If it is appropriate, additional controls over and above those specifically laid down in mink keeping legislation will be contained in any licence issued. A licence will be refused if there is real doubt that it is possible to reduce the risk at a particular site to acceptable levels.

The Act provides for the revocation of licences and we expect licensees to take their obligations extremely seriously. Annual inspections will ensure that they do so. I ask the House to approve the order.

10.42 pm

Mr. Elliot Morley (Glanford and Scunthorpe): The Minister has mentioned that the debate is on the order and not on the issue of welfare or on the prohibition of keeping mink. I protest that, unlike the consultation in 1987, this consultation did not give the option of the banning of mink. The consultation offered was simply the choice of continuing with the Mink Keeping Order or ending it. Faced with such a choice, most organisations would naturally support the maintenance of the order. What we should be discussing is the prohibition of mink farming and of Arctic fox fur farming.

The order has been inadequate over the years and has been poorly applied. The intention of the order, as the Minister said, was to prevent escapes of animals covered by the Destructive Imported Animals Act 1932. In that sense, the order has been a failure. So many mink have escaped over the years that I am surprised that there is not

[Mr. Elliot Morley]

a line of ferret-faced predators listening to the debate behind the Minister—[HON. MEMBERS: "There is."] I will not be drawn on that.

It is important that the order is considered not only in terms of how it applies now, but in terms of how it will affect conservation issues and welfare issues. Can the Minister explain why the Isle of Arran, which has been mentioned, and the Isle of Wight have not been covered by the prohibition? There is no established feral mink population on the Isle of Wight. There is one mink farm, although I am not sure whether that still operates. The mink farm on the Isle of Wight was established without permission and permission was granted retrospectively. The farm is very near the Newtown site of special scientific interest which has a range of important ground-nesting birds.

The Minister made it clear that he has accepted the advice of Scottish Natural Heritage in respect of the isles of Harris and Lewis. However, he is ignoring the advice of English Nature which recommended to the Government that there should be no keeping of mink on the Isle of Wight. I hope that the Minister will deal with that point.

In respect of the Isle of Arran, I must confirm what my hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) said. There is no difference between the isles of Harris and Lewis, where there are feral mink populations and eradication programmes, and the Isle of Arran. It would be a great help if the Minister made it clear that no mink farms would be established on the Isle of Arran in future. Eradication programmes could remove the problem of mink in that area in future.

Mr. Bowden: The hon. Gentleman referred to not establishing new mink farms in a particular area. Does he agree that it is absolutely essential that there are no new mink farms anywhere? While my hon. Friend the Minister told us about the great reduction in numbers, something which we all welcome, the sooner all mink farms have gone, the better.

Mr. Morley: I agree with the hon. Gentleman. It is Labour policy that mink farming should be ended at the earliest opportunity.

When we talk about the welfare implications of mink, I wonder why the Minister ignores the findings of the Farm Animal Welfare Council in relation to mink keeping. He quoted from the council's findings, but the House may be interested to hear what the council had to say about the keeping of mink and fox:

"Mink and fox have been bred in captivity for only about 50 to 60 generations and the Council is particularly concerned about the keeping of what are essentially wild animals in small barren cages. The Council believes that the systems employed in the farming of mink and fox do not satisfy some of the most basic criteria which it has identified for protecting the welfare of farm animals. The current cages used for fur farming do not appear to provide appropriate comfort or shelter, and do not allow the animals freedom to display most normal standards of behaviour."

That is a powerful indictment of fur farming from the Government's own advisory body.

With regard to the time scale for domestication, mink have been kept for about 60 years in terms of intensive farming. Dogs have been kept for 12,000 years and chickens for 4,000 years. However, even after 4,000 years, chickens have not adapted to intensive, battery conditions. Solitary animals such as mink, which are clearly much wilder than chickens, are expected to be reared in such conditions.

We recognise the need for registration and the need for the order. However, the argument is that, even as they stand, the regulations have not been effective. I understand that not one mink farmer has been prosecuted under the regulations. It comes as no surprise to the House to learn that there has been only one report of escaped mink since 1987, as it is not in the interests of mink farmers to admit that mink have been escaping. There is an analogy in that respect with trout farms. The Minister will be aware of current court proceedings instigated by anglers over the difficulty in getting trout farms to admit that rainbow trout have escaped into rivers. It is hardly surprising that mink farmers do not admit that there have been escapes.

There are two basic arguments against the keeping of mink and Arctic fox and they are on conservation and welfare grounds. On conservation grounds, we have already established that the effect of escaped mink on wild mammals and bird species has been disastrous. In certain parts of the country, water voles have been completely wiped out by feral mink.

Mink farms also result in diseases such as aleution disease and distemper which can be transmitted to other animals, notably otters. When mink escape and settle into a suitable habitat, they can establish themselves and live in reasonable harmony with the existing ecology. However, if escapes continue to occur, the escaped mink displace the feral population, with potentially disastrous consequences, and attack domestic stock.

It is clear that, as long as mink farms are allowed to continue in this country, escapes will continue. I have seen the photographs of Swalesmoor farm near Halifax, which have been mentioned. Those photographs clearly show mink running loose within the farm. A number of people who live adjacent to the farm confirmed on numerous occasions that mink had been running loose in the area and attacking farm stock. The photographs show that the fur farm in question is in a poor state and undoubtedly is a miserable place in which to rear any animal of this type. A shed with more than 4,000 mink in it had not been inspected by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food for three to four years, whch demonstrates that the Mink Keeping Order in its present form is not necessarily enforced effectively.

That brings me to the welfare considerations of keeping mink. Wild mink are solitary animals. In the wild they normally have a territory which is two and a half miles long. In farm factory conditions they are forced to live in unnatural intensive conditions in cages which are 24 in long, 15 in wide and 12 in high. Respected animal behaviourists such as Dr. Desmond Morris have said that:

"Because of the intensive keeping of animals like mink, the result of this degree of confinement is that animals exhibit all the typical reactions of wild creatures to a restrictive and deprived environment. They perform stereotyped patterns of movement and various forms of self-mutilation. These are clear signs that the captive animals are under stress."

That is from a report entitled "Mink Factories", which was published jointly by Lynx and Compassion in World Farming. I could also refer to the Farm Animal Welfare Council and its findings on the keeping of animals.

I argue that the keeping of mink in their present form is in breach of articles 3 and 4 of the European convention on the protection of animals kept for farming purposes. There are five main principles in terms of keeping animals:

first, freedom from thirst, hunger and malnutrition; secondly, appropriate comfort and shelter; thirdly, the prevention or rapid diagnosis and treatment of injury, disease or infection; fourthly, freedom from fear; and, fifthly, freedom to display most normal patterns of behaviour. I argue that the second, third and fourth criteria are not met in the keeping of mink.

As articles 3 and 4 of the European convention deal with the natural behaviour of animals and seek to ensure that they are given the opportunity to display natural behaviour, it is clear that mink farming breaches that convention. Given that overwhelming evidence, how can the Minister justify the continuation of fur farming in the United Kingdom? The Minister referred to the Council of Europe report. It is clear that if that report evolves into a directive, it is unlikely that the mink farms in this country will be able to meet such a directive.

I draw the Minister's attention to early-day motion 143 which calls for an end to the keeping of mink. That motion has been signed by 226 hon. Members, including many of the Minister's hon. Friends who are sitting behind him. Fur farming is reviled by the public, as the mail bags of many hon. Members show only too clearly.

I also draw the attention of the Minister to a recent survey which found that 78 per cent. of the public opposed fur farming. Fur is clearly out of fashion, because people rightly reject the infliction of such stress and misery on animals for the sake of the vanity of a few people. That view is reflected in both the decline in the number of farms —to which the Minister referred—and the decline in the price of pelts.

Given the decline in the number of mink farms in Britain, is it not time to act? Is it not time that the Minister took the opportunity not merely to cut out the consultation on the option of banning mink farms but to introduce an order that bans them?

While mink farms exist, they must be properly regulated. The Opposition have tabled an amendment calling for the phasing out of mink farms at the earliest opportunity. I appreciate that our procedures did not allow such an amendment to be selected for debate. We argue that the order does not go far enough. Unless we receive assurances from the Minister tonight, first, that there will be a moratorium on all new fur farms, in the sense that the Minister will refuse to issue new licences, and, secondly, that existing fur farms will be phased out as soon as possible, we shall have no option but to vote against the order, not because we do not want fur farms to be regulated but because we want an order that will bring about the end of the vile and inhumane exploitation of animals for no real or useful purpose.

10.55 pm

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): As the House will have noted, the order applies only to Great Britain. However, we have feral mink in Northern Ireland and, like other hon. Members, I have an interest in the matter.

I listened with care and attention to what was said by both Front-Bench spokesmen. The debate deals with not only the welfare of farmed mink but the problems associated with escaped feral mink. The Minister talked about a natural feral population. By definition, feral populations cannot be natural. They are the descendants of escaped mink. As the Minister said, they pose a threat of substantial damage.

It is clear from the experience of those who live in the countryside that escaped mink have caused considerable damage in all parts of the United Kingdom and even further afield. We should not allow that to continue because the feral mink do not simply die out; they breed and live in the wild. Their numbers are constantly increasing. In some areas they have increased to the point at which the population is stable. The population can be stable only at the expense of the local indigenous species, which we in Britain want to maintain.

No one has mentioned so far that the order is descended from the Destructive Imported Animals Act 1932. As the Minister will be aware, that Act covered only musk rats. All the other animals covered by subsequent orders were added at a later stage. The list of animals covered by orders is long. The 1932 Act was followed by the Northern Ireland legislation in 1933. The list is long and all the species included are species that none of us would love.

The list includes the grey squirrel, which was included by an order in 1937. Non-indigenous rabbits were included in 1954. The Coypus (Prohibition of Keeping) Order was introduced in 1987. I am sure that the Minister will have looked at that order in preparing for the debate and will have noted that it placed an absolute prohibition on the keeping of those animals in Great Britain. That species has vanished from the countryside—or at least I hope that it has disappeared because it caused considerable damage in the east of England. The Mink (Keeping) Order 1987 has lasted for the past five years.

The 1932 Act referred to non-indigenous animals. But I suggest that we should not close our minds to the wider difficulties of bringing other non-indigenous creatures within the scope of the legislation. The intention of the original Act was to license the keeping and to prohibit the importation of the animals. The Act also laid down another duty, which at least shows that our predecessors had some concern about the animals—a duty to destroy escapees—or it took refuge in the old parliamentary device of saying "may" take the necessary steps to destroy them. Those steps could be taken directly by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, or by the council in whose areas the escapees existed but, as far as I can tell, that has never been done.

From what the Minister and other hon. Members have said, it is plain that there are many escapees, which have bred, and that there is a stable population of these vicious and destructive animals.

One of the Minister's comments should not be quickly forgotten. He said that mink were easy to catch and I have also been told that by one of my relatives who lives in Canada, and has caught them with a trap line. They are obviously easy to catch there too. If that is so, why have no consistent and assiduous efforts been made to wipe out what is, by all accounts, a destructive animal? It should not be all that difficult—all that it would take is time, effort and a bit of money. It would pay rich dividends and, for the good of all our indigenous species, it is long overdue.

Many other species have been introduced into this country and released, and are having an unfortunate effect on indigenous species, for example, catfish, rainbow trout and farmed salmon. As the Minister will recall, fish were dealt with fairly comprehensively throughout the United Kingdom by changes in the law some years ago. Those changes were wise, very welcome and have done some good.

[Mr. William Ross]

I am sure that, like myself, the Minister reads country magazines that deal with wildfowling and shooting. If he has not noticed it with his own eyes I am sure that his officials will have drawn to his attention the problem caused by various types of geese, which are hybridising and will cause the most enormous damage and difficulties. That problem should be dealt with.

Furthermore, I believe that there are populations of escaped kangaroos and wallabies in England. Those are not the sort of animals that one would normally think of as traditional in the English countryside.

A large number of different species of deer have been running loose in this country for a long time—some are useful and others are not.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. The hon. Gentleman is getting rather wide of the subject. Will he return to mink, please?

Mr. Ross: I have just come to the end of my list, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I am grateful that you allowed me to go so far. If you had allowed me a moment more, I would have said that some unwelcome plants have also been introduced, but I shall leave those.

Some animals are more acceptable than others and we can live with some of them. I suppose that we can live with almost any strange creatures, provided that they are present only in small numbers, but that is not true of mink or other destructive animals, which should be destroyed. We can do that only by killing each and every one. That might not sit happily with some folk, but it is a fact of life that if we do not destroy them, they will do further immense damage to our indigenous species and will interbreed with closely related creatures—God knows where it will end.

All such animals are a factor in changing the ecology of our countryside. I hope that the Minister will consider my comments and will start down the road of eliminating them.

I intervened in the Minister's speech because I thought that, in the middle of the hubbub, he had missed something. He was reading out the technical specifications for burying wire underground to keep in mink and I believe that he said that the wire should be bent outwards. If that is the specification, and if it is not a misprint in his brief, then the specification is wrong. If it is bent outwards, the mink will simply dig out under it, whereas if it is bent inwards, the mink will not know, if it digs out, how to get back. I think I see the Minister nodding in assent, so I assume that there was a mistake in his brief. If there was not a mistake, I hope he will change the regulations.

11.5 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I know that the Minister has some sympathy for the arguments that are being advanced about the welfare of mink, but we had expected him to be rather more robust with his officials in terms of the assurances that he blandly read out from his brief—assurances that do not seem to match the reality of the situation.

The Minister said in reply to me that there had been one case of an escaped mink. As my hon. Friend the Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) asked in an excellent speech, in which he covered most of the salient points, how can one expect mink farmers to report that some of their mink have escaped? It is like a speeding motorist going to the police and turning himself in. It might be an act of Christian charity and show respect for the law, but it would also be stupid in view of the penalties that would follow. So it is not satisfactory for the Minister to say that, because there has been only one reported case, that must mean that no other mink have escaped.

There was a litany of eye-witness evidence surrounding the case that Lynx presented in court regarding Swalesmoor. Many people in the vicinity of Swalesmoor testified to the number of times that they had had to send for the farmer from Swalesmoor to recapture mink that had escaped from his farm. It is true that they are easy to catch. That is because they have been half domesticated and their spirit is broken by the appalling conditions they must endure at Swalesmoor and, I am sure, at other fur farms.

It is nonsense for the Minister to say that mink have not escaped from Swalesmoor and elsewhere. My hon. Friend the Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) said that one was seen in the middle of Halifax and had to be captured by environmental health officers from the local authority. Was that the one escaped mink that ended up on the records of the Minister's Department? My hon. Friends and I found the Minister's speech insufferably complacent in many respects and we expect him, after this debate, to toughen up his approach to his officials and his attitude towards the practices of some of the appalling mink farms.

The Minister said we were not debating the issue of mink and animal welfare. I do not see how one can avoid that issue, given the conditions at some mink farms. I find fur farming obnoxious and unacceptable and I regard the wearing of mink fur—other than by natural mink in the wild—to be naff and vulgar. People who go round wearing mink have more money than taste.

The Minister mentioned the Farm Animal Welfare Council, which drew attention to the fact that the systems employed in the farming of mink and fox—including white Arctic fox—do not satisfy some of the most basic criteria for protecting the welfare of farm animals. That should lead one logically to the conclusion that we should phase out all mink farms. As my hon. Friend the Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe pointed out, the original consultation paper leading up to the 1987 measure——

Mr. Soames *rose*——

Mr. Banks: Let me finish the sentence, Minister. I appreciate that the hon. Gentleman is active and eager, but I would appreciate being allowed to complete the sentence.

One would have thought, under the circumstances, that the phasing out of mink fur farms would have been natural, and it has not been explained why the option of phasing out was included in the consultation paper leading up to the 1987 measure but was somehow excluded from the 1992 consultation process.

Mr. Soames: It may be convenient for the hon. Gentleman to know that neither the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food nor any of its agencies has ever received any report of escaped mink from Swalesmoor.

Mr. Banks: I find that incredible.

Mrs. Mahon: My local *Evening Courier* contains photographs of a mink that escaped and was caught in the

centre of town. Most of the population was shocked and horrified because the environmental health officers clubbed it to death. There have been numerous such reports. Many complaints have been made to the local council and I am pretty sure that they have been reported to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

Mr. Banks: I am beginning to feel sorry for the Minister because his civil servants must be either incredibly stupid or entirely negligent. It is apparent from all the evidence in the locality of Swalesmoor that numerous escapes have been reported. The Minister should stop simply taking assurances from his civil servants and start investigating in greater detail precisely what is going on on the ground.

It is difficult for us to accept the fact that the order excludes the Isle of Wight, which has a licensed mink farm, although it is currently free of feral mink. Lynx, the organisation which has done so much to draw the attention of the public and the House to the conditions within those appalling hell holes of factory farms, has made it clear that the Isle of Wight mink farm should be closed. It is in the immediate vicinity of Newtown harbour nature reserve, which is a site of special scientific interest and an internationally important site for nesting and migrating birds. Should any of those mink escape, the damage that they would do to that reserve is incalculable. It is amazing that the Minister is prepared to run such a risk in respect of the Isle of Wight.

Opposition Members have made it clear that there have obviously been escapes in the past, otherwise there would not be feral mink populations in various parts of the country. Minks have been escaping since 1929. I agree with the hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross) who said that the minks should be killed. I must admit that I feel a bit sorry for them, but, because of the destruction that they wreak on other species, a humane trapping programme should be adopted and the mink humanely destroyed.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): Will my hon. Friend comment on the Prime Minister's crusade against bureaucracy and red tape? Does not that mean that mink farms should be prohibited rather than licensed? With licensing, either there will be no inspection, in which case there will be much cruelty and the hell holes to which my hon. Friend referred, or the Minister is way out of line with the Prime Minister's requirements, because much costly bureaucracy will be involved.

Mr. Banks: The Minister is trying to suggest that my hon. Friend's facial hair is a false mink beard. I assure him that it is natural and flourishing feral hair on Harry's face.

My hon. Friend is absolutely correct. I would not mind if that bureaucracy was working. The Minister has given us all the assurances which his civil servants wrote. He must test the issue for himself, not simply take assurances that clearly do not match reality. I have shown him the enormous album of photographs from Swalesmoor. If these are the result of annual inspections by his civil servants and inspectors, he should sack the damn lot of them because they are clearly taking their money under false pretences.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe said, the inspectors managed for a number of years to miss a shed containing thousands of mink. It takes a very myopic inspector to miss a shed of such dimensions that it can enclose thousands of mink, but the Minister's inspectors managed to do so. What action did the Minister take against those civil servants who are clearly not doing their job? The pictures that I have show the sort of conditions that inspectors are prepared to accept when licensing the farms. The conditions are disgusting and unacceptable, and the Minister must change them.

My hon. Friend the Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe said that the mink is a wild, semi-aquatic animal, whose normal territory is anything up to 2·5 miles. The animals we are talking about are kept in rows in wire mesh cages that are 24 in long, 15 in high and 12 in wide. Mink normally avoid each other's company except at mating times because they protect their own territories. Given the amount of stress that they are under, it is no wonder that they go in for self-mutilation—they are bored. They are placed in conditions that are so unnatural they are totally obscene and unacceptable.

The order should be about the welfare of those animals. The state in which they are kept is unacceptable in this day and age. Why are we keeping them in such appalling conditions? Is it so that prune-like little old women and flashy, spivvy types can wear mink coats? There is no justification for that. Individuals' vanity is paid for by obscene suffering by animals.

We shall vote against the order, but the Minister must start checking the facts. I know him to be a reasonable person, and when he has checked the facts for himself, he might share some of the anger that I feel tonight. Then he will go into his Ministry and start tearing up his speech in front of the civil servants who wrote it, and tell them to get out and start earning their money.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. The Front Bench teams have said that, with the leave of the House, they wish to begin the wind-up speeches at 11.30 pm.

11.17 pm

Mr. Paul Tyler (North Cornwall): It is clear that there is widespread concern throughout the House and in many parts of the country about the continuation of mink farming, not least in the agriculture community, where it is regarded as a potential time bomb that is ticking away in the rural parts of the country.

As has been mentioned, at the time of the 1987 order, there was full consultation on a three-way choice: continuation or renewal, lapse of the order, or total prohibition. The agriculture community expected to be consulted on the options in the run-up to the current order, but they were not. They should have been.

Why did the Ministry remove the obligation to report the presence of mink at large in 1987? That obligation existed before 1987, but has not existed for the past five years and the system has been greatly weakened as a consequence. That is why so many hon. Members tonight have expressed their concern at the Swalesmoor case and others. Surely the Minister should give us an explanation as to why that case was not referred to his Ministry, rather than the other way round.

Mrs. Mahon: The Swalesmoor case has been referred to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. I have done so at least twice. I have received unsatisfactory replies stating that nothing can be done about it. There must be a file on the Swalesmoor case gathering dust somewhere within the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

Mr. Tyler: I am grateful to the hon. Lady for that contribution, as she has made my argument for me. Under the present system it is left to the breeders to report an escape. With great respect to the hon. Lady, it should not be left to a Member of Parliament to draw the problem to the attention of the Ministry—that is not our function; I was not trained for that job when I was elected to the House. At present, the breeders are the only people obliged to report an escape. Who has ever heard of a poacher going to see the gamekeeper and saying, "Gamekeeper, sir, I want to report that I have been poaching this evening." That is ridiculous.

Mr. William Ross: If the hon. Gentleman looks at the relevant Act, he will see that there is a legal obligation on the owners to report escapes.

Mr. Tyler: Under the Wildlife and Countryside Act, if owners do that they will put themselves outside the law. So the law is making an ass of itself. It is important to clarify it as soon as possible.

Are we really to believe that as of 9 June this year there had been no reports of escapes from registered farms in the previous 12 months? That is patently untrue. The feral population is increasing; that cannot be happening by natural breeding alone.

The Minister gave the impression that the annual inspections in these fur prison camps were an effective parade and that it was possible to check on precise numbers—and that any animal escaping would be immediately identified, like some prisoner of war. That is absurd: the system is not working.

The escapees from this artificial captivity are especially dangerous to the fragile ecological balance in the natural habitat. Wildlife is suffering. Feral mink can cause chaos and ecological disaster.

If there were some sudden change in the tactics of the Animal Liberation Front and it let loose large numbers of captive animals into the wild, that would cause great damage.

We greatly regret that the House is not being given the chance to vote on the amendment. At the same time, we should acknowledge that eradication of mink in the wild is probably now impossible. It is important not to treat the mink as a scapegoat for all the problems of the delicate balance in the wild. English Nature says:

"The mink is now too well established in Britain for eradication to be an option, so conservation action should focus on creating those conditions which best enable vulnerable prey to cope with mink predation in the future."

That means that we will have to be even more careful about allowing this activity to continue. We should work steadily on a planned programme of the run-down and eventual prohibition of all mink farming. The massive increase in such farming which still might occur would be extremely dangerous, and any more escapes to the wild would cause great damage.

I was interested to hear the Minister say that mink are very easy to catch. I understand that a great many different techniques are used to catch them. I am not sure which one the Minister recommends as easy, but since a large number of mink in some parts of the country are still doing great damage, the Minister should concentrate his attention on advancing the parallel development of improved methods of eradication—at the same time as running down and prohibiting the farms.

Both the Council of Europe and the Farm Animal Welfare Council have pointed the way: their expert advice is available to all Members, many of whom support it. Tonight the Minister has a responsibility to assure the House that he will ensure that this trade is stopped and the problems with which it is connected are removed.

11.23 pm

Mr. Peter Griffiths (Portsmouth, North): The large number of signatures appended to the relevant early-day motion shows that the strength of feeling expressed by the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) is shared by Members of all parties. The aim of most of our constituents is the elimination of fur farming.

I would have hoped that we might vote on the amendment tonight. That is not possible, but it is the reason I and others are speaking. To vote against the order would be a disaster. If by some mischance it was defeated, it would not lead to the abolition of controlled mink farming in this country; it would mean that mink farming could proceed without any control whatever. Farms would be able to be set up without the restrictions and controls that the Minister described. Competition would put out of business immediately those who were attempting to conform to the order. The result of that would certainly not be the humane slaughter and disposal of the present stock of mink, but escape to the wild would be facilitated as the cheapest possible option.

I want to see an end to fur farming in this country. My hon. Friend the Minister may not be able to give us an assurance about that tonight, but until that happy day comes we need some control of these animals and the order must therefore be supported.

11.25 pm

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): I shall certainly speak briefly so as to let other hon. Members in. My interest arises only because of the reference to my constituency in the order. I do not criticise the Minister for flippancy, but things were said that require the record to be straightened.

The hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross) made the point that there is no such thing as a natural mink population and, therefore, the Minister was unintentionally misleading in suggesting that there was. The parallel between Lewis and Harris, and Arran in my constituency, is precise in that both have mink populations because there were farms in those islands 20 to 30 years ago when people were crazy enough to open those farms in agricultural communities and then to allow those creatures to escape. We have lived with these problems ever since. I do not think that in the real world anyone will open a mink farm on Arran; there are ways in which it would be blocked if anyone made such a ludicrous proposal.

However, I gather from the Minister's remarks that exclusion from or inclusion in this order is a reflection of the steps taken to eradicate the existing problem. That is what I want to set straight.

The Minister said that mink are easy creatures to catch. I did not know about that, but I am prepared to take the word of hon. Members here who know a great deal about the subject. If that is the case, it is surely unforgivable that local groups in these communities and crofters and farmers have been suffering the problems for years without the little bit of support and expertise necessary to get rid of the problem once and for all.

On Arran for many years it was impossible for people to keep hens because of the mink population. I know that that has also been the case in the Western Isles. There the problem spread. The mink were swimming from Harris across to North Uist and establishing a presence in a different group of islands where there had been no mink farming.

I shall end now so that others may speak. Surely if a little bit of money and a little bit of expertise are needed, on the basis of this debate that should be forthcoming. I shall certainly be raising the possibility with Scottish Natural Heritage on behalf of Arran and any other communities that continue to labour under this unfortunate and unnecessary affliction.

11.28 pm

Mrs. Lilo Golding (Newcastle-under-Lyme): I am very concerned about the fact that nothing seems to be done about destroying the mink that are in the wild. Nobody has mentioned that in my part of the country some lunatics broke into a farm and released all the mink into the wild and ever since we have had a problem in north Staffordshire and the surrounding area. I have written to the National Rivers Authority which said that it had always been the responsibility of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. I wrote to the Minister and he said that it was entirely at the discretion of individual landowners or occupiers to decide whether they wished to control mink. Nobody is taking responsibility. Mink roam for at least a mile when they are breeding and can move at least 30 miles after the breeding season is over.

In north Staffordshire and the surrounding areas, there are reports of the destruction of wildlife. Despite what some people say, mink are not often seen. However, people do see fish killed by a bite through the backbone, between the head and the dorsal fin; and mammals and birds killed by a bite in the neck—usually near the base of the skull. In the case of a fresh kill, sometimes it is possible to see punctures about 8 mm apart, made by the mink's canine teeth.

Those are nasty, vicious and destructive creatures. I want to know who will take responsibility for getting rid of them before they destroy all our wildlife.

11.30 pm

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): Hon. Members have already commented about sordid stalags, and I want the Minister to make it clear that Britain can provide standards higher than those recommended in the Council of Europe report. It would be extremely useful if we did so at this stage, since a number of member states permit cruel and barbaric practices. We want to see their standards raised, and it could be helpful if we could point to higher standards in Britain.

The Minister referred also to security. I believe that there have been no prosecutions for any fault or failing under the previous arrangements. Will the Minister make it clear to the remaining fur farmers that standards will be properly supervised, and that there will be no hesitation in bringing prosecutions should faults of the kind described to the House occur? There can be no excuse for the sort of cases to which reference has been made.

I hope that in the short time that remains before we can see an end to the wearing of furs produced in such odious circumstances the Government will ensure the standards are a great deal higher than they have been over the past 30 years.

11.32 pm

Mr. Morley: I hope that the Minister has noted that not one hon. Member who has spoken during this short debate supported the keeping of mink or the Minister's claim that the order will be effective in preventing the escaping of mink.

We know that mink have escaped in every area where there have been mink farms. They have been established as a breeding species in the wild since 1957, and escaped mink are found around every mink farm, or the site of every former mink farm.

I accept that there is a legal obligation on mink farm owners to report escapes, but in reality not only are they reluctant to do so for obvious reasons—they will face prosecution—but when there are escapes, because there is a feral population in the wild, the mink farm owners invariably say that the mink are feral mink and not from their own farms.

That is certainly what happened in Halifax. The farmers did not report the matter to MAFF. When the local population see the mink, they understandably complain directly to the farm. That accounts for the lack of official complaints—and to suggest that that means that there have been no escapes is disingenuous.

I hope that when the Minister replies he will explain, as I asked him to do at the start, why the option to consult on the banning of mink was denied during the consultation period. I hope that he will also explain why it was that,

[Mr. Morley]

although the advice of Scottish Natural Heritage was accepted, that of English Nature was not, in the case of the Isle of Wight. I hope that it has nothing to do with the fact that there are no grouse moors on the Isle of Wight.

Will the Minister give an assurance that the state veterinary service will inspect every existing mink farm annually, as recommended by the Farm Animal Welfare Council, and that the service will be able to do that despite the Government cutbacks that it has suffered?

I hope that the Minister will acknowledge an argument that has been clearly made in the debate: that fur farming in this country does not meet either welfare standards recommended by the Government's own advisers or the recommendations of European committees. I hope that he will also acknowledge that 226 hon. Members have signed an early-day motion calling for an end to this type of intensive farming.

The hon. Member for Portsmouth, North (Mr. Griffiths), expressed concern about voting against the order. I will give an assurance if, by any chance, the order is defeated tonight. If the Government will come back to the House with an order that includes an immediate moratorium on the keeping of mink—there is not a single reason why that could not be done tonight, because we are not talking about compensation to existing farms or about any great difficulties—or if the Minister will give the House an assurance that from now on no further licences will be issued to mink or fox farms, we will support the Government. He can do that. There is no financial or legal difficulty about it. If the Minister would bring forward an order that included both that and the phasing out of the keeping of fur animals in farms of this kind, the Opposition would co-operate with the Government in getting that order through as quickly as possible.

I want it put on the record that we shall vote against the order only if we do not get the assurance that this sort of fur farming will be phased out. If we vote against the order, it will not be because we do not want to see strong regulation, but because we want to see both regulation and the ending of this farming, which is odious, unnecessary and just part of a luxury trade. It fulfils no useful purpose in terms of economic employment in this country or of the welfare of the animals concerned. There is an opportunity tonight for the Minister to give an assurance that, at long last, something will be done about this matter and standards will be set that other European countries will follow.

11.36 pm

Mr. Soames: I will try to confine myself to points that have been raised by hon. Gentlemen tonight, as they would expect.

I start with the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley), who spoke with a good deal of knowledge and experience on this matter, and particularly raised the question of the Isle of Wight, which the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) also raised. They asked why mink keeping is not banned on the Isle of Wight. The answer is that there is a mink farm currently in operation on the Isle of Wight. It was there prior to the last review of the mink-keeping arrangements and the conditions of its licence are especially stringent to prevent escapes. No escapes have been reported, so there is no justification for banning mink-keeping on the island.

At the same time, the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe made a perfectly valid point about why English Nature recommended that mink farming be banned on the Isle of Wight. It is true that it did recommend that it should be banned, but that was because it was under the false impression that there were no farms currently in operation on the island. That is the definitive reason why they were not banned.

The hon. Gentleman then went on to ask for a ban and managed to drag in a bit of good solid class warfare about people wearing mink coats, and all the rest of it, but perhaps I can just deal with the sensible point that he made about the Farm Animal Welfare Council.

In a statement made in April 1989, the Farm Animal Welfare Council—as I have already said, a body to whose views the Ministry of Agriculture and Her Majesty's Government attach the highest importance—expressed its disapproval of fur farming, and many hon. Members, I am sure, share that view. However, it did not recommend that the practice be stopped.

At about this time, the Council of Europe was working on its welfare recommendation, which was adopted a year later. We expect that recommendation to be used as the basis for a Community standard. The Government's policy regarding the welfare of fur animals is that we will press for the highest standards to be adopted on a Communitywide basis.

The Farm Animal Welfare Council's statement recommended research into housing and behavioural requirements of the mink and fox. It recommended that pelting sheds be sited away from enclosures to prevent distress caused by the release of scent during pelting, and that the state veterinary service should monitor fur farms on a regular basis. Several hon. Members felt that the state veterinary service should inspect every year. I have taken that on board, and will consult my right hon. Friend the Minister and others to see what steps can be taken.

The hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe called for a moratorium on new mink farms. Under our present regime we might encounter some legal difficulties, on the ground that it would be unreasonable to refuse a licence to a new farm that could meet the same requirements as existing farms. On the basis of the mink's destructive habits, I must say that a ban on mink keeping is not justified. The security arrangements are adequate in preventing escapes, so that is not a relevant argument.

The hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross) made a knowledgeable and robust speech, as would be expected of someone who actually understands a little about the countryside. He spoke at length, and with knowledge, of the feral mink; his angling interests have ensured that he is kept well informed—and he knows that I share his enthusiasm for that. It is true that mink are easy to catch, and if the hon. Gentleman would like to accompany me one day I shall show him how to do it. He is right: it requires both time and effort, as well as some expertise. I am not aware—and neither is my Department—of the existence of feral kangaroos and wallabies in this country, although I have no doubt that the suggestion will comfort those who drive home late at night having drunk too much.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-West made a passionate and knowledgeable speech about a subject on

which he plainly feels strongly. He mentioned sightings of escaped mink, as have many other Opposition Members. There is no point in their banging on at me; none of those sightings, save one, has been reported to the Ministry of Agriculture. We are unable to act unless members of the public make a report to us. *[Interruption.]* There is no point in the hon. Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) citing a report in an evening paper; that is no good to us. We need sightings to be reported to the regional service centres so that we can take the necessary action.

It is quite untrue to say that we are insufferably complacent. We regard this as an extremely serious matter, and we acknowledge the strength of feeling expressed by many of our citizens. It is in our interests to ensure that a disagreeable business is conducted honourably and properly. I look forward to seeing the hon. Member for Newham, North-West shortly to discuss the situation at Swalesmoor, and to examine at greater length the photographs that he has already shown me. I apologise for standing him up today.

The hon. Gentleman also made an important point about the sighting of escaped farm mink. Reports of sightings have been made by individuals and organisations, and have been investigated, but they have failed to confirm the origin of the mink, and to highlight any deficiency in the security of mink farms that needs to be addressed. It is extremely difficult for the lay person to distinguish between wild and farmed mink—as it is to distinguish between a weasel and a stoat: as the House will know, a weasel is weasily identified, but a stoat is stoatally different. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] I think it is rather a good joke, actually.

The hon. Member for Cornwall, North (Mr. Tyler) mentioned eradication. The Department mounted an eradication campaign; it cost about £20,000 a year, was operated for five years and was ultimately found to be entirely unrealistic. We take the question of the capture of wild mink very seriously, but, at the end of the day, it is up to individual landowners to ensure that their land is free of mink.

I wholly endorse the view of my hon. Friend the Member for Portsmouth, North (Mr. Griffiths) about the folly of voting against the order: that would only ensure that a large population of mink were released into the wild, which would be extremely unsatisfactory.

I shall be happy to arrange for a discussion between the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) and Scottish Natural Heritage. If he wishes to come and discuss it with me, I shall be happy to oblige. The hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mrs. Golding) has shown great interest in the matter: again, it comes down to individual landowners——

It being one and a half hours after the commencement of proceedings on the motion, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted Business):—*

The House divided: Ayes 252, Noes 188.

Division No. 98] **[11.45 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alexander, Richard
Allison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliff)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Heseltine, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon. Ian
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mariand, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Morrison, Sir Hector
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve

Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trimble, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. James Arbuthnot and
Mr. Tim Boswell.

NOES

Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blunkett, David
Boyce, Jimmy
Bradley, Keith
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Cleland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dixon, Don
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lester, Jean *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McMaster, Gordon
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Hallam)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Hara, Edward
Oiner, William
Parry, Robert
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Rayneford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Jon Owen Jones and
Mr Jack Thompson.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Mink Keeping Order 1992, a copy of which was laid before this House on 25th November, be approved.

PETITIONS

Disabled Persons

11.55 pm

Mr. Bill Olner (Nuneaton): I beg to ask leave to present a petition which reads:

To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament Assembled.

The Humble Petition of the citizens of Nuneaton showeth:
That disabled people must have the right to the same equality of opportunity in all aspects of their daily life as non-disabled people;
that people who are disabled or perceived to be disabled continually have to face widespread unjustifiable discrimination; and
that legislation is necessary to outlaw this unjustifiable discrimination.

Wherefore your petitioners pray that your honourable House introduce legislation to outlaw this discrimination against disabled people as soon as possible.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray etc.

I sincerely hope that the sense of feeling expressed in the 239-signature petition against the discrimination of disabled people will be fully taken into account when my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) introduces his private Member's Bill.

To lie upon the Table.

Water Services, Scotland

11.56 pm

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I rise to present a petition that has been signed by more than 30,000 people in the Inverclyde district. It expresses their deep disquiet and serious concern about the threat to the ownership and management of the water services in Scotland.

The petition was given to me in the Provost's room in the municipal buildings in Greenock in the presence of Liberal, Conservative and Labour councillors. In the traditional way, it expresses their deep concern and it states:

The Humble Petition of people of Inverclyde Sheweth,
That we, the undersigned, do not consent to and further entirely disapprove of any proposal that would lead to the privatisation of Scottish water.

Wherefore your petitioners pray that your honourable House communicate our disapproval to the Secretary of State for Scotland and reject any proposed legislation to privatise Scottish water.

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, &c.

To lie upon the Table.

Bypass (East Cleveland)

11.58 pm

Mr. Michael Bates (Langbaurgh): I beg leave to present to the House a petition signed by 1,500 of my constituents calling for a bypass of the towns of East Cleveland, Skelton, and Brotton. The petition was collected by Mr. L. J. Hill, of 11 Foster street, who leads the Brotton residents association.

The popular call for the bypass has been running for 15 years and I have pleasure in presenting the petition which reads:

To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland Assembled.

The Humble Petition of the people of Brotton in East Cleveland Sheweth.

That owing to the level of traffic and the need for economic development in East Cleveland a bypass is urgently needed.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that Your Honourable House act to urge the Government to act to construct a bypass of Skelton and Brotton in East Cleveland.

And your Petitioners as in duty bound will ever pray.

To lie upon the Table.

Traffic (Residential Areas)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. MacKay.]*

12 midnight

Mrs. Judith Chaplin (Newbury): We have just heard a petition for a bypass, and I wish to raise a problem that has arisen after a bypass has been built. I welcome the opportunity to raise the problem in the House.

We all want to reduce the congestion on our roads. The Confederation of Business Industry constantly points out the enormous damage that congested roads cause to industry and business. We need to have traffic moving freely around the country and between the industrial areas and ports of this country.

Every time a new road is built, or a road is increased in width, the people who live nearby are affected. Sometimes those people can be compensated financially. At other times they will have insulation through grants from the highway authority. When new roads are built, there will be screens, banking, trees and all manner of methods to reduce the nuisance that new roads cause to those who live near them.

The problem arises because the measures apply only when there are new roads or when additional carriageways are added to existing roads. There must be some alteration to the location, the width or the level of the carriageway. The public can be compensated only if the increased traffic cannot reasonably be foreseen. Therefore, when it is simply an increase in traffic, none of the compensatory measures apply, but even if the existing roads have the same level of noise as a new road, compensation would be justified.

That exact problem has arisen on a road in my constituency. The A34 goes from the north to the south of the constituency. In 1966 a bypass was built around the village of East Ilsley. The residents welcomed the bypass because it brought relief to the village. The village has narrow streets, and the villagers were delighted that the heavy traffic was removed from its centre.

Since that time, the traffic travelling along the A34 bypass beside the village has increased enormously. It has increased especially since the A34 was named as one of the Euroroutes in 1975. I know that the Government do not recognise Euroroutes and do not wish to do all the signing that would be necessary for them; one accepts that that is a sensible decision. However, there is no doubt that the naming of the A34 as a Euroroute means that lorries are directed to use such routes.

Furthermore, there has been a tremendous step change recently because the A34 has become the main link between the south coast ports and the midlands. The A34 also links with the extension of the M40, so it is an excellent way of getting from the south coast of England to the midlands. That extension has enormously increased the traffic on the A34. It has not simply meant that the number of vehicles going by has increased greatly; the tonnage of the vehicles has also increased. Many large lorries now pass along the A34.

The Department of Transport recognises the importance of the A34. I hope that the Newbury bypass will be included in the Department's plans shortly. The Minister should take this opportunity to reassure me that he recognises the enormous importance of the A34 to this area. At present the road beside Newbury is heavily used.

[Mrs. Judith Chaplin]

Indeed, there are always long queues on it. On the days when there are races at Newbury racecourse the traffic virtually comes to a halt. It can take literally hours to get from the M4 to Newbury. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister agrees that it is vital that nothing stops the bypass being built as soon as possible.

The Department recognises the importance of the road because the junction of the A34 with the M4 is to be altered so that the A34 goes straight through and there is no roundabout stopping the flow of traffic. The altered junction will be near another village in my constituency, Chieveley. As the route will be changed, the residents will receive the full protection that can be given to those who live near new roads. But those who live slightly further up the road feel, not unnaturally, that they are being unfairly treated in this case.

We all recognise that the road will be busy. The inevitable consequence of the present level of traffic on the road is that the noise in the village has increased immensely. I understand from the useful booklet published by the Department of the Environment about insulation against traffic noise that the highway authority normally compensates people living near new roads or where roads have been extended if the noise is above 68 decibels, taking an average over a certain period. When measures were taken for the houses nearest to the road in East Ilsley, measurements of 73 and 78 decibels were recorded—well above that which would normally qualify for compensation if the road was new.

I was in the village at 10 o'clock on Sunday morning. The noise was substantial even then—a time which is the most peaceful of the week and the day. Obviously, on a normal working day the noise would be substantially higher.

In other Government Departments we are doing so much to protect the environment. We endlessly introduce legislation to reduce noise for people who live near the source of many types of noise. Yet the people living by the A34 are unprotected. Another booklet entitled "Bothered by noise?" tells people how to complain about noises such as horns of cars or reversing alarms of lorries, all of which are controlled.

A consultative document has been published about sources of noise such as clay pigeon shooting and war games and the number of days on which such activities may be pursued in an area. People recognise that noise is a genuine nuisance and that it destroys the environment. Therefore, the Government have a duty to do something about it. People in the village in my constituency do not suffer from intermittent noise on some days of the year: they suffer from continuous noise throughout the year from the heavy traffic on the road.

I know that if I suggest that people should receive compensation for the increased noise or that the Department should do something to ameliorate the noise, the immediate response will be that the cost is too high. I will be told that if the Department accepted that increased traffic could lead to compensation, it would set a precedent which would cause difficulties in other areas. However, that is not true, because an objective measure could be used above which compensation would be paid.

For example, the Government could say that compensation would be paid if the road was a Euroroute. Or an objective level of the number of vehicles travelling along the road, the tonnage of the vehicles or the level of noise could be set above which compensation could be paid. Several objective measures could be used above which either compensation could be paid or help could be given with insulation or other measures. One could state that above those levels the highway authority should provide grants to insulate houses that are most affected. Of course, that would mean legislation and I am realistic enough to know that that is unlikely in the immediate future. However, the Department should show that it is determined to lessen the impact, which has been substantial because of the change in the way in which the road is used.

An earth bank is not possible because of the siting of the road and the village, but I understand that the Department is considering other measures. It has issued guidance on the way in which barriers are made. Acoustic fences could be used, and I understand that it is experimenting with pervious macadam, which lessens the noise.

I urge the Minister to reconsider the problem caused by the road as it passes the village, and to find out whether anything can be done to lessen its impact. Work will be done on the road when the junction is altered and when the Newbury bypass is built. I hope that at the same time he will consider whether it is possible to take measures to improve the lives of the people in the village. It is a shame for a charming village and the lives of its inhabitants to be destroyed because of constant noise.

12.10 am

The Minister for Roads and Traffic (Mr. Kenneth Carlisle): It is a pleasure for me to answer this debate, even at this late hour, and I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Mrs. Chaplin) on raising this important subject. I do not want to embarrass her, but since she came to the House she has often come to me with the problems of her constituency, which she pursues with great force and tenacity. I respect her efforts on behalf of her constituents.

My hon. Friend is right to say that traffic has increased continually during the past few years. That is the result of growing economic activity, of people's desire to have cars and of development decisions. It also reflects our belief that people should have choice in their means of travel. It is certainly true that more than 90 per cent. of passenger journeys and more than 90 per cent. of overland freight trips are by road and so whatever we do to improve to rail transport—we are anxious to move more goods on to rail—we would still need a substantial road programme. All our predictions show that growth will continue. The White Paper, "Roads for Prosperity", predicts an increase in total traffic of between 83 per cent. and 142 per cent. by the year 2025 compared with 1988.

My hon. Friend is right to say that we shall continue to face the problem. We believe that the trend in growth will be faster for inter-urban traffic than for traffic on urban roads. It is significant that, although trunk roads—the major roads across the country—form little more than 4 per cent. of the total road mileage in Great Britain, they carry 31 per cent. of all traffic, including 54 per cent. of heavy goods vehicle traffic.

Like my hon. Friend, I am anxious that we should do everything possible to reduce congestion because it is bad

for the economy and for the environment—it leads to increased air pollution, for example. We are determined to do everything possible to relieve congestion and to protect the environment.

My hon. Friend was mostly concerned about noise, but because air pollution is important for communities near roads, it is worth recording that we are making substantial progress in restraining such pollution.

Tight new emission standards for cars and lorries are coming in over the next few years, and from the beginning of 1993 most new cars will need catalytic converters. They should reduce harmful emissions by about 80 per cent. The MOT emissions check was introduced for cars in November 1991, and since 1 September there has been a metered smoke test in the annual test for heavy diesels. A similar test for light vans and diesel cars will be included for the first time in the MOT test from 1 January next. So, as my hon. Friend will see, we are doing much to combat pollution.

Another effective way of dealing with congestion and helping communities is by a substantial bypass programme. If we can build bypasses, we remove traffic from town centres and villages. That is of huge benefit to those communities. Under our roads programme, we have completed about 400 improvement schemes since 1979, including more than 150 bypasses. This year we expect to complete another 32 schemes, of which 11 will be bypasses. So a substantial number of roads are bypasses.

My hon. Friend referred to her wish for a Newbury bypass. I also share that wish. I hope that in the coming year we shall be able to make good progress with that scheme, and I urge her to keep in close contact with me about it. We know how hard pressed that community is and we want to relieve Newbury of traffic.

I wish to go in some detail into the provisions for compensation because my hon. Friend argued a close brief and mentioned precisely some of the mitigation measures and the compensation we have paid. It is worth reviewing those measures. An important aspect of the entry of a scheme into the roads programme is that it brings into play the provisions of the Land Compensation Act 1973. In those circumstances, when, as a highway authority, we are acting as a developer in providing a new road or significantly altering an existing one, the Act imposes statutory obligations and gives us powers which enable us to provide traffic noise mitigation measures, and to pay compensation for depreciation in the value of properties arising from physical factors, including noise intrusion emanating from a new or altered road.

Under the Act, where a new road is first opened to public traffic or where a new carriageway is added to an existing road, the highway authority is required to offer insulation to occupiers of eligible properties if the noise level on a facade of the property rises above a specified level.

My hon. Friend explained in some detail the levels of noise that must be reached, and I shall not restate those, although it must be said that the levels are clearly thought out, that we apply them in a scientific way and that we do whatever we can to mitigate noise. Sometimes we do not provide insulation, for example, if we believe that a noise barrier would be more effective. Since coming to my present post, I have been struck by the nuisance that noise creates. I have already dealt with several debates on the subject, and I assure my hon. Friend that we are in no way complacent about the problem of noise. We are determined to do all we can to reduce it.

The question of noise from different forms of road surface is particularly difficult. The perception is that the noise from concrete surfaces is higher than that from black-top. Because that perception is clear, a substantial review was followed by my announcement on 28 July of a three-pronged attack on the source of noise from road surfaces.

The first development will mean that motorways with a heavy traffic load and trunk roads carrying more than 75,000 vehicles a day will generally be constructed with black-top rather than concrete. We shall consider roads carrying less than that volume scheme by scheme to achieve the best result.

The second and most exciting development will be that, in urban and other noise-sensitive areas, porous asphalt will be used where conditions are suitable and where the benefits outweigh the higher cost. I hope to make considerable progress in the next few months with that new material.

Thirdly, we are continuing our research and next year we shall include a trial on a scheme in Derbyshire of a new concrete called "whisper concrete", which has been developed successfully in some European countries. We want to see how it does here. So we are not complacent and will try to make new roads quieter.

My hon. Friend specifically spoke of the hard-pressed community of East Ilsley. I am sorry that none of those measures will help that community and I shall seek to explain why, but first I shall put the A34 in context. It is a strategic route between the industrial west midlands and the south coast ports which has been progressively developed to a high standard. From the Oxford area northwards, the route comprises the M40 extension that was opened early last year. From Winchester southwards, linking the M27, it is the M3, the last section of which is now being built. Between Oxford and Winchester, the majority of the A34 will have been improved under a series of schemes to which the noise mitigation provisions of the Land Compensation Act 1973 have been applied wherever relevant. That includes the East Ilsley-Chilton improvement, the remaining A34 schemes still in preparation, the Newbury bypass and the A34-M4 junction 13, which is the Chieveley scheme. All those will be treated in accordance with the Act.

As my hon. Friend explained, the main exception is the East Ilsley bypass itself, which was completed a couple of years before the 1969 cut-off date to which the retrospective provisions of the Act apply.

The traffic flow on the A34 in the East Ilsley area is in the order of 35,000 vehicles a day, which is appropriate for the standard of road. Therefore, we do not believe that there is excessive traffic on that road at present. Although it has increased and can be expected to increase further, the A34 is no different from many other roads throughout the country.

On noise mitigation, the key factor is that the length of A34 in question is an existing road for which we have no improvement proposals. As my hon. Friend said, if that road were improved, it would be a different matter and provisions would apply to the road's improvement or redesign.

My hon. Friend mentioned Euroroutes. The A34 was designated as a Euroroute some time ago in the European

[Mr. Kenneth Carlisle]

agreement on main international traffic arteries, which the United Kingdom has not yet ratified. My hon. Friend will understand that designation has little significance in the context of noise intrusion and confers no entitlement to special noise measures or treatment.

The legislation does not take into account traffic levels more than 15 years after the opening of a road or review the noise mitigation measures provided as a consequence of traffic growth that is greater than that estimated when a scheme was prepared. We do not provide any relief from roads such as the East Ilsley bypass, opened before 17 October 1969. The obligations placed on us relate only to where a new road is provided or an existing one significantly altered.

I have every sympathy with those who have suffered an intensification of traffic noise as a result of increased traffic volumes. However, in the absence of legislation requiring us to restrict noise intrusion to prescribed levels along existing unaltered roads, we could not justify the substantial costs involved in meeting, on an equitable basis, the many requests that we receive for protection.

I know that that response will not be of much comfort to my hon. Friend, who wants to change the position. However, I must emphasise that the costs of doing so would be substantial. We believe that, on trunk roads alone, the cost would be more than £2 billion throughout the country. That would mean the postponement of many bypasses that my right hon. and hon. Friends desire to be built around their communities, the delaying of many much-needed schemes to reduce congestion, and the imposition of an intolerable burden on our road building programme. I do not believe that the Government would be justified in delaying so many road schemes and bypasses.

I am sorry that I cannot help my hon. Friend further this evening. I admire the tenacity with which she presses her case. I am always willing to consider such matters again to see whether there is any way in which I can help the community that is exceptionally hard pressed. However, I have to do so without opening the flood gates. If my hon. Friend would like to continue the discussion with me and my Department, she is more than welcome to do so, and I look forward to many future discussions with h[illegible].

I have described the growth in traffic and what we are doing to reduce noise in new schemes, such as the new techniques, the noise barriers and the new surfaces. I have described the detailed legislation and tried to explain why, in this case, I cannot bend to her arguments, although I sympathise with them. Once again, I thank my hon. Friend for bringing this important topic to the attention of the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-eight minutes past Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 9 December 1992

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

RIVER HUMBER (UPPER BURCOM COOLING WORKS) BILL *[LORDS]*

Order for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time tomorrow,

Oral Answers to Questions

ENVIRONMENT

Urban Programme

1. **Mr. Mudie:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from the local authority associations on the future of the urban programme.

The Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities (Mr. John Redwood): I have received a formal representation from the Association of Metropolitan Authorities and several letters from individual local authorities and others.

Mr. Mudie: Is the Minister aware of the widespread distress caused in Leeds and throughout the country by the cancellation of the urban programme? Is he further aware that, by that act, he has removed the one hope for the unemployed, the elderly and the very poorest in our inner cities? Does the Minister understand and accept the worrying possible consequences of compelling our inner cities to face next summer with no cash, no initiatives and no hope for our long-term unemployed?

Mr. Redwood: The hon. Gentleman has not looked at the statement. Some £176 million will be spent on the urban programme and capital partnerships for the inner cities next year. The hon. Gentleman may like to remember that, taking city challenge and the urban programme together, we plan to spend £408 million next year, compared with only £319 million this year. Of course I want to see action in the inner cities. We have many projects and plans, and with a Conservative Government we are going to do it.

Mr. Marlow: Would it not be better to spend large sums of our own money in our own deprived urban areas, rather than splashing out vast largesse into the Community cohesion fund?

Mr. Redwood: I agree with my hon. Friend that there are priority needs in our inner cities. That is why we are budgeting as I have described for next year—to produce better hope and life and more jobs in those inner-city areas. Of course Her Majesty's Government intend to drive a hard bargain with our Community partners. We believe in getting value for money wherever public money is spent and that must be true at Community level as well as here at home.

Ms. Lynne: How can the Government claim to be creating employment prospects while at the same time cutting urban programme grants to areas such as Rochdale?

Mr. Redwood: As I have explained, we have a number of programmes for the inner cities, many of which create jobs and job opportunities. Instead of whingeing and complaining, the Opposition should start taking an interest in city challenge, capital partnership and all the other schemes that are producing life and hope in the inner cities and generating many jobs and job opportunities.

Mr. Vaz: That is yet another example of ministerial complacency about a fundamental shift of Government policy which will directly affect the lives of thousands of people who live and work in inner-city areas. Now that the Minister has refused to commit the Government to support round three of city challenge, does not the cancellation of the urban programme put the Government's entire urban regeneration programme into a state of crisis? If the 57 urban programme authorities fail to raise the £500 million that he has predicted they will raise because of the change in the capital receipt regulations, will the Minister come back to the House personally, announce that he will give back to those councils the money that he proposes to take away, and apologise to the people whose lives and jobs and projects will be ruined by this appalling decision?

Mr. Redwood: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way.

The £500 million that we hoped that local government will raise by way of extra receipts represents additional money for the inner cities. Instead of complaining, the hon. Gentleman should be encouraging his friends on Labour councils in those urban programme areas to ensure that they get the receipts money on time and spend it on good projects for their areas. That is what I want, and I hope that that is what the Opposition want. That is the way to make progress in the inner cities.

Rough Sleepers (Central London)

2. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will be renewing the rough sleepers initiative in central London.

The Minister for Housing and Planning (Sir George Young): We shall be making resources of £86 million available over three years from April 1993 to build on the achievements of the rough sleepers initiative which, since June 1990, has reduced the number of people sleeping rough in central London by more than a half.

Mr. Marshall: May I congratulate my hon. Friend the Minister on securing additional finance from the Treasury in the autumn statement? Does he agree that the problem of rough sleepers in London would be eased if inner London councils would let their unlet council houses and collect their uncollected rents?

Sir George Young: My hon. Friend is right. It is an affront to the many people in London who are homeless or in temporary accommodation that large numbers of local authority flats continue to be unlet after more than a year. My hon. Friend is right to remind the House of the Government's priorities, in a difficult public expenditure round, in finding the necessary resources to continue further the progress that we have been making in respect of rough sleeping in central London.

Mr. Tony Banks: Does the Minister not feel ashamed and embarrassed to see so many people sleeping on the streets of London when he is on his way to the opera? I do not suppose embarrassment is something that comes easily to Conservative Members because they could not care a damn about people who are sleeping rough. Does the Minister recognise that the problem of homelessness is not confined to inner London? How many outer-London severe weather shelters are being provided? Why has the Minister's Department turned down proposals for such shelters in Croydon, Camden and Newham?

Sir George Young: I would have hoped that the hon. Gentleman might find it possible to congratulate the voluntary organisations in central London on their work in the past two years to reduce the number of people sleeping rough, but, instead, he saw fit to deliver the rather ungrateful rant that we have just heard. The Government focus resources on central London because that is where there is the largest concentration of rough sleepers. Roughly half the rough sleepers in this country are in central London, and that is where we are targeting our resources. Outside inner London, we are funding voluntary organisations to make progress. However, we would expect local authorities such as that of the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) to recognise that they also have a responsibility and should make provision of the kind mentioned by the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Harry Greenway: Will my hon. Friend join me in congratulating the Salvation Army on its superb work with its soup run to rough sleepers? Does he also agree that the Salvation Army and others minister to a number of rough sleepers who generally refuse to come into accommodation available for them?

Sir George Young: My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to the sterling work of many voluntary organisations and charities in London which deliver help and shelter to those sleeping rough. There are a number of rough sleepers who have been approached by resettlement workers and outreach workers and have been offered accommodation in hostels with access to move-on accommodation, but have turned that accommodation down. It is a challenge for everyone who wants to see a reduction in rough sleeping in central London if there are people who turn down offers that are made to them.

Contaminated Land

3. Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he is taking to ensure that land that was contaminated and which has now been cleansed is brought into uses that provide economic or environmental advantage.

The Minister for the Environment and Countryside (Mr. David Maclean): The Government are keen to encourage all contaminated land to be brought into productive use and I am looking carefully at my proposals on section 143 registers to ensure that we deal with the conflicting concerns voiced by local authorities, developers, lenders, valuers, insurers and, indeed, Members of this House.

Mr. Hardy: Does the Minister appreciate that considerable areas of derelict and contaminated land in my constituency and elsewhere have been cleared and reclaimed at considerable cost to public funds? However, while the Government maintain the contaminated land register as it is and insist on including the reclaimed land on that register, there will be no economic advantage as a result of the investment that has been made. Does the Minister accept that the needs of the areas concerned are such that the Government should be pursuing policies of assurance and indemnification to allow some hope and advantage to be brought to those very necessitous districts?

Mr. Maclean: Because of that concern voiced by the hon. Gentleman and by many others, I made a special visit to the black country recently to see the problem on the ground, and that point of view was impressed on me in no uncertain terms. I therefore intend to look at other areas of the country where there may be similar worries about the potential blighting effect if the registers went ahead. It is important for me to talk to the insurers and lenders, because we would not be able to bring the contaminated land back into use without their support. My intention is to deal with land that is actively contaminated and needs to be cleaned up, and not to cause unnecessary blight.

Mr. Thompson: I welcome my hon. Friend's statement today that he is reconsidering the permanent nature of the contaminated land register. Does he agree that if encouragement is not given to the development of derelict and contaminated land in the inner cities, greater pressure will be created in the countryside and on green belt land? Does he agree that that pressure should be avoided wherever possible by inner-city developments?

Mr. Maclean: That is yet another consideration as to why we must get our proposals on contaminated land right. As Minister for the Environment and Countryside, I should find it wrong if we created unnecessary pressures on the countryside because developers, for whatever reasons, were frightened away from using potentially useful land in inner cities. That is a matter to which we shall give careful consideration.

Ms. Short: When shall we know the outcome of the review? It is the strong view of the Confederation of British Industry in the west midlands that the present system acts as a barrier to the treatment of contaminated land and, therefore, leads to pressure on the green belt and great swathes of dirty land being left behind. Do we not need a graded register, incentives to treat, and then a way of coming off the register so that the land will be brought into use? The present system is a barrier to treatment and reuse.

Mr. Maclean: There are incentives to treat, and a variety of schemes funded by Government and local government to bring land back into productive use. The hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) has identified one of the flaws in existing legislation—that no

matter what work is done to clean land up and make it suitable for a purpose, it will nevertheless be completely unable to come off the register. We are addressing that matter.

As the economy comes out of recession, I do not want this problem lingering for much longer. We want to deal with the matter and settle the concerns as soon as possible in the new year.

Subsidiarity

4. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what effect the adoption of the principle of subisidiarity in environmental policy in the European Community is expected to have on United Kingdom standards.

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Michael Howard): The principle of subsidiarity requires that decisions should not be taken at Community level unless effective action cannot be taken by member states. It does not affect standards. We shall continue to maintain high environmental standards in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Williams: Does the Minister agree that there are two types of environmental problem? One type, involving the atmosphere and the seas around our coasts, is international in its impact. The other involves problems such as the quality of drinking water, contaminated land and recycling, which are much more localised in their impact. Is there not a danger that, under the cloak of subsidiarity, a cynical Government, such as we have at present, could use that loophole to mouth platitudes at international conferences about environmental regulations while in their own back yard it will be business as usual as the dirty man of Europe?

Mr. Howard: I have some sympathy for the distinction with which the hon. Gentleman commenced his question, but the inference that he drew from it was entirely misplaced. I suspect that the difference between us is that I have greater faith in the institutions of this country to take the necessary decisions to safeguard our environment.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that some of the steps being taken at European level are wholly inconsistent with the principles of subsidiarity as advocated by the hon. Member for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams)? For example, draft directives on landfill do not seem to take into account the fact that the position in the United Kingdom is entirely different from that in continental Europe. Would it not be better if the European Community stuck to international environmental issues such as air pollution rather than getting into the detail of things which are better dealt with a member state level?

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend has cited one example, and there are a number of other examples which one should scrutinise carefully in the light of the definition of subsidiarity to which I referred earlier. That is something that Her Majesty's Government will do.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Given that the then Minister for Housing and Planning, on introducing the legislation in 1988 to give effect to the directive on environmental impact and assessment, said that it was "thoroughly commendable", can the Secretary of State give a cast-iron guarantee that neither at Edinburgh this week nor later will there be any change in the full commitment to and implementation of the present environmental impact directive so that woods such as Oxleas wood which is 8,000 years old are entirely protected and not at risk from a weakening of European Community-inspired legislation?

Mr. Howard: The hon. Gentleman should know by now that the assumption on which his question was based is wholly mistaken. The dispute over Oxleas wood has nothing whatever to do with Britain's acceptance of the environmental impact assessment directive. It is a purely technical dispute about the moment at which that directive came into force. It is about time that the hon. Gentleman and his friends stopped misleading people about the attitude of Britain to that directive.

Mr. Wilkinson: In view of the highly egregious and probably unjusticiable nature of the phrase "subsidiarity", even as defined by my right hon. and learned Friend, will he simply make sure that British environmental standards are at least as good as any of those set on the continent?

Mr. Howard: I believe that our standards are already at least as high as those on the continent. Any objective comparative assessment would support that view. We shall continue to ensure that environmental standards in Britain are of the highest.

Mr. Chris Smith: Does the Secretary of State agree that, especially with the impact of the single market coming in on 1 January, it is vitally important that environmental standards across Europe are kept consistent and high? How does he explain the internal Government documents recently leaked to the European Parliament which show that the Government seem intent on blocking Community initiatives on landfill, water quality and, perhaps most importantly, the environmental impact assessment of Government policy making? Is it not the case that the Government seem determined to become the bargain basement of Europe environmentally as well as socially?

Mr. Howard: No, that is not true. If the hon. Gentleman and his friends spent less time scavenging around for leaked documents, they would be less familiar with basements, bargain or otherwise. We should have high environmental standards in Britain. Where it is appropriate for the Community to take action, it is right that environmental standards across the Community should be high and consistent. However, there are many matters on which it is perfectly legitimate to leave nation states to take the necessary decisions. We shall seek to implement that approach wherever it is appropriate to do so.

Peak Park Planning Board (Elections)

5. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to introduce direct elections to the Peak park planning board.

Mr. Maclean: We have no plans to do so. The national parks review panel did not recommend direct elections to the park authorities as it felt that the long-term national interest would not be served. The Government intend to legislate to create independent authorities for all the national parks. We also intend to take steps to ensure that local interests are properly represented on them.

Mr. Knox: How does my hon. Friend justify the fact that the Peak national park is one of only two areas in the country where planning decisions are taken by people who are not directly elected? How does he justify that? Does he think that it is fair to the people who live in the Peak national park?

Mr. Maclean: Councillors on national park bodies were elected in their districts or county councils. Although they were not directly elected to the national park authorities, they were elected in their council areas. The national parks review panel considered the matter and decided that it was not appropriate to follow the model of direct elections, and I am inclined to agree.

Mr. Clelland: Is the Minister aware that the Peak park planning board is just one of many quangos which run various aspects of our lives at no small cost to the taxpayer? Often the people who serve on such quangos do so for no other reason than that they are in the favour of Tory Ministers. Is it not time we moved Britain into the 21st century by the election of a democratic tier of regional government which could encompass organisations such as the Peak park planning board and bring them under the control of the people whom they are supposed to represent?

Mr. Maclean: I am pleased to acknowledge the large amount of expenditure on our national parks to which the hon. Gentleman has alluded. In the past five years it has increased by 50 per cent. in real terms; that is recognition of the Government's commitment to some of the finest areas of this country. I do not know where the hon. Gentleman has been, but I have met many chairmen of national parks and members of their boards. Many have long and distinguished records as Labour councillors in Labour areas. Our boards are a mixture of members from all political parties and from none. On balance, they are doing a pretty good job and the hon. Gentleman does a disservice by suggesting that there is party-political favour in such appointments.

Caravan Sites Act 1968

6. **Mr. Clifton-Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the responses to his Department's consultation paper concerning reform of the Caravan Sites Act 1968.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Tony Baldry): The Department has received more than 1,200 responses to the consultation paper from local authorities, gipsies, land-owning interests and other organisations and individuals. We are considering the responses carefully, and will make an announcement in due course about implementing the reforms.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: My hon. Friend will recognise that that problem causes misery in many rural areas and I urge him to take whatever action is necessary before there is a repeat of last summer's activities. May I also urge him to communicate to his colleagues in the Home Office the need for reform of the Public Order Acts to relieve the problem?

Mr. Baldry: We intend to take action, and we shall proceed as soon as we have had the opportunity to consider responses to the consultation paper. It might be helpful to make it clear to hon. Members that our proposals for reforming the Caravan Sites Act 1968 do not cover public order problems caused by large congregations of new age travellers. Home Office Ministers, in consultation with other Government Departments and the police, are urgently considering what practical measures —including changes to the civil and criminal law—can be taken to deal with mass trespass.

Mr. Gunnell: The Government have spent more than £50 million since 1979 on the development of caravan sites. Will the Minister explain how he intends the quality of those sites to be maintained and how spaces will be made available for travellers? Can he explain how the legislation being contemplated can assist with homelessness, as it seems to me that it threatens to make the situation a good deal worse?

Mr. Baldry: I think that the hon. Gentleman should allow the gipsy organisations to speak for themselves. In response to our proposal the National Gypsy Council has said:

> "Having been in the forefront of official site provision ever since the implementation of the 1968 Act, and as originators and the strongest advocators of the concept of private site initiatives for gypsies, the views of the National Gypsy Council are well documented. In our opinion private sites are beneficial to all concerned, to gypsies because they offer them the security of a legal home and a base from which they can send their children to school, to local authorities and central Government who are spared the expense of developing and managing sites and to local settled communities by the reduction in the number of unauthorised encampments. Furthermore, private gypsy sites are in locations where the gypsies who will live on them want to be. They suffer none of the problems due to incompatibility which are sometimes found on local authority sites and once a private site has become established, the families on it quickly prove themselves to be good neighbours."

Mr. David Nicholson: Is my hon. Friend aware that there will be a widespread welcome for his proposed measures to deal with illegal camping? Is he also aware that some of my constituents have strong reservations about aspects of his consultation paper, which appear to enable local authorities to evade their responsibilities? Will he do all that he can to protect my constituents in North Curry and Wrantage, who may be disadvantaged if neighbouring local authorities are able to evade their responsibilities in relation to gipsy encampments?

Mr. Baldry: We are determined that no local authority shall evade its responsibilities under this or any future legislation.

Mr. Pike: Will the Minister give an assurance that the Department is not working to a rigid timetable in considering responses to the consultation, as it is important to consider the complexities of such a broad issue before the Government respond and take action?

Mr. Baldry: We will consider all the responses very carefully, but there is no doubt that the 1968 legislation, which was brought in for the best possible reasons, has failed the travellers and local communities. It is time for a reform and we are determined to bring that about.

Rent-a-room Scheme

7. Mr. Hendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the number of additional units of accommodation that will be brought into use by the rent-a-room scheme.

Sir George Young: It is not possible to give a precise figure. The nature of lodging makes it difficult to measure accurately the size of the sector. We hope, however, that the new scheme will encourage an increase in the number of people who take in lodgers.

Mr. Hendry: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that reply. Is he aware that building societies and the Council of Mortgage Lenders, which have traditionally discouraged people from taking in lodgers, not only welcome the scheme but are actively encouraging people to take advantage of it? Does that not show what a useful and valuable addition it is to the range of policies already in place for tackling homelessness?

Sir George Young: I very much welcome the new approach by the Council of Mortgage Lenders and other lenders. We must make the best possible use of our housing stock. The scheme also provides an additional source of income for those who own those properties, which may be useful at the present time.

Mr. Soley: Having reduced the private rented sector from 14 per cent. of the total housing stock in 1979 to 7 per cent. now, is it not time that the Goverment came up with a proper private rented sector instead of subsidising private landlords, whether in mortgaged properties or otherwise, via housing benefit, and even subsidising some who are in prison because they have harassed their tenants? Would it not be better to have a tax-break system in exchange for the registration of landlords? We could then strike off those who were bad landlords, instead of using public money to subsidise them.

Sir George Young: Few people have more responsibility for the decline of the private rented sector than the Labour party, whose wholly hostile approach to the private landlord was responsible for many leaving that sector. It is interesting to note the hon. Gentleman's U-turn; he is now suggesting a tax break for private landlords, after the Labour party has spent decades harassing them. That is real progress.

Basel Convention

8. Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects the United Kingdom to ratify the Basel convention.

Mr. Maclean: Ratification of the Basel convention is dependent, first, on adoption of the European Community waste shipments regulation by the Council of Ministers and, secondly, on the Council's decision on the timing of ratification.

Mr. Coombs: Although my hon. Friend rightly says that this is a matter mainly of European competence, does he agree that early ratification is particularly important because the Basel convention confirms the self-sufficiency principle, which means that developed countries should not transport their hazardous waste unnecessarily? That convention gives developed countries the opportunity to receive waste from developing countries that do not have the recycling facilities necessary for hazardous waste.

Mr. Maclean: My hon. Friend is right. Ratification is a matter for the EC and we shall want to see that achieved as early as possible.

We are committed to the self-sufficiency principle and I pay tribute to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for successfully negotiating that when he took over the presidency of the European Council. We shall now develop our own national plans to ensure that developed countries that are large enough to deal with their own waste do not transport it here.

Mr. Denham: Is the Minister aware that millions of people in this country are still deeply concerned about our continuing role as the toxic waste-bin of Europe? Does the Minister accept that, despite all the fine words about the Luxembourg agreement and the Basel convention, no unequivocal statement has ever been made by any Minister to the effect that the Government will use those powers to ban the import of toxic waste from developed countries? No committed timetable has ever been set for achieving such a ban. Will the Minister make that unequivocal commitment and present that timetable this afternoon?

Mr. Maclean: I fear that the hon. Gentleman is very muddled. First, he should look to see which countries are the toxic waste-bins—it is certainly not this one. We have just negotiated a regulation in the EC which will, for the first time, give this country the power to turn off the tap of waste coming from developed countries for disposal here. If the hon. Gentleman looks at the convention, he will see that it does permit developing countries, that do not have the facilities to deal with their waste safely to send it to developed countries where it can be treated properly. That is a sensible part of the convention.

Mr. Rowe: Is it not the height of irony that the Labour party makes such a song and dance about importing toxic waste for treatment from developing countries that do not have the technology to deal with it safely, when it spends most of the rest of the time posing as the party most concerned about environmental damage being done around the world?

Mr. Maclean: My hon. Friend makes a good point. All developed countries agreed that it was morally right that they should not instantly cut off the ability of poor developing countries to have their waste properly treated in developed countries. We shall certainly not take waste from other developed countries that can deal with it themselves. Waste for final disposal should be dealt with in developed countries. That is what we have negotiated and we are implementing national plans to ensure that it is put into place when the directive is ratified.

Local Authority Staff (Pay)

Mr. Mandelson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about the application of the policy on pay increases in 1992-93 for staff working in local authorities.

Mr. Howard: I expect local authorities to play a full part in achieving pay restraint to maximise the potential

for investment and employment. The chairmen of the local authority associations have undertaken to do their very best to settle within the zero to 1·5 per cent. range.

Mr. Mandelson: How can the Secretary of State justify a policy that asks some of the lowest-paid in our community to pay the price for the Government's economic incompetence? When hon. Members are lobbied this afternoon by representatives of the National and Local Government Officers Association, they will know that many public sector employees—in the health service and local government—already receive wages below the Council of Europe's decency pay threshold. If belts must be tightened, would not it be fairer for the well-off to feel the pinch, rather than making those who are already low paid experience the pain from the Government's policies?

Mr. Howard: The fairest approach is for those in work to accept some sacrifice to maximise the opportunities to create jobs for those out of work. The fact that the Opposition fail to recognise and support that objective shows the extent to which they are out of touch. That objective behind our policy has won the support of the chairmen of the local authority associations to whom I referred.

Mr. Alexander: As public sector pay in local authorities accounts for 70 per cent. of the cost of local authorities, if people working in local government accept the public sector norms which the rest of us have accepted, does it not follow that the settlement announced only the other day means that local authorities should not need to raise their charges by any more than they received from the community charge last year?

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. It is a measure of the dimension of what can be achieved through that policy that every 1 per cent. on public sector pay costs an additional £800 million a year. If local authorities sought those savings by manpower reductions, 50,000 jobs would be put at risk.

Mr. Henderson: Given that the Secretary of State has already acknowledged that pay accounts for 70 per cent. of local authority costs, does he accept the assessment by the stockbrokers, Robert Fleming, that the suggested Government spending total for next year is less than 1 per cent. above what councils expect to spend this financial year? If that is the case and if inflation is only 3 per cent. in the next financial year, does he accept that, given his financial regime, capping and the 1·5 per cent. pay limit which he will impose on local authorities, the inevitable result will be cuts in vital services? If so, will he now withdraw his statement to the House on 26 November that no service cuts in local authorities are needed?

Mr. Howard: As long as the Labour party and its Front-Bench team continue to base their assertions on comparisons that do not compare like with like, they demonstrate how unfit they are to be taken seriously. We have to compare the total standard spending for next year with the total standard spending for this year, not compare the total standard spending with budgets. When the hon. Gentleman demonstrates that he has understood that, we shall take his arguments seriously.

Social Housing

10. Mr. Wells: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate he has for the amount of social housing which will be provided from public funds over the next three years.

12. Mr. Moss: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much the Government will be investing in social housing over the next three years.

Mr. Howard: Our manifesto promised that 153,000 houses would be provided over the three years beginning April 1992; we now estimate that the Housing Corporation should be able to provide some 170,000 additional homes in that period.

Mr. Wells: I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend and his team on obtaining that additional money for social housing. Will he find innovative financial methods to use the additional money from taxpayers to lever the private sector into social housing? That would enable us to extend social housing provision to constituencies such as mine where there are poor people who are equally in need of housing for themselves and their families.

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend has made an important point. The autumn statement was based on the assumption that we should be able to increase the private sector contribution to social housing. We intend to do that with the additional money made available for the remainder of this financial year; taking into account the private sector contribution, we shall provide nearly £1 billion worth of additional social housing in the period to the end of the current financial year.

Mr. Moss: I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend on the fact that the autumn statement commits us to exceeding our manifesto pledge for the provision of social housing. However, does he agree that the needs of rural regions such as my constituency of Cambridgeshire, North-East are just as pressing as those of urban districts? Does he accept the need to encourage private sector houses to be made available in the rented sector at affordable rents?

Mr. Howard: I certainly agree with my hon. Friend, and I hope that his constituency and other rural districts will benefit from the package announced with the autumn statement. He is right to emphasise the importance of encouraging the revival of the private rented sector, which the policies of the Labour party have done so much to damage for such a long time.

Mr. Raynsford: Will the Secretary of State tell the House of the estimates of housing need in Britain that have been produced by a series of organisations, including the Institute of Housing, and, most recently, estimates produced for the Housing Corporation by Mark Kleinman and Christine Whitehead? Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman confirm that they all make it clear that at least 100,000 new homes are needed each year for rent? Therefore, on the basis of the Secretary of State's projections this afternoon, there will be a serious shortfall over the next three years, which will mean that the problems of homelessness will get worse. When will the Government recognise that their programme is inadequate?

Mr. Howard: Estimates of need vary widely. If the hon. Gentleman is seriously interested in making a constructive contribution to the resolution of such problems, I invite him to devote a little more of his time and attention to the solutions to the problems—solutions such as those that I mentioned earlier.

Ms. Abbott: The Minister will be aware of the excellent work done by the housing associations in the London borough of Hackney, particularly through inner-city challenge. Does the Minister accept that the Government's stated policy—that housing associations alone should provide all new housing—cannot hope to meet the extent of the need in inner-city districts? If the Government insist that all new houses must be provided by housing associations, they will consign thousands of my constitutents to homelessness and poor housing conditions. If the Government are serious about housing the people of the inner cities, they must give councils the money to do the job.

Mr. Howard: I am glad that the hon. Lady has recognised the important contribution made by housing associations. It is not only housing associations that provide new houses. If the hon Lady pays careful attention to the state of council housing in her constituency—I am sure that she does—she will see the importance of getting away from solutions that were tried in the past, and failed, and of tackling the problems in a way that fully meets contemporary needs.

Mrs. Currie: Is it not right that social housing can be provided not just out of public funds? I draw to the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the imaginative schemes brought together by South Derbyshire district council, Toyota and a housing association, in which accommodation which has been built for the Toyota executives and trainers who will be here on a short-term basis will revert to public housing for low-cost rent when Toyota has finished with it.

Mr. Howard: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I had not heard of that scheme, but I shall study it with great interest. I know that on this, as on so many other issues, my hon. Friend invites the rest of the country to look to South Derbyshire for a lead. I shall see to what extent we can follow that lead in this area.

Mr. Battle: No doubt, next week the Secretary of State will tell local authorities that their housing investment programmes and their permission to borrow to provide will have to be cut. Is it not true that estimates do not vary—that there is consensus among everyone, except the Government, on the need for more than 300,000 more homes to rent in the next three years? However, Government measures, including the recent initiatives for housing associations, are now revealed as providing well below that target. When will the Secretary of State and the Government get to grips with the scale of the housing and homelessness crisis and ensure that there are enough homes to rent? That is what people desperately need.

Mr. Howard: When will the Labour party learn that it is no use one Front-Bench spokesman after another getting up and asking for more and more money to be spent while the shadow Treasury team wanders around the country trying to persuade everyone of how responsible the Labour party is? When the hon. Gentleman has talked to the shadow Chief Secretary and received his sanction to call for additional public expenditure, we shall listen to what he says with some seriousness—not before.

National Parks (Privatisation)

11. **Mr. Steen:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to privatise the national parks.

Mr. Maclean: We have no plans to do so. National parks are living, working landscapes and most of the land within them is already in private ownership. The continued success of the parks depends on the delicate balance between nature conservation, rural development and sensitive regulation for the benefit of all who live, work in and enjoy the parks.

Mr. Steen: I am delighted with that answer. The last thing I should like my hon. Friend to do is to privatise the national parks. Is he aware, however, that the Duchy of Cornwall is treating the Dartmoor national park committee with contempt and in a cavalier manner? When the Ministry of Defence sought permission to spend £30,000 of taxpayers' money to fill up the holes in a road which it said it would allow to fall into benign neglect, the Duchy of Cornwall and the MOD, in a covert operation in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson), did not consult the national park committee at all. Will the Secretary of State see to it that the Duchy of Cornwall behaves more openly in future?

Mr. Maclean: I am sorry to hear of that local difficulty. I had understood that the Ministry of Defence notified the national park that it was about to fill in some potholes. In questions about such matters as access to national parks there is always the potential for conflicts of interest which are best resolved at local level.

I should like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Ministry of Defence on the way in which it protects wildlife. Some of the best wildlife sites in this country are protected on Ministry of Defence property, and I recommend that colleagues read the booklet "Sanctuary" which shows the tremendous work that the MOD does. If there are brickbats to be thrown, one should throw them, but I also want to applaud the MOD when it does things right—such as nature conservation work.

Mr. Trimble: I greatly welcome the Minister's statement this afternoon about maintaining the national parks and providing independent authorities for them. Given his strong support for national parks, will he have a word with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and ask him why there has never been a national park in Northern Ireland?

Mr. Maclean: That is a territory into which I dare not tread. I shall pass on the hon. Gentleman's views to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State. I merely say that on my visits to Northern Ireland I considered the entire country to be a wonderful national park.

Miss Emma Nicholson: The Okehampton loop road, to which my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) referred, is valued by my constituents. Will my hon. Friend consider direct elections to national park

committees that include people in the surrounding parishes as well as outside experts? Only by that method will national parks be properly cared for by people who really know about them.

Mr. Maclean: There are requirements that a proportion of the members serving on national park committees should come from within the boundaries of the parks. When district and county councils appoint their elected members to the park boards and authorities, I hope that they pay special attention to the need to have local people serving on those bodies. We are committed to new national parks legislation. We are working on it and my hon. Friend may wish to consider the issue of representation when that legislation is considered by the House.

Council Tax

13. **Miss Lester:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how his Department's present estimate for the average council tax for a two-adult household in a band D equivalent property differs from the estimate published by his Department in 1991.

Mr. Redwood: The Department of the Environment has never forecast the likely levels of council tax.

Miss Lester: May I remind the Minister that estimates were made? In 1991, the estimate for band D was £400. In the rate support instruction, it was £494. The *Financial Times* today suggests that another £50 will be added to that. Is the Minister aware of the consternation that this is causing to lower and middle-income groups, who are worried about the way in which valuations have been determined? Is he aware also that many people think that he should return to the drawing board and start all over again?

Mr. Redwood: Local government does not want us to start again. It wants the local tax that we propose and it wants an independent source of revenue; we are getting co-operation from many Labour and Liberal councils as a result—it is a pity that we are not getting co-operation from Opposition Members as well. The figures shown for illustration in 1991-92 were based on spending in 1991-92. Opposition Members seem to have forgotten—or they do not want to know—that local councils are spending more this year than last and that they will be spending more next year than this. We are not intending to forecast. There is independence and freedom within local government to decide what to spend and how much tax to impose within the limits set out by my right hon. and learned Friend. We intend to wait and see what councils do and to praise those that set modest taxes and provide high-quality services.

Sir Anthony Durant: When my hon. Friend is considering capping, will he cap Labour-controlled Reading borough council, which seems to have set out to produce the highest rate of council tax of any area in Berkshire?

Mr. Redwood: I can reassure my hon. Friend. If any council exceeds the criteria limits that have been set out following proper consultation, it is likely that my right hon. and learned Friend will have to cap it to defend the interests of local taxpayers and to make sure that that council, like most local authorities, delivers good services at a sensible price.

Mr. Barnes: Why is there only a threefold difference in payment between the low band of the council tax and the high band? Is that the nearest that the Government could get to the poll tax while pretending that there was a difference between the two taxes?

Mr. Redwood: No. The council tax is a new tax with new principles. It has a strong property element, which Opposition Members have always said they wanted. There must be some limits on the amounts that those in more expensive houses have to pay. That issue was debated in Parliament and our proposals were approved by Parliament.

Housing Corporation

14. **Mr. Dickens:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many new houses will be provided by the Housing Corporation over the next three years.

Mr. Baldry: We estimate that as a consequence of the autumn statement of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, housing associations will now be able to provide about 170,000 new homes for social renting by April 1995 with funding from the Housing Corporation —considerably more than the 153,000 promised in our manifesto.

Mr. Dickens: Does my hon. Friend agree that the £630 million of Government money that is going towards housing associations and local government will release about 20,000 social dwellings? Is that not a magnificent effort by the Government, remembering that the Conservative party always adheres to its manifesto promises, whereas the Labour party fails to do so repeatedly?

Mr. Baldry: My hon. Friend makes an excellent point. The housing associations are working well on the programme. The first family to be helped has already moved out of the caravan in which they were living to a home made available through the programme. The housing associations have no doubt that they will be able to deliver 20,000 homes to families in housing need by March next year.

Mr. Litherland: Is the Minister aware that his appalling gall is matched only by the Government's appalling housing record, which has dropped by 50 per cent. since 1979? Does he agree that millions of housing bricks being stockpiled and 500,000 construction workers on the dole are not just economic madness but immoral?

Mr. Baldry: The hon. Gentleman clearly was not present when my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer made his autumn statement. Had he been, he would have heard about the additional funding for the Housing Corporation and the fact that local authorities such as his will be allowed to spend 100 per cent. of the capital receipts that they raise between now and December next year. We estimate that that will bring well over £1 million into new housing investment. I should have thought that he and other Labour Members would be cheering that announcement, not cat-calling.

Mr. Ian Taylor: Will my hon. Friend bear in mind the fact that the additional money being provided for the Housing Corporation and the ability to spend capital receipts will be welcomed by local authorities in the south-east, where there is a particular need for social housing? Conditions are difficult and the Housing Corporation and housing associations have difficulty meeting local demand. Will my hon. Friend ensure that the schemes are put into practice without disadvantaging local authorities in my area?

Mr. Baldry: We have a determination and an ambition that every family in this country should have a decent home in which to live. Different areas have different housing challenges, but we are determined to meet the housing challenge in Esher as we are to meet it in any other part of the country.

Council Tax

15. **Mrs. Anne Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the position of students in relation to payment of the council tax.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Robin Squire): Most students will pay no council tax at all. Students halls of residence will be exempt, as will dwellings occupied exclusively by students. A student who lives with non-students will not be counted towards the personal element of the tax. That means that he will not add to the household's bill. For instance, where a student lives with one parent, the dwelling will be treated as having only one resident and a 25 per cent. discount will apply.

Mrs. Campbell: Is the Minister—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady can hardly be heard. I should be grateful for order in all parts of the House.

Mrs. Campbell: Is the Minister aware of the position of some students in my constituency who share houses in multiple occupation? If one person ceases to be a student, the household will be liable for the full council tax, less the 25 per cent. rebate. If two people cease to be students, the household will be liable for the full council tax. Does the Minister think that that is fair?

Mr. Squire: The short answer is yes. I am genuinely surprised that the hon. Lady, who represents one of our great university cities, has not welcomed the fact that the overwhelming majority of students will not be paying tax in future years. The only way to remove the position that she has highlighted would be to extend exemption for council tax to those who were either in employment or eligible to claim benefit. The Government believe that that would be quite wrong.

Macclesfield

16. **Mr. Nicholas Winterton:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from Macclesfield borough council about the housing investment programme allocation and the provision of low-cost housing.

Mr. Baldry: Following the receipt of Macclesfield's housing investment programme strategy and bid for resources for 1993-94 in August, the council made a presentation to me in Macclesfield of its housing plans and proposals on 14 September. Later in September, officials from the Department's north-west regional office and the Housing Corporation met council officers to discuss the details of the strategy and bid. I have also corresponded with the leader of the council on these matters.

Mr. Winterton: Does my hon. Friend accept that the housing department of Macclesfield borough council is extremely well run, that it does an excellent job and that it deserves the Government's support? Of course, the council is under overall Conservative control—one of the few, if not the only one, in the north-west.

Does my hon. Friend further accept that low-cost housing in areas such as Macclesfield is essential if we are to provide the range of housing accommodation that is desperately required? The problems of a well-off area exacerbate the problems of people on low incomes. Would my hon. Friend pay particular attention to that need in Macclesfield?

Mr. Baldry: Macclesfield council made a constructive and positive submission in its housing investment programme. Its performance and needs will be well reflected in the amounts made available to it in the coming year's housing investment programme.

Toxic Waste

17. **Mr. Sweeney:** to ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to minimise the international trade in toxic waste; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: Our policy is that all developed countries should dispose of their own waste—the principle of self-sufficiency. This principle is incorporated in the EC waste shipments regulation, which was agreed at Council on 20 October.

Mr. Sweeney: Does my hon. Friend agree that we have a duty to accept waste from developing countries, and what is being done to help developing countries to dispose of their own waste?

Mr. Maclean: When the Basel convention is ratified and the EC waste shipment regulation takes effect, all developed countries and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries will be able to deal with waste from developing countries and to help them deal with the problem. We are quite adamant, however, that the developed world—especially Britain—should not take waste from developed countries that can deal with it themselves.

Prince and Princess of Wales

3.30 pm

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): With permission, Madam Speaker, I wish to inform the House that Buckingham palace is at this moment issuing the following statement. It reads as follows:

"It is announced from Buckingham Palace that, with regret, the Prince and Princess of Wales have decided to separate. Their Royal Highnesses have no plans to divorce and their constitutional positions are unaffected. This decision has been reached amicably, and they will both continue to participate fully in the upbringing of their children.

Their Royal Highnesses will continue to carry out full and separate programmes of public engagements, and will from time to time attend family occasions and national events together.

The Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh, though saddened, understand and sympathise with the difficulties that have led to this decision. Her Majesty and His Royal Highness particularly hope that the intrusions into the privacy of the Prince and Princess may now cease. They believe that a degree of privacy and understanding is essential if Their Royal Highnesses are to provide a happy and secure upbringing for their children, while continuing to give a whole-hearted commitment to their public duties."

That is the text of the announcement.

I am sure that I speak for the whole House—and millions beyond it—in offering our support to both the Prince and Princess of Wales. I am also sure that the House will sympathise with the wish that they should both be afforded a degree of privacy.

The House will wish to know that the decision to separate has no constitutional implications. The succession to the throne is unaffected by it; the children of the Prince and Princess retain their position in the line of succession; and there is no reason why the Princess of Wales should not be crowned Queen in due course. The Prince of Wales's succession as head of the Church of England is also unaffected. Neither the Prince nor the Princess is supported by the civil list, and this position will remain unchanged.

I know that there will be great sadness at this news. But I know also that, as they continue with their royal duties and with bringing up their children, the Prince and Princess will have the full support, understanding and affection of the House and of the country.

Mr. John Smith (Monklands, East): May I, first, thank the Prime Minister for making a statement to the House? I am sure that the whole House will share the feeling of sadness that he has expressed at the announcement of the separation and will share the hope that a greater degree of privacy might result for the Prince and Princess of Wales and their children in what would be a difficult time for any family. We associate ourselves entirely with the expression of support for the Prince and Princess of Wales in the carrying out of their public duties.

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): I wish to associate myself and my right hon. and hon. Friends with the words of the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition. These will be difficult times for the royal family, and the whole House will wish to extend to them our sympathy, especially to the Prince and Princess of Wales, and to assure them that whatever decisions they take on these purely personal matters, they can be assured of our continued support in future. I wish to reinforce the comments made by the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition in expressing the hope that they will indeed be allowed a period of months—or longer if possible—in which they may have a degree of privacy and peace.

I thank the Prime Minister for having expressed so clearly the constitutional position and for having expressed what are, I am sure, sentiments that will be felt by all parties in the House. In particular, I should like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the Prince and Princess of Wales for their past and continued service to the nation.

The Prime Minister: I am sure that the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) and the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) have spoken for the country in what they have had to say and that I need comment no further upon their remarks.

Sir Edward Heath (Old Bexley and Sidcup): I think that the House would wish me, as Father of the House, to express the understanding of the whole House of the action which has been taken and which has been so clearly described by the Prime Minister. It must be one of the saddest announcements made by any Prime Minister in modern times. I am sure that the whole House feels exactly the same way about it.

I also support the plea which has already been made for their Royal Highnesses to be granted privacy. May I suggest, in my position, that perhaps we in the House, in the questions we ask and the speeches we make, might give leadership in extending privacy to their Royal Highnesses.

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): Does the Prime Minister understand that the statement was received by my party with deep regret and great sympathy for the royal family? May I support what the Prime Minister said in requesting a period of quietness for those who find themselves in this unfortunate situation? The last thing that any family needs at such a time is a forest of television or other cameras pointed in its direction. Indeed, if fewer cameras had been pointed in its direction and fewer comments made, perhaps this might not have happened.

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): On behalf of my party, I should like to associate myself with what the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition and the leaders of other parties have said. The royal couple, especially their family, need our sympathy and our prayers. I trust that what has been said in the House about press coverage will be heeded and that the family will have a time of quiet and calm to get over this problem.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Does the Prime Minister accept that even a family of great wealth and position has felt the strains which have resulted in divorce—in separation—and in difficulties for the marriage? Is not it true that hundreds of thousands of ordinary people go through similar strains and are afflicted by an equal degree of sadness? Is not it also true that poor housing, low pay and rotten conditions of employment place much greater strains on marriages and that it will be a welcome day when the Government make a statement to the House to relieve those strains, not only those affecting the narrow royal family?

The Prime Minister: I think that the whole House will endorse many of the remarks that have been made in the last few minutes by right hon. and hon. Gentlemen. To ensure that there is no dispute or misunderstanding, may I make the point beyond any dispute that their Royal

Highnesses have separated—both the Prince and the Princess have made it clear that they have no plans to divorce.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Does the Prime Minister realise that probably the most controversial part of what he said was that there would be no constitutional changes? Would not it be fair to say that, as a result of the occurrences in recent months and the pushing of the self-destruct button by the monarchy, we could now be witnessing the end of the monarchy and that the reigning Queen could be the last? That could not be blamed on those of us who believe that there is no need for a monarchy in this land now.

I therefore ask the Prime Minister to bear in mind the fact that the shattering announcement will result in changes in our constitution. It is high time that we stopped this charade of swearing allegiance to the Queen and her heirs and successors, because we do not know from time to time who they are.

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman does not, I believe, speak for the nation, or for any significant part of it. The affection for the monarchy and for members of the royal family in this country is deep, widespread and enduring. We live in a monarchy and, if I may speak personally, I hope and believe that we always will.

Dame Jill Knight (Birmingham, Edgbaston): May I say, Madam Speaker, how greatly I and my right hon. and hon. Friends, and, I am sure, many Opposition Members, resent and reject the remarks by the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). I would not wish the voice of this House to say anything other than that we are loyal subjects of Her Majesty, and we fully appreciate what she does for this nation, which is immeasurable.

Madam Speaker: Order. We now move on. Thank you, Prime Minister.

Points of Order

3.40 pm

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. My point of order relates to the protection of the integrity of proceedings in the House, and of *Hansard* as a record of those proceedings, not only for those who consult it now but for future historians.

I refer to a statement made in the House on 19 October by the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, whom I have notified of my intention to raise a point of order. His absence is, I fear, a further illustration of his attitude to the integrity of proceedings in the House. The right hon. Gentleman said:

> "I had to go to Corby in 1979 when the Labour party closed the steelworks"—[*Official Report*, 19 October 1992; Vol. 212, c. 209.]

I wrote to the right hon. Gentleman and told him that what he had said was not true, because it was the Conservative Government who closed the steelworks. In my letter I said:

> "What you have said is an untruth and I am writing to ask you to apologise for purveying this untruth and to withdraw your statement."

The right hon. Gentleman replied to me, dodging what I had said. I wrote again, and last week I received a letter from him which still failed to apologise for the untruth of what he had said. Nevertheless, the letter acknowledged that what the right hon. Gentleman has said was untrue, by saying that the announcement of the closure of the steelworks was made on 1 November 1979, six months after the Conservative Government came to office. The closure took place the following year.

The Secretary of State has now acknowledged that what he said to the House was not true. Nevertheless, he has knowingly left an untrue statement on the record of the proceedings of the House. Before now Ministers have been compelled to resign for knowingly not telling the truth to the House of Commons. In this case, a right hon. Gentleman has knowingly not told the truth and has admitted by implication that he has not told the truth, yet he is allowing his untruth to remain on the record, in *Hansard*. I ask you, Madam Speaker, to require him to make an apology and a correction so that the record may be accurate.

Madam Speaker: The right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) will be aware that the Speaker is not responsible for the accuracy of the speeches by Ministers or, for that matter, by Back Benchers. Had the right hon. Gentleman attempted to raise this matter with me on 19 or 20 October, I might have been able to take some action—*[Interruption.]* There is no point in hon. Members raising their hands; I have not finished yet. What happened is not a point of order for the occupant of the Chair. If there has been an inaccuracy, however, the right hon. Gentleman has corrected it by his statement today.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: There is no further point of order. I have dealt with the question.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I remind you that the matter was raised on——

Madam Speaker: Order. I have dealt with the matter as far as I can at this stage, and any inaccuracy has been fully corrected by the right hon. Member for Gorton.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): On another point of order, Madam Speaker. In last week's business statement, the debate that we are about to have was styled as a debate on the common fisheries policy. I understand that certain documents pertaining to that policy have not been seen by the House. I refer to documents relating to a so-called presidential compromise on new proposals for the common fisheries policy. I have checked, and have discovered that the documents are not available. May I therefore ask you whether it is in order that we should have a debate that was meant to be on the common fisheries policy without the documents being available to us? If it is not, is there any guarantee that we shall have the opportunity to debate the common fisheries policy before decisions are signed, sealed and delivered in Brussels next week?

Madam Speaker: It is not for the occupant of the Chair but for the hon. Gentleman himself to determine whether he has sufficient information to enable him to make up his mind about the Government's intentions. It will be a wide-ranging debate, and I can tell him that the motion on the Order Paper is perfectly in order. It is up to the hon. Gentleman to determine how he should proceed in the debate.

Mr. Flynn: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I should like again to try to raise with you the point of order——

Madam Speaker: Order. There can be no further points of order. I have made that absolutely clear. The right hon. Member for Gorton who raised the original point of order did so quite properly and he has been answered quite properly and to the best of my ability. We shall now make progress.

BILL PRESENTED

Trade Boycotts

Mr. Spencer Batiste, supported by Sir Rhodes Boyson, Mr. David Sumberg, Mr. John Marshall, Mr. Edward Garnier, Sir John Wheeler, Mr. Andrew Rowe, Mr. Alan Duncan, Mr. Greville Janner, Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody, Mr. David Alton and Mr. Michael Gapes, presented a Bill to prohibit companies from giving information for the purposes of a trade boycott which has not been approved by United Nations or European Community agreement; and for connected purposes: And the same was read a First time, and ordered to be read a Second time upon 9 July 1993; and to be printed. [Bill 100.]

Racial Violence

3.47 pm

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to make racial violence a specific criminal offence; to make other related amendments of the law; and for connected purposes.

In the past few weeks, much attention has been given to racial violence abroad. The murder by neo-Nazi thugs of three Turkish females, two of them children, deeply shocked much of Europe. This week has seen the terrible outbreak of communal violence in India and surrounding areas. We do not yet know how many people have died on the Indian sub-continent since Sunday. The attacks—be they in Germany, in other parts of Europe or on the Indian sub-continent—have, in the main, been engineered by extremists, basically of the same kind, as we know only too well from pre-war Europe. Thugs are thugs, regardless of colour, nationality or religion.

We must also recognise, however, that although, fortunately, the problem here is by no means as alarming as in many places abroad, we, too, suffer from continuing racial violence—or, I should say, the victims suffer from it. It is ugly, brutal and deeply obnoxious. That is why I am asking the House today for permission to bring in a Bill to make racial violence a specific criminal offence in law.

Some may say that I am really referring to harassment or prejudicial remarks. That is not so, although racial harassment is ugly enough and there can be a thin dividing line between it and outright violence against the person. Nevertheless, I am referring to racial violence, and the picture is one that should cause concern to all of us—even on the figures supplied by the Home Office. The figures show an alarming increase in racial attacks. The official figures refer to nearly 8,000 racial attacks in a year. As the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department is listening, I must state that few would seriously dispute that the real figure is tragically far greater than that. Some people believe that there are as many as 50,000 or even 70,000 attacks in a given year motivated by outright racialism. That is a very serious situation.

During the past year at least four people—*The Economist* referred this week to nine people—have been murdered in Britain as a result of racist attacks. Someone was convicted recently of murdering a 15-year-old Asian boy during a burglary at an off licence. After his arrest, that person gave a nazi salute and called out "Sieg heil" twice as he was apprehended by police. So far, no one has been charged in respect of the brutal murder of a Tamil refugee who was allowed into this country as he was fleeing from terror. That youngster was put to death as a result of racism, the crime was undoubtedly racially motivated, and the sooner those responsible for the death of that youth are brought to justice, the better.

The large majority of racial attacks, however, involve bodily harm or grievous bodily harm. As has been the case with bullies throughout the ages, the more defenceless types are subject to that sickening violence. Very often, the victims are Asian women and children.

We should not conclude that the problem is confined to the capital. Last month *The Scotsman* reported that incidents of racial violence were increasing. The senior community relations officer in Strathclyde was quoted as saying that evidence coming in to the community relations council and black advice centres showed that such violence

was very much on the increase, and that in the west midlands and also in the Strathclyde area, unfortunately, fascist organisations were attempting to stir up the maximum amount of racial hatred.

There seems to be a contradiction in the law as it stands. Incitement to racial violence is a criminal offence and many of us fought and campaigned for that. It is right and proper that such provision should be on the statute book. However, the existence of organisations like the national front and the so-called British national party, whose headquarters is in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Woolwich (Mr. Austin-Walker), arises from an attempt to stir up the maximum amount of racial strife and hatred. There is undoubtedly a contradiction there.

I welcome the moves that have been taken in Germany. They may be rather late in the day, but they are intended to deal with fascist organisations. The day may come when we shall have to deal with such individuals as well. I do not suggest that we should simply ban such organisations because the people concerned could easily form another organisation the next day. We must be clear that there is a contradiction along the lines that I have just described.

Like the Commission for Racial Equality, I believe that amending the law as I now suggest would be a recognition by Parliament and thus by the courts that racial violence should be regarded as an aggravating feature in prosecution and when a person has been duly convicted. That would send two messages. First, there would be a message to people who are in the business of inflicting such racial violence. There would also be a different message to those in the community at large and in the ethnic communities.

Amending the law as I suggest would also show our total abhorrence of the kind of crime that I have described. It would hopefully stimulate a more realistic level of reporting of such offences and demonstrate to all the seriousness with which we view attacks on people because of their colour or race.

All forms of attack and criminality are to be deplored. We want to bring to justice everyone who carries out criminality. That goes without saying. I am drawing attention today to a particular type of criminality whereby people are attacked simply because they happen to have skin which is a different colour from that of the majority of people in this country or because of their racial origin or the religion that they pursue. That is unforgivable and the House cannot ignore it.

My Bill is not meant to be an overall solution. Nor is it intended to be a substitute for existing laws. If anything, I want to see the existing laws strengthened. My proposed Bill would be part of coming to grips with the problem. It would be one more step to remove the fear and agony which exists.

Fortunately, a large majority of people of the ethnic minorities live in our country without difficulties. They live law-abiding lives and, by and large, do not have the sort of difficulties that I have described. However, there are those is certain parts of the country who have suffered day in and day out the fear and agony of being attacked for the reasons which I have outlined. My proposed Bill would be one of a number of steps to end such criminality.

Some time ago, going back indeed about a quarter of a century, with other Labour Members I argued for changes in the law to do away with race discrimination. Those measures were introduced largely as a result of the Labour majority of the late 1960s. All that has happened has demonstrated how right we were to argue for such changes.

I believe that my Bill is another step to ensure that we can all live in this country without fear of persecution or terror of any sort, regardless of our colour, race or background.

Mr. John Austin-Walker (Woolwich): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Madam Speaker: Order. I cannot allow an intervention now that the hon. Gentleman has sat down or, for that matter, during a 10-minute rule speech.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. David Winnick, Ms. Diane Abbott, Mr. Paul Boateng, Mr. Tony Banks, Mr. John Austin-Walker, Ms. Clare Short, Mr. Harry Cohen, Mr. Keith Vaz, Mr. Bernie Grant, Ms. Joan Lestor and Mr. Max Madden.

RACIAL VIOLENCE

Mr. David Winnick accordingly presented a Bill to make racial violence a specific criminal offence; to make other related amendments of the law; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 5 February and to be printed. [Bill 101.]

Fishing Industry

Madam Speaker: We now come to a motion on fisheries. I must inform the House that I have selected the amendment standing in the name of the Leader of the Opposition.

3.58 pm

The Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Sir Hector Monro): I beg to move,

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 9697/92, relating to guide prices for fishery products for 1993, the proposals described in the unnumbered Explanatory Memorandum submitted by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on 7th December 1992, relating to total allowable catches and quotas for 1993, and the Government's intentions to negotiate the best possible fishing opportunities for the United Kingdom fishing industry for 1993 consistent with the requirements for conservation of fishing stocks.

I welcome the hon. Member for Edinburgh, South (Dr. Strang) to the Front Bench to talk about fishing policies.

The House is conscious of the risks and difficulties that our fishermen face. We have been reminded this year, through the publication of the marine accident inquiry report, of the Antares tragedy. Only a couple of weeks ago we had sad news of the deaths of three in-shore fishermen from Cornwall. Danger is never far away, and fishing is not an easy occupation for the fishermen or their families.

In a normal year this debate provides one of the few occasions for the House to discuss fisheries matters. This year is rather different. Consideration of the Sea Fish (Conservation) Bill, which comes before us again this evening, has allowed for a surfeit of fisheries debates.

On the other hand, this is an especially important year for the fishing industry. It is fortuitous that so many matters have come to fruition during the United Kingdom presidency of the European Community.

We have been making good progress with the mid-term review of the common fisheries policy. A new four-year multi-annual guidance programme on the capacity of fishing fleets has just been agreed. There is a new fisheries agreement with Iceland, subject to the European Economic Area coming into force, and fisheries relations with Canada have been improved. I pay tribute to the skilful chairmanship of my hon. Friend in making so much progress in recent debates in the Council of Ministers.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): The Minister will be aware that feelings are running high in the fishing communities. That is evident from the action that is being taken north of the border today, which I firmly support. The Minister says that good progress has been made on the common fisheries policy. Will he confirm that a new United Kingdom Government document exists in which the British Government, as president of the Community, make new proposals for the common fisheries policy? That document has not been seen by any Member of Parliament. Does he seriously expect Members of Parliament to accept that we are having this debate on fisheries today yet next week or the week after the Minister and his colleagues will sign, seal and deliver a fisheries agreement without the House having any opportunity to debate its provisions?

Sir Hector Monro: I stand at the Dispatch Box today to make a speech about our policy. The hon. Gentleman has hardly given me a chance to start. He would not expect to see the negotiation document. But, clearly, when my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and I go to Brussels next week, we shall do our best to help the fishing industry in the United Kingdom. We are well aware of the protests in Lochinver and the Firth of Forth today; we understand the reason for them. But at the same time the fishermen must understand our difficulty and understand that we cannot concede more fish than conservation will permit. The reason for the debate is to allow opinions to be expressed which will be borne in mind by Ministers in Brussels. I shall return later to some of the issues that I have mentioned.

Agreement was reached in November on guide prices and on quantities and tariff rates for fish being imported into the Community. It is important that we have retained, against some contrary suggestions, the dual price system for herring which is particularly important to the Scottish pelagic fleet so that they can continue to sell in bulk to the klondykers. I hope that that trade will be able to take place in 1993 without the need for autonomous prices.

On tariff quotas and suspensions, the measures agreed struck a balance between the needs of fish catchers for a stable market and the needs of processors and consumers for access to a range of fish supplies. The measures were based on the assumption that tariff-free supplies would be arriving from European Free Trade Association suppliers under the agreement on the European economic area. This weekend's events in Switzerland suggest that that assumption will not now be correct. We therefore consider that the tariff quotas and suspensions for 1993 need reconsidering since the EEA is not about to come into effect. The signs are that the Commission shares that view and will propose an appropriate revision—as indeed it formally undertook to do if its underlying assumptions were not fulfilled. However, my hon. Friend the Minister of State has written to Commissioner Marin pressing him to make early proposals taking into account the new situation.

I now turn to total allowable catches and quotas. Some of our most important fisheries are managed within a fisheries agreement with Norway. I regret that thus far, after three long rounds of negotiations, it has not yet been possible to conclude an agreement between the Community and Norway for 1993. I am therefore not able to be as precise about the expected levels of quotas next year as I would like to be. However, I assure the House that officials will do their best to reopen the negotiations at their level as soon as possible.

The scientific advice on white roundfish stocks is generally not good. Haddock is in a better position and it is likely that there will be an increase in the North sea haddock total allowable catch from 60,000 tonnes this year to about 133,000 tonnes for 1993. The west coast TAC will be increased from less than 12,500 tonnes to 17,600 tonnes. Of course, that is good news, especially for the Scottish fleet, but the stock will still need to be husbanded carefully if the TAC increase is not simply to be a flash in the pan. I shall return to that point later.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): The Minister makes the important point that the stock must be husbanded carefully. Does he agree that if the Commission insists that there should be industrial catches, it is important that they should be kept to an absolute minimum?

Sir Hector Monro: I agree with the hon. Gentleman, and we stressed that last time that we were in Brussels. In the United Kingdom we have grave doubts about industrial fishing, but it is important to some Scandinavian countries. We have that matter firmly in mind. I have given the grand totals for the North sea and west coast and, as the House knows, we still have to negotiate our exact quota with Norway.

Setting aside haddock, the general picture continues to be worrying.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): Will the Minister comment on the fact that—as I understand it—the Hague preference has been abandoned and, although there is to be an increase in the total allowable catch, the British quota of TAC will not remain the same but will be reduced by about 10 per cent.?

Sir Hector Monro: I was coming to the Hague preference, which is especially important for Scotland, as the hon. Gentleman knows.

The North sea cod stock remains in a dangerous state and maintaining the 1992 TAC level of 100,000 tonnes is the most that can be justified. Saithe stocks in the North sea and to the west of Scotland are also in poor shape and there is a recommended reduction in the whiting TAC. However, it is encouraging that North sea sole and plaice stocks are strong, with a significant increase in the sole TAC from 27,500 to 29,000 tonnes.

Demersal stocks in the Irish sea continue to be in a poor state generally, and the scientific advice is for reduced fishing to allow stocks to recover. It should be possible to avoid any reduction in the present TAC for cod, following improved recruitment to that stock. The position on whiting is more difficult, but we believe that there is a case for setting a TAC slightly above the 6,500 tonnes proposed by the Commission, without endangering the stock, particularly on the basis of the use of square mesh panels to release juvenile fish.

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): The Minister will be well aware that Northern Ireland fishermen depend on the whiting catch. Can he confirm that a 35 per cent. cut in the catch is proposed, which would mean that Northern Ireland fishermen would get only 18 per cent. of the whiting catch? That would put the Northern Ireland fishing industry in a terrible state and bring it near to catastrophe.

Sir Hector Monro: I hear what the hon. Gentleman says. Perhaps my hon. Friend the Minister of State will give the detailed figures in his winding-up speech. If the hon. Gentleman cannot be here, we shall certainly ensure that he gets the information.

In the channel, the scientific advice suggests maintaining or slightly reducing the present TAC for many stocks. Cod is the main exception, and a reduction in the TAC from 20,000 tonnes to 16,800 is proposed. Scientific information available on the cod stock is rather limited. We shall consider carefully whether a higher figure than that proposed by the Commission can be justified for cod, and for sole and plaice.

Pelagic fish stocks continue to be healthy, with little change expected in the TACs for the main herring and mackerel stocks.

Decisions on TAC levels will be taken at the next Council of Fisheries Ministers, which I and my hon. Friend will attend on 19 and 20 December. Our main objectives will be familiar to the House from previous debates.

We want to secure the highest TACs consistent with the scientific advice—that is, with ensuring the future healthy state of the stocks. We shall be anxious to secure our Hague preference rights, where those apply, but we know that they are strongly contested by other states and it is prudent to edge up our TACs—where that can possibly be justified—to avoid triggering Hague preference arrangements. As things stand, we expect the Hague preference arrangements to be triggered to our advantage for west of Scotland saithe and whiting. In the Irish sea, the arrangements will come into play against us for cod, whiting and plaice, but we hope to help the situation through swaps. Of course, we want to ensure mackerel flexibility so that the United Kingdom fleet can fish that important but migratory stock in the autumn, east of the four degree west longitude line.

The Commission's proposals for TACs and quotas include a proposal for a tie-up scheme to limit fishing effort against cod and haddock. It is similar in principle to the eight days per month tie-up that we had in 1991 and the 135-day tie-up in 1992, but the proposal is for a tie-up of 190 days, including at least 10 consecutive days per calendar month. The United Kingdom has made it clear that that proposal is not acceptable. We have agreed a multi-annual guidance programme for the next four years, which will reduce fishing effort right across the United Kingdom fleet through a combination of decommissioning, effort control and licensing measures. In that context, a measure targeted at particular group of boats, for example, a 10-day tie-up, is unnecessary and inappropriate.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): The Minister will recall that during an Adjournment debate last week he said that a 200-day tie-up was a rumour. He has now said that a tie-up of 190 days is unacceptable, and I agree. What will he negotiate in terms of tie-up days? What do the Government see as acceptable? There are only 365 days in a year and our men must make a living.

Sir Hector Monro: The answer is absolutely none—

Mr. Salmond: No tie-up?

Sir Hector Monro: We are not in favour of the proposal at all. We do not favour any consecutive tie-up of eight or 10 days.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): The Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, who is sitting beside the hon. Gentleman, has given a clear understanding that the arrangements for next year would be nothing worse than a freeze. I understand the difficulty about not revealing one's negotiating hand, but we must have a clear understanding from the Government of what is going on. If the Fisheries Council is even thinking of a freeze, it must consider temporary compensation for tie-up or some other solution to the industry's problem. Consideration must be given to establishing a system of support through social security, income support and family credit that reflects the fact that those in the fishing industry, particularly in this country, are having their opportunity for earnings statutorily restrained in the next 12 months.

Sir Hector Monro: I note what the hon. Gentleman says, and so does my hon. Friend the Minister—he may be an excellent fisheries Minister, but he is not a ventriloquist and I have not picked up all the information that he has passed on to me today.

Next week we will go to Brussels with a firm determination that the Commission should withdraw the 190-day tie-up proposal. If it does not, we will oppose it as vigorously as possible in the Council of Ministers.

Mr. Phil Gallie (Ayr): Does my hon. Friend agree that the Government have outflanked Europe with the Sea Fish (Conservation) Bill? We are now one step ahead. Does he agree that that Bill will kill the current proposal from Europe?

Sir Hector Monro: My hon. Friend is right. If the Bill receives Royal Assent—we hope to make progress later tonight—all the arrangements for conservation can be covered by it. We think that that is a far superior way to maintain our conservation policies than that proposed by the Commission.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): Will the Minister make it clear beyond doubt that it is his intention, and that of the Government, to oppose the eight consecutive days tie-up in the next round of negotiations and to oppose any consecutive tie-up requirement of that sort?

Sir Hector Monro: I can give the hon. Gentleman the absolute firm assurance that that is our intention.

Mr. Salmond *rose*——

Sir Hector Monro: I shall give way, but we must make some progress.

Mr. Salmond: It is courteous of the Minister to give way. I wish to reassure him that my fishermen think that he is a very nice man, but that he has no power. It is not just a question of the ventriloquist sitting beside him——

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): That is not what they think of you.

Mr. Salmond: They think other things of me, but at least they elect me.

In reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing), the Minister said that no tie-up was acceptable. Does he believe that a tie-up imposed by Brussels is not acceptable but that a tie-up imposed by London is acceptable?

Sir Hector Monro: The hon. Gentleman is a great chap for trying to misquote hon. Members. I made it clear that we would firmly oppose a consecutive day tie-up, whether it was eight or 10 days. The scheme contained in the Bill, which I hope will receive Royal Assent, is a superior way of helping our fishermen to conserve fish.

The fishing industry must accept that restrictions are inevitable. All hon. Members have accepted that. If we have no restrictions, in a year or two's time there will be a substantial reduction in the number of fish available.

Mr. Wallace: Before this series of interventions, the Minister referred to the multi-annual guidance programme and said that he saw it as both effort limitation —for which we can read the words "tie-up"—and reduction in capacity. When he talks about measures that the British Government wish to introduce through the legislation that we shall debate later, will he make it clear whether the purpose of that legislation is conservation or to meet our MAGP targets? What is the formula for converting effort limitation into reduction in capacity?

Sir Hector Monro: It gives us an opportunity of all forms of restrictions where they are required for conservation. We want to do the best that we can to achieve sufficient conservation with the least difficulty for the fishing industry. I know that it is not easy, but we are trying extremely hard to find the right half-way house to restrict effort. It is clear from the scientific advice that we have received that we must continue to restrict effort. We must do that in the best way possible with the least inconvenience to the fishing industry.

I shall discuss the MAGP in a moment, but I shall not give way much more because hon. Members want to contribute to the debate so that we can take their ideas to Europe next week.

Mr. George Kynoch (Kincardine and Deeside): I know that my hon. Friend wants effort limitation and conservation without harming the industry. However, will he look seriously at the non-sector fishermen, who seem to resemble tail-end charlies who mop up the situation after quotas have been allocated elsewhere? If certain sectors have over-fished their quotas, non-sector fishermen have been cut off in their prime before fishing their complete quota. I understand that the retribution may be that the quotas allocated next year will be reduced so that they will get more; but if they cannot get it this year, they cannot make use of it next year. Will the Government look seriously at how the quota could be better managed so that smaller non-sector fishermen are not harmed and whole communities put out of business?

Sir Hector Monro: I appreciate my hon. Friend's point. As I said in an Adjournment debate last week, the producer organisations and the non-sector fishermen must keep roughly in step, otherwise what my hon. Friend outlined will happen. Fisheries might be closed because the POs have fished their quota and the non-sector fishermen have not achieved their limit. Yes, we must try to get the balance right, in the hope that the detailed quotas will be announced after next week's Council and that the POs and the non-sector fishermen will be able to balance it out over the 12 months so that we do not face the difficulty of running out of quota as we did in October and November this year.

We have firmly asked the Commission to withdraw the proposal of a 10-day tie-up because we find it unacceptable. However, the total allowable catch and quota proposals also contain several other technical conservation measures. We welcome the retention of the one-net rule in the derogation to fish for whiting in the North sea with a 90 mm net and measures to prevent that derogation from being abused.

Multi-annual guidance programmes have recently been agreed to secure reductions in the EC fishing fleets for the period 1993 to 1996—four years. The key features are that the Commission has agreed that its original proposal for a 30 per cent. reduction for white fish trawlers was not realisable and, instead, the reductions are to be 20 per cent. for white fish trawlers and 15 per cent. for beam trawlers and nothing for pelagic vessels.

After taking account of the United Kingdom's backlog from its last programme, our overall reduction is 19 per

cent. over the four years, of which up to 8·5 per cent. may be achieved by reductions in fishing effort rather than capacity. Our target will be met by the combination of decommissioning, licensing changes and effort control that we announced in February, and subsequently introduced in the Bill.

It is our intention that effort control in 1993—control of a vessel's days at sea—will be exercised under the arrangements proposed in the Sea Fish (Conservation) Bill, subject to its receiving Royal Assent.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): Surely all the measures that the Minister keeps describing are, by their nature, unselected measures. The real effort control involves the sort of effort required to ensure that good years of fish are available for the future and to provide the basis of stock. Surely the Minister should consider gear options, square mesh panels and the various devices that fishermen say are more effective in ensuring that we conserve stocks and that do not merely tie up boats without improving conservation.

Sir Hector Monro: I know that the right hon. Gentleman is extremely keen on conservation. Our fisheries department is constantly looking at gear options, which it discusses with fishermen, and particularly at panels and mesh sizes. The right hon. Gentleman is right to say that we should not miss an opportunity to improve the overall position to give advantage to our fishermen, provided we do so within the terms of conservation.

It is our intention that, by 1993, effort control will be covered by the Bill, subject to its receiving Royal Assent. I am concerned about the views being expressed to us by the fishing industry that the good news on haddock means that effort limitation is not now required when fishing for that stock. That would be irresponsible.

Mr. Wallace: The Minister has not answered the question that I asked him earlier. If meeting the targets involves a combination of effort control and decommissioning, what is the formula used for translating days at sea or tie-ups into reduction of capacity? There must be a formula, otherwise it would be impossible to say that both devices are used to reach the MAGP targets. What is the formula?

Sir Hector Monro: It is almost impossible to declare the formula as it will involve a compromise of all the options in order to find the most effective solution that is least inconvenient to fishermen. That has been the thrust of our policy. I believe—Opposition Members may think otherwise—that there is no doubt that we have done our level best to assist fishermen. I know that fishermen feel that they have had a rough ride this year and that the fact that we ran out of quota made their position even worse. However, I know from the frequent contacts that my hon. Friend the Minister of State has with the fishing industry that fishermen accept that we are doing our level best to provide the best solution to what is a Community issue which is not as straightforward as some people might like to think.

Mr. Nick Ainger (Pembroke) *rose*—

Sir Hector Monro: I cannot give way as I must finish my speech, and many hon. Members want to speak.

I am dismayed that so many of those in the fishing industry feel that the large increase in the number of haddock means that they can relax. We have made a step in the right direction, but it will not provide the answer for ever.

We must recognise that, although haddock is now once again abundant, the stock is still very fragile because it depends on only two year classes. It would be only too easy to fish it out next year, with substantial discards, and with the prospect of a shortage again by 1995. Proper effort limitation arrangements next year should help to avoid that, and should also incidentally help more orderly marketing, which is important if reasonable price levels are to be achieved.

As regards the mid-term review of the common fisheries policy, I shall only say that good progress is being made. We hope that the forthcoming Fisheries Council will be in a position to agree a new basic regulation for the next 10 years of the CFP. A draft of this regulation is now under detailed discussion by officials. It relects clear decisions in principle already taken by the Council of Ministers which will preserve the existing access rules in relation to the six and 12-mile limits and the Shetland box, and relative stability in the annual distribution of TACs.

The administration of fisheries is never easy, and has been particularly difficult in the past few years; it will no doubt continue to be so. But the picture is not entirely bleak, and I am glad to have been able to report to the House this evening some improvements in the state of fish stocks, and satisfactory progress so far in securing our main objectives in the mid-term review of the common fisheries policy. My hon. Friend and I will do our best to secure a satisfactory outcome on all these matters at the forthcoming Council in Brussels.

I must explain that I have to be away later this evening, so I apologise in advance for not being here for the winding-up speeches. No doubt my hon. Friend will take the opportunity then to answer questions arising from the debate.

4.26 pm

Dr. Gavin Strang (Edinburgh, East): I beg to move, to leave out from 'quotas for 1993, and' to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

'calls upon the Government to ensure at the forthcoming Fisheries Council meeting that British fishing interests are protected within the review of the Common Fisheries Policy and in particular to ensure that any structural changes or conservation measures are only applied to the United Kingdom fleet if other member states implement similar changes; and rejects the implementation of any measures that unfairly discriminate against British fishermen, interfere with the principle of relative stability and deny British fishermen equal access to the same level of EC funding utilised by other EC states.'

The fishing industry makes a significant contribution to our national well-being. It provides a valuable and healthy part of our national diet. In many coastal areas, the industry, including the catching, processing and distribution sectors, along with ancillary businesses, forms the mainstay of the local economy. But the fact is that the industry is in crisis. Prices have been low and quotas have been fished out, with the result that boats are standing idle.

This afternoon, I do not intend to argue that all the problems are the fault of the British Government, but they must accept a large share of the responsibility. For years, they have failed to accept the advice of the industry on conservation and above all on the need for a reduction in capacity, brought about by a properly managed and

[Dr. Gavin Strang]

socially acceptable decommissioning scheme. Anyone who has taken the trouble to read our main fisheries debates over the past few years will be struck by the extent to which Members on both sides of the House who represent fishing constituencies have argued the case for an effective decommissioning scheme to reduce capacity. The Government failed to take that advice—the fundamental reason why we believe that they have failed the industry.

Mr. Gallie *rose*——

Dr. Strang: I will not give way. Like the Minister, I am keen that all hon. Members who represent fishing constituencies should have a chance to speak today. I did not intervene on the Minister, and I do not intend to give way to interventions today.

The central task of Government fisheries management is to regulate the fishing effort at a level that will protect the fishing grounds from over-exploitation. We need so to organise our affairs as to provide for the balanced exploitation of fishing stocks over the long term, with a fishing industry that is able to provide decent returns and a reasonable level of job security for the men and women who derive their livelihood from it. No one could say that that is being achieved.

The control of fishing methods—increasing mesh sizes, using spare panels—has an important part to play, and catch quotas also play a significant role. There is, however, a requirement for a managed and socially acceptable reduction in the capacity of the industry.

In all our fisheries debates over the past few years, hon. Members on both sides of the House have been arguing the case that I have outlined. It is true that there were weaknesses in the decommissioning scheme in the early 1980s, which were outlined in the report of the Public Accounts Committee. The weaknesses or failures were the result of the misguided detailed rules and faulty implementation. There is no reason in principle why we cannot have an effective decommissioning scheme.

The Government's refusal to consider a decommissioning programme has been followed by a change of heart. The industry and the Labour party have been campaigning for many years for an effective scheme, and it is not as if we have been trying to persuade the Government to implement a policy that would be in conflict with EC recommendations. Almost every other EC member state has run, or is running, a decommissioning scheme. The House will know that the EC makes a financial contribution to such a scheme.

We agree with the conclusion of the House of Lords Select Committee on the European Communities that the Government's proposals for a decommissioning scheme announced in February are too little, too late.

"The Committee accept that £25 million is not even enough to prevent the fleet capacity from expanding; four or five times that amount is now needed to make up for the lack of a decommissioning scheme in the United Kingdom during the last decade."

A decommissioning scheme must be tightly related to taking capacity out of the industry. We are talking about a scheme which, unlike the original one, which was completely discredited, will provide compensation for the employers of fishermen and for all the fishermen involved in the industry, and not only for those who own the boats. Furthermore, the scheme must provide properly balanced help for the communities that will be most severely affected. If we can use the EC social fund in that way for the steel and mining industries, there is no reason why we should not be able to win some EC help for the type of adjustment that will have to be made in communities that will have to accept some reduction in the numbers of people earning their livelihoods directly from the industry.

The Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. David Curry): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Strang: I shall give way once to the Minister, but I shall not give way again.

Mr. Curry: I am deeply honoured, and most grateful to the hon. Gentleman. He has quoted a report that says that four or five times £25 million would be required for decommissioning. Is he endorsing that sort of figure from the Opposition Front Bench?

Mr. Strang: I was quoting the recommendation of the House of Lords Select Committee.

The cost of a decommissioning scheme will depend very much on benefits that are available for communities. We are not suggesting that we can have a decommissioning scheme on the cheap—far from it. If the Government had implemented a decent scheme, they might have operated it much more cheaply than any scheme that might now be introduced if we are to achieve a significant reduction in British fishing capacity in future. The scheme that the Government have put forward—they have done so belatedly, and, as I understand it, it will operate for only two or three years—will not be able to achieve what is required. I was happy to receive the Minister's question, but the fixed sum that will be available for the two or three-year period will not be adequate for the purpose.

The Under-Secretary of State for Scotland spoke about the Government's objectives in relation to total allowable catches. In broad measure, I support what he said. It is necessary to remove the tie-up requirement. At the same time, we all agree that we must accept scientific advice. I know that there are times when fishing communities feel that that advice is not as reliable as it might be, but there is no way of proceeding other than on the basis of considering such advice, the Council of Ministers considering it and then the taking of a final decision.

Of course, there is scope for adjustment, and we all know that adjustments tend to be upwards. I hope that the Minister achieves some adjustment to stop the Hague preference coming into operation—not least because of the interests of the fishing communities in the south-west of England, and with respect to the Irish element in the Hague preference.

I was somewhat taken aback by the Minister's reference to the multi-annual guidance programme. He will be aware that both the industry and the Opposition are astonished that the agreement reached by the EC Fisheries Structures Committee has been put forward by the Government as some sort of triumph. The figures say it all. Incorporating the backlogs from the 1986-91 programme, the United Kingdom has a fleet reduction target of 19 per cent., while Spain must make a reduction of just 4·5 per cent. In case any hon. Member is minded to intervene, I should explain that the Spanish reduction reflects the fact that Spain has made more progress than Britain. Although

there might be a paper figure of 8 per cent., I am talking about the reality—the relative impact—of the multi-annual guidance programme.

The Department's press release on 1 December announcing the agreement positively boasted about the fact that the United Kingdom had ensured that 45 per cent. of the planned reduction would be achieved by effort control. That is not what the industry or the Opposition want. I understand that the original intention was that 25 per cent. should be achieved by effort control.

Hon. Members will recall that there was a substantial debate in the European Standing Committee on the proposed review of the common fisheries policy. It is important that we take this opportunity—as I am sure many hon. Members will do—to give the Government further advice on that important matter. Fundamental decisions will be taken that will lay down the common fisheries policy for a number of years. Therefore, it is worth raising a few issues.

The first issue is policing and enforcement. The Minister will be aware that the Opposition have been keen to have European Community involvement in the enforcement of regulations. In particular, we recommend the establishment of multinational inspection teams to execute EC spot checks on the enforcement regimes of member states. Therefore, we are pleased to note that the policy review proposes the introduction of a Community monitoring system.

Some might argue that subsidiarity must be applied across the board. We take the view that the Government are using the issue of subsidiarity as a cover for their failure to put the economy on the agenda at the forthcoming EC summit. They are trying to pretend to some of their Back-Bench Members who are rather unhappy about any move towards European union that somehow subsidiarity could be a means of preventing that.

The reality is that we need effective national enforcement. We need large national enforcement teams. Britain has one, and it is certainly larger than those of other member states. We also need effective supervision and monitoring of the teams and of the action being taken in all member states to prevent overfishing. We want Commission involvement, but we also want the teams to involve inspectors from other countries.

We also want transparency. If we are to achieve acceptance of the enforcement of quotas and of the restrictive fishing methods needed for conservation, we must have the confidence of the whole industry—not just in this country, but throughout the Community—that it is real enforcement. We must achieve uniformity of penalties so that British fishermen are not, as many believe, subjected to higher penalties than fishermen elsewhere in the Community. I am not suggesting that some other countries do not also impose high penalties, but there needs to be some levelling upwards.

The second issue I wish to raise here is the fundamental one of future decisions on the management of stocks under the new common fisheries policy. We are concerned about the nature of the proposed management committee for fisheries, in which, as my hon. Friend the Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) noted in Standing Committee last month, there does not appear to be any role for the fishermen's organisations. Our concern is that decisions that should be taken by elected representatives in the Council of Ministers will be deferred to the committee. Yes, let us have a role for the European Parliament and consultation with its Members, but the key decisions must be taken in the Council of Ministers by Ministers answerable to their national Parliaments.

We welcome the Community's proposal for a licensing scheme for all vessels in EC waters and EC vessels outside the zone. It is our policy to require the licensing of all boats fishing for profit. We are keen to ensure, however, that an EC licensing scheme is administered by member states. I welcome the Government's decision to apply licensing to all vessels. If we are to have an effective decommissioning scheme—I certainly hope that the Government will reconsider and propose a meaningful scheme—we must ensure that we have comprehensive licensing and can extinguish the capacity and the licence——

Mr. Wallace: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Strang: No. I said that I would give way only once. The hon. Gentleman can make his speech. My hon. Friend the Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe will be happy to respond to any point that he wishes to make or to give any clarification of Labour policy.

It has been our policy for some time to introduce compulsory satellite tracking systems on all licensed boats over an agreed size. We are pleased that the Commission has proposed a 50 per cent. grant towards the costs of the required equipment, but we urge the Government to press for more generous assistance and to agree to make up the remaining cost from Government funds. As the system costs more than £1,000, it is only right that our fishermen should be offered substantial assistance in complying with the requirement.

I was interested in the Minister's comments on industrial fishing. As I am sure he knows, it has long been our policy that industrial fishing should be phased out. I would be the first to accept that that will not be achieved unilaterally, and that compensation will have to be offered to countries where a significant number of people are dependent on industrial fishing. We welcome the fact that the Government now endorse our approach, and we want the Minister to adopt a more positive approach to the issue in the Council than he implied earlier.

The issue that has hit the Scottish newspapers and some of the national media today is the blockade at Lochinver, which is a timely manifestation of the frustration that now exists in the industry. Nobody in the Labour party wants to see action of this nature, but the incident reflects the all-time low to which relations have fallen between the Government and the United Kingdom's fishing industry. Had the Government used a proper decommissioning scheme to reduce fishing capacity in recent years, the quotas allocated to Scottish fishermen for haddock and cod would not have been exhausted so early in the year, and the income from the fish would have provided a fairer return for the reduced number of fishermen in the industry.

There is no escaping the fact that the Government have failed the industry, and they must accept a substantial share of the responsibility for the turmoil in fishing communities. Fishermen's frustration will be given full expression on Friday when fishermen from all over the United Kingdom protest against the Sea Fish (Conservation) Bill at the Edinburgh summit.

The Government must face up to the crisis. They must understand that it is not acceptable for a young man who may have invested all his capital and borrowed a

[Dr. Strang]

substantial sum of money to put a modern fishing boat to sea to be forced into bankruptcy by the Government's tie-up policy. There is no way in which the industry will accept that policy. If the Government depend on it—the Minister's comments did not suggest otherwise—it will have to be enforced with a rigour that will mean bankruptcies. It follows from that, no matter how much selectivity is built into the licensing system, that the youngest fishermen and those who have borrowed the most will be the most vulnerable.

It is unacceptable that we should impose this condition on our industry. The idea that boats should be tied up for substantial periods is indefensible. It will increase pressure on men when they are allowed to fish, and they will take more risks with the weather and will work excessive hours. Given the effect that it will have on the industry and on the people who earn their livelihoods from it, the policy is indefensible.

The Government failed to implement a decommissioning scheme and to take the industry's advice on effective conservation methods. They belatedly introduced square mesh panels and increased mesh sizes, but we are now paying the price for their failure to achieve a significant reduction in the capacity of the industry. A decommissioning scheme is not a panacea or a policy that can work on its own, but it takes the pressure off the use of quotas and means that they are not likely to be exhausted so quickly.

It also removes the temptation to cheat on controls on fishing gear, for example, by using more than one net when it is banned. We are all against black fish and the breaking of the rules by fishermen in this and other countries, but we have reached this position because too much pressure has been put on existing systems of control. The tie-up policy is not on. We must carry the industry with us if we are to achieve progress and to balance the needs of the industry with those of conservation.

The Government must use the Christmas recess to have a fundamental rethink of their policy on the fishing industry. Relations between the Government and the industry have never been worse. Quotas and fishing method restrictions for conservation purposes cannot be imposed effectively without the co-operation of the industry. At this month's Fisheries Council, the Government must stand up for Britain and defend the industry on fair quotas and fishing effort limitation.

But, above all, they must carry out an urgent, fundamental review of their policy on the industry. Their present policy has failed. They are on course for confrontation with the industry next year on the compulsory tying up of fishing vessels in our ports. That is no way to run an industry. The Government must think again.

4.49 pm

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson (Aberdeen, South): During a similar debate this time last year my predecessor, a Labour Member of Parliament, concluded his speech with the following words:

"His actions"—

meaning the Minister—

"have affected the election results. Before the 1983 election the Conservative party held five out of six seats in Grampian. The most recent by-election has resulted in the Conservative party holding no seats in the Grampian region."—[*Official Report*, 11 December 1991; Vol. 200, c. 941.]

True to form, the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) could not resist rising to the bait. He said:

"Unless someone in the Scottish Tory Party can quickly devise a credible, vote-winning policy for Scottish fisheries during the coming months, their total elimination at the poll in all Scottish fishing constituencies is certain."—[*Official Report*, 11 December 1991; Vol. 200, c. 960.]

Therefore, the Government must now have a credible, if still misunderstood, fishing policy because it was the Labour party which lost votes and representation in the north-east of Scotland and our party which won more votes and gained two seats.

The fishing industry is crucial to Aberdeen and to the north-east of Scotland. However, as I said in my maiden speech——

Mr. Salmond *rose*——

Mr. Robertson: No, I shall not give way. I want the hon. Gentleman to use his ears, not his mouth, in this debate.

The fishing industry is crucial to Aberdeen and to the north-east of Scotland. However, as I said in my maiden speech, Aberdeen's relationship with the fishing industry has changed. The balance has moved from the catchers to the processors. Now, after Humberside, Aberdeen has the highest concentration of fish processing in the United Kingdom—most of it in my constituency, the rest being in the constituency of Aberdeen, North. In Aberdeen, South there are almost 3,000 direct jobs from fish processing, covering almost 150 businesses.

It might seem obvious but it is worth repeating that the processors require and depend on a constant, regular and dependable supply of fish at the right price. It is fair to say that in Humberside much more use is made of imported fish, especially from Iceland, but that in Aberdeen we are much more dependent on United Kingdom landings, especially those from the North sea. It is worth noting that in the league table of United Kingdom landings by value, three out of four are in Scotland—Peterhead, Aberdeen and Fraserburgh.

It is the long-term fish stocks which cause the processors, the House, the fishermen and me the most concern.

Mr. Salmond: Has the hon. Gentleman yet summoned the courage to give way?

Mr. Robertson: The Government have come in for much criticism for their stated policy of limiting days at sea. As I said before, would the hon. Gentleman for once please use his ears, not his mouth?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. It is clear that the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Robertson) is not going to give way.

Mr. Robertson: The Government have come in for much criticism of their stated policy of limiting days at sea. However, the idea—despite its press—is not unique to the Government. The Scottish Fishermen's Organisation, Scotland's largest producer organisation, produced a much more draconian proposal earlier in the summer. It wanted to tie up all boats for one month each year for a while. Although the sentiment is understandable, its practice would have serious implications for the processors. If there were no fresh fish for an entire month, markets would be lost, the consumer would go elsewhere

and the market share would be damaged, perhaps permanently. By contract, the Government's plan for staggered days in port throughout the year is a preferable option.

The central problem from which we cannot escape is that fish stocks in the North sea—especially cod and haddock—are under tremendous pressure, despite the recent and welcome quota announcement. I am concerned that the announcement could be premature.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): The hon. Gentleman is making a reasoned speech, although there are arguments on both sides of the question. Does not he think that he was unwise to refuse the invitation of the Scottish Fishermen's Federation to attend the rally on Friday? As the Minister knows—I am glad that he has tempered his views in the past year—an all-party approach to the matter has paid dividends in the past. Sir Albert MacQuarrie, who used to represent Banff and Buchan very well, was a doughty fighter on behalf of the fishing industry. Will the hon. Gentleman reconsider his decision and join representatives of all parties on Friday, not necessarily to attack the Government but to fight to protect the fishing industry? That is all that we ask.

Mr. Robertson: I do not regret my decision, and I shall explain why. As a Scot, I am proud that our capital city of Edinburgh has been privileged by the Prime Minister to hold the European Community summit. I do not think that Scotland's international reputation will be enhanced if every group that has a grievance—regardless of how deeply or widely held—uses the summit, the centrepiece of the presidency, to parade through the streets of Edinburgh. As a Scot, I want Edinburgh to be seen in the best possible light. I want the world to regard Edinburgh positively, and I do not think that such a rally is the way forward.

Before the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) made a speech rather than intervened, I was saying that I was concerned that the announcement on the cod and haddock quota was premature. Many of the fish which could be landed next year will barely be larger than the minimum landing size.

David Maclennan, one of the top scientists in this subject and deputy director of the Scottish fishing department's marine laboratory in my constituency, wrote in this week's issue of *Fishing News* the following warning:

"If the exploitation continues at the same high rate in 1993, it is inevitable that the welcome increase in the spawning stock will not last long—two or three years at most—before being fished out. Thereafter we must expect that the stock will hit rock bottom once again."

David Maclennan is not unique in holding that view. Speaking in Aberdeen on Friday, the much respected chairman of the Sea Fish Industry Authority, my noble Friend Lord MacKay of Ardbrecknish, said:

"It would be a disaster if the suggested doubling of the haddock quota led people to believe those concerns of the autumn can now be ignored . . . far from it. What kind of haddock are we going to see next year?"

Are they the kind that the merchants want, are they the kind the processors want? Will all the fish landed be through the market and not through the back door?

As the Under-Secretary of State said, cod is still a matter of grave concern. I hope that all sectors of the industry—the catchers, the processors and the producer organisations—will talk to each other, away from the crisis atmosphere at the Peterhead summit held in September. There is no point in landing fish for it to be used merely as fish-meal. The fish which is landed must be wanted. All parties in the fishing industry must get together to maximise the economic value of the increased numbers of haddock. No sector of the industry will be forgiven if the fish which is landed in the first part of the year is used for fish-meal while the fishery is still closing early this time next year.

The lack of the right fish cannot be blamed on the Government or the European Community. We cannot promise imaginary fish. The hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) is wholly irresponsible and reckless. He stomps around the north-east of Scotland, promising fish which are not there. He raises hopes and expectations, safe in the knowledge that he will never have to deliver his promises and boasts.

Mr. Salmond *rose*——

Mr. Robertson: Before I give way, the hon. Gentleman should remember—although it may be hard for him to accept—that it was someone far greater than him who was the last man to perform miracles with fish.

Mr. Salmond: I have not heard that comparison for a while. If the hon. Gentleman can dispense with the insults, he seems to be saying that he is supported by a substantial section of the fishing community in Scotland. Will he name three people in the fishing community who support his current position?

Mr. Robertson: The hon. Gentleman merely proves that, although we represent seats in the same part of the country, we live in different worlds.

It is perfectly clear that there is too much catching capacity—too many fishermen chasing too few fish. I welcome the Government's conversion to a decommissioning scheme, long championed by the Under-Secretary of State. I accept that it is a limited scheme, but it is a start and it will help. Any scheme which limits catching capacity is a step in the right direction. I regret the time that it has taken for the Government to get this far, especially in the light of the help given to other industries to help them to retract and to face the market—I am thinking in particular of farmers and set-aside.

However, any scheme is better late than never. The fishing industry must realise that if there is too much capacity it is not enough merely to cut that capacity; one also has to control the catching capacity of that which is left. I fear, and regret, that the only way to do that is to limit the number of days the catchers are at sea.

Another central problem that the Government and the industry must tackle is the fact that, with the overall increase in the number of fish, the number of fish just below the minimum landing size will increase. More will be discarded and wasted. The more that I talk to people involved, the clearer it becomes that, with increased engine power and bigger net configurations, whatever the size of the diamond mesh, it closes under pressure and the cod end becomes an impenetrable sheath for undersized fish. I urge my hon. Friend to consider, as a matter of urgency, making square mesh panels mandatory. The industry would welcome that, and I say to fishermen that if, for whatever reason, the Government will not take the step, the industry itself should take it and make square mesh compulsory. That would be in everyone's interests; it

[Mr. Robertson]

would reduce the number of discards and let small fish escape to be caught again another day when they are of a size to be landed.

As always, the industry faces great challenges and uncertainties, with the different sectors looking for different solutions to the same basic common problems. Despite all the criticism, I genuinely and earnestly believe that the Government should be supported. Decommissioning will reduce the catching capacity, and limiting the days at sea will limit the time during which the remaining capacity is in the water. If limitations in the days at sea still allow fishermen to catch their quota—that is the crucial factor—they must accept it as a sensible and appropriate way forward. Preservation of fish stocks is necessary not merely to get us through next week, next month or next year, but for generations to come.

5.1 pm

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): I welcome my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, East (Dr. Strang) to the Dispatch Box as the Labour party's principal spokesman on agriculture, fisheries and food. He has a background in the subject, and some experience—if my memory serves me correctly, he has ministerial experience—and we welcome him back. As his speech tonight has shown, he has the heart of the industry in mind.

I am happy that the Under-Secretary's opening speech was delivered calmly and rationally, because sometimes we have heard hectoring and hostile opening speeches. I am sorry that the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Robertson) did not follow his hon. Friend's example.

We are discussing mid-term review of the common fisheries policy, and it is worth recalling the CFP's original general aims. The CFP was designed to achieve stability for all sectors of the industry, and for the consumer. The consumer is often left out of our discussions, yet in some senses the consumer is the most important factor. The industry exists to serve the consumer and to provide a good-quality high-protein food at reasonable prices. We want stability for the processors, who are a vital link in the food chain, and for the catching side of the industry. As the catchers are the primary source of supply, at the start of the chain, it could be argued that they are the most important part of the industry.

Encompassing everything was the need to conserve stocks, based on scientific evidence. We have seen the stocks becoming depleted, the decreasing age profile of the fish and their decreasing quality. Had the CFP come anywhere near achieving any, let alone all, of those objectives, we could have considered it a success; instead, we have had crisis management from year to year. The industry has run into disastrous problems, which have multiplied as each year has passed. We do not seem to reach anything like a long-term solution.

Many people in the industry now question the quality and accuracy of the scientific advice on which the total allowable catch is based. To the layman, the annual numbers game seems based more on ad hoccery than on logical examination. How can the scientists account for the large differences in the total allowable catches from one year to the next? The Minister has confirmed that the TAC proposed for haddock in the North sea is 130,000 tonnes, compared with 60,000 tonnes last year. That is twice as much for next year as for this year—and that is not the first time that there have been such wild fluctuations. The TAC was doubled one year, then halved the year after. I cannot understand how the numbers can change so much from year to year.

Furthermore, we are concerned with more than a simple matter of numbers. The quality of fish has much improved. The hon. Member for Aberdeen, South referred to the puny size of the fish. Sadly, like him, I have been worried over the past few months by the size of some of the haddock on the quayside. They must have been stretched to the limit to bring them above the minimum size. I discussed that question this morning not only with representatives of the Scottish Fishermen's Federation but with people who go to sea. Not only are there more fish of higher quality, but the haddock has been described as bonnie fish. For the benefit of *Hansard*, I shall spell that out—I mean "bonnie", not "bony" fish. There is clear evidence that the number and quality of the stocks are increasing. That is to be welcomed.

That brings me to the difficulties now facing the North sea fishermen. We all know that the quota for North sea haddock was extinguished at the end of October. Although it may be too late, we must remember that the industry asked to borrow 15 per cent. of next year's quota, to allow fishing to continue until the end of the year. That would help the catching side and the processors, who depend on supply to remain in business.

I have said outside the House, and have no hesitation in repeating, that normally I would not countenance such a proposition. If there were no increase in the quota for next year, the problems would simply be compounded in 1993. The crisis would be reached in July and August instead of in October. Such an arrangement could not be regarded as a quick fix, or an easy response to the problems. The Government have refused even to consider the claim, and they gave the impression that they did not even try to secure an increase in the quota—although the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro), sought to suggest otherwise a few days ago.

The Government excused themselves for not trying to increase the quota by saying that there was no scientific advice available. They took refuge in saying that all the talk about there being more fish in the sea was purely anecdotal. It is no consolation to fishermen to tell them that the haddock that they have thrown back over the side is anecdotal. That haddock is real fish. Throwing hundreds of tonnes of dead fish back into the sea—one does not know exactly how many—does nothing for the cause of conservation. Once the fish are caught and are dead, that is it—nothing can be done with them. There must be a better way of managing fishing and conservation.

The TAC for haddock is to be doubled—although the proposals that I have seen will mean that we shall not get as big a proportion of the increase as we might have expected. Nevertheless, the scientific evidence is clear. That evidence must have been available to Ministers in October, as it is now. If it was not, Ministers should have asked the scientists.

Mr. Curry: I do not intervene in a polemic way, because I know that the hon. Gentleman takes the matter seriously. I want to make a serious comment. I am sure that he will remember that I said in the House a year ago that there was a good year class of small haddock, and that we did

not want to hammer the young stock so that it would be destroyed. Three quarters of the haddock in the North sea at the beginning of the year are killed, mainly by fishing, by the end of the year. The hon. Gentleman himself described the very small haddock which he thought must have been stretched to reach the minimum landing size. There is more haddock, and there will be an increase in the TAC. The relative increase will come from the non-application of the Hague preference. That addresses the apparent inconsistency in the shares.

Had we obtained the authorisation to bring forward quota, it would have been in small—in some cases, very small—fish, and the danger would have been that we should have been catching precisely the stock on which we depend to go into the spawning stock biomass to furnish the more marketable, better-quality fish for next year and provide longer-term, better opportunities for fishing.

I know that the hon. Gentleman and I subscribe to the same objectives. I have made that point simply to try to explain the position.

Mr. Hughes: I take the Minister's intervention in the spirit in which it was intended. It is not an easy argument. I find it difficult to believe, however, that fish that are mature enough to be caught on 1 January are so immature six or eight weeks beforehand that they cannot be caught. The issue as I see it is that the measurement of fish stocks —in terms of how much there is, the assessment of quality and the forecasting of what might be caught after 1 January—is not done on the basis of random sampling over a day or a week. The size of the TAC that is permissible based on stock size is arrived at on the basis of information that is accumulated and calculated over a longer period. Surely an estimate could have been made in October or at the beginning of November to allow us to reach a conclusion and so consider seriously the request to borrow forward.

As I said, I accept that the matter should not be taken lightly. We should not say, "The easiest thing to do to get the fishermen off their backs is to give them the 15 per cent., and the devil take the consequences." Of course it should not be done like that, but—I hope that the Minister will take my remarks in the best of spirits—there is no doubt that, among fishermen in the north-east of Scotland and elsewhere, there is a feeling that the hon. Gentleman did not really care enough to take their claim seriously. That has led to a tremendous loss of confidence in the Government and has dealt a damaging blow to the CFP.

I have seen a document—I do not claim to have read every word of it—entitled "A Better Way Forward", which was presented to the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food by fishermen from the south-west. Such is the similarity between that document and the representations and information that I have received from the Scottish Fishermen's Federation that I would not have known—apart from the geographical locations—that someone else had written it. There is a remarkable consistency of view throughout the United Kingdom.

The problem is one of confidence. Whatever CFP regime comes into force in 1993 and subsequent years, no part of it will work or hang together unless the industry is confident that it will bring justice. Without that confidence, everything will fail. I am not advancing an abstract argument or engaging in an academic exercise here: that lack of confidence has practical damaging results. I cite as an example the illegal landing of fish. I do not know what the extent of it is. I am relying on press reports and—lest someone should wish to throw my remarks back at me—anecdotal evidence. The reports vary. Some say that the illegal landings are small and of no consequence and that we should not worry about them, while others say that masses of fish are being landed illegally.

Wherever the truth lies, I unreservedly condemn all those involved in the handling of illegal fish—whether the fishermen, the buyers or the processors who knowingly take part in the practice. They do nothing but harm to the industry. They make it more difficult for us to represent the fishermen and put their case and, I believe, they damage our negotiating position in the EC.

Some seek to justify such practices on the ground that there is a lack of policing by other member states. They say that only British fishermen are sticking to the rules, that people are compelled into illegal practices only by economic necessity—the need to avoid bankruptcy—and that that frustration and anger lead to episodes such as that at Lochinver. The hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) said that he supported that. I do not want to break the all-party consensus, but I must say that I do not think that it is responsible to encourage fishermen to take the law into their own hands. That does no good, and certainly does not help our relations with the French. But these things happen.

United Kingdom haddock quotas have increased tremendously, but the real issue is that our share last year was such that less than 10 per cent. was left for other EC fishing countries. Fishermen are asking this stark and simple question: how, with such a small quota, can the French and whoever else still be catching at a time of year when we have exhausted a much bigger quota? They firmly believe that policing methods are not sufficient to deal with the problem. It is certainly indisputable that no other EC member state has anything like as many inspectors as us. I complain not about the number of inspectors that we have but about the fact that the number of inspectors elsewhere is deficient.

I believe in enforcement. My hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, East said that we must ensure that enforcement is carried out with the same vigour throughout the Community. What plans does the Minister have to ensure that the number of inspectors is increased, both by individual member states and by the Commission? My hon. Friend and others have advanced the proposition that we ought seriously to consider mutual inspection, with inspectors from one nation's fisheries working alongside those from another nation in their inspection. That would do much to inspire confidence and put paid to the oft-expressed feeling that everyone cheats on quotas. Such cynicism is extremely dangerous.

We all know that the problems of the industry are deep-seated. They have been with us for too many years. Although I am optimistic by nature, I feel that those problems will persist for some time. It has been said before: too many vessels are chasing too few fish. The halcyon days of free-for-all fishing are gone for ever. There has to be management, regulation and the reduction of fishing effort and capacity. I know that that is unpalatable to many fishermen. It is hard to say to people that their livelihood will be affected, but fishermen understand the reality and they want a sensible system for the future.

The tie-up days may be part of the answer but they are not the whole answer—whether what is proposed is a

[Mr. Hughes]

period of 135 days or 190 days, which we have been assured will not be accepted. Whatever the figures, that will not help the industry in the absence of any compensation for the days tied up. Without compensation, we shall be getting nothing more and nothing less than decommissioning by bankruptcy. In farming circles we have a set-aside scheme whereby compensation is paid. I do not see the difference in principle between compensating farmers for setting aside their land and paying compensation in respect of fishing boats that are tied up. It is the same principle, and it ought to be considered.

Apparently the Government have set themselves entirely against any tie-up compensation scheme. At least there is some movement on a decommissioning scheme, however. They are beginning to set aside—no pun intended—the hang-ups of the past. Their earlier decommissioning scheme was a disaster. They were ripped off and had their fingers burnt. At least they now have a commitment to a decommissioning scheme, even if it is nothing like good enough. They should sit down with the industry yet again, draw from its knowledge and expertise and then find the necessary money. I cannot quantify what will be required.

The Minister intervened in the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, East to ask whether he endorsed the figure in the House of Commons Select Committee report of three, four or five times the money that the Government have set aside. I would not set a figure on it, but that money ought not to be the hurdle over which the Government cannot leap. We should consider the matter and find the money.

We must be sure that British fishermen are not targeted or adversely affected compared with other EC fishermen. There must be comparability of treatment. It is essential that we achieve a common fisheries policy that will stand the test of time. That is what we are all looking for. If the Minister can achieve that, he will have our support and we wish him well in his endeavours to do the best for the industry. If he comes back with a satisfactory deal, he will not find us lacking in praise for him.

If the Minister fails, he must understand that that failure will reverberate throughout the industry, and a valuable resource and whole communities that depend on fishing will be devastated. I am sure that the Minister does not want that to happen. Indeed, no hon. Member would want that to happen. We therefore hope that the Minister tries seriously to find a system that will work which is beneficial and in which there is justice for all.

In conclusion, I apologise to the Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food who is to reply to the debate. Like his colleague, I must be out of the House when the winding-up speeches are made. Therefore, I shall not be here to listen to him. However, I hope that he accepts that I do not in any way mean to be discourteous to him.

5.20 pm

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): We hear much criticism about Britain's commitment to Europe. However, the European nations should be reminded that, if Britain had not been prepared to give her territorial fishing waters to this common policy, these nations would have been bereft of any fishing waters. That point should be repeated on every occasion. As a Member of the European Parliament, I am sick of listening to Frenchmen and people from Germany saying that Britain does not give proper commitment to the fishing policy, the common agricultural policy and so on. We have made a vital contribution, without which the common fishing policy would not exist.

I know that the Minister of State was a Member of the European Parliament for many years. He knows how the European Parliament, the Commission and the Council of Ministers work. He has a very solemn and heavy responsibility in respect of the issues that he will discuss in the very near future.

As the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) said, the same message is coming from fishermen all over the United Kingdom. There is no difference in the message of the fishermen from Northern Ireland, England, Wales and Scotland. I am concerned about three main issues: the quota levels for 1993; the position about sea fish conservation; and the general review of the CAP operations.

As I understand it, on 23 November 1992, EC officials in Brussels agreed three things: fishing for cod, haddock and other white fish will, from 1 January 1993, be reduced by 20 per cent. over four years; the quota system already operating will be determined by the amount of stock, or projected amount of stock, available; fishing for plaice and sole will be cut by 15 per cent. over the next four years.

Mr. Curry: I think that the figures to which the hon. Gentleman is referring are the targets for cutting the capacity of vessels. They are not the figures that relate to stocks. There would be a 20 per cent. cut over four years in the fleet targets for demersal vessels—that is, for white fish. There will be a 15 per cent. cut over four years for the beamers—that is, for plaice and sole. That does not refer to the stocks. I thought that it might be helpful if I made that clear at this stage.

Rev. Ian Paisley: If the Minister had listened to me, he would have noticed that I said that the quota system already operating would be determined by the amount of stock and projected amount of stock available. The Minister should have kept that in mind.

I understand that those cuts, no matter how the Minister argues them, are less than those first proposed. However, they they are more than the industry in Northern Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom can sustain. That is the point that the Minister should take on board.

There are already shortages of fish, and that pushes up prices for the consumer and puts Britain's fishermen on the dole. The quota system has restricted United Kingdom vessels from landing sufficient catch to meet national demands. Fishermen who transgress the quota face heavy fines.

Once again, Britain is at a serious disadvantage. While we are imposing the single market rules, regulations and policies strictly and with extreme efficiency, we are being penalised by other nations which are not policing the regulations. There is no doubt about that. The suggestion of the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North that the policing operations should be mixed among the nations of Europe so that we can see what they are doing would mean that we would have some confidence in a fair and level playing

field. We hear calls for a level playing field in the Community in industry and commerce. We need a level tidal mark for the British fishing industry. I should like the Minister of State to consider the point about the Irish sea, as the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland said that he would deal with it.

It seems that the quota level for whiting catch in the Irish sea is proposed to be cut by 35 per cent. Northern Ireland will get 14 per cent. of the catch. In effect, that reduces the tonnage available to the United Kingdom from the Irish sea stock to 1,400 tonnes. If those figures are correct, that is an all-time low. Those figures are unviable: they will wreck Northern Ireland's fishing industry.

Who is defending Northern Ireland's position in Europe? Will a Minister from the Northern Ireland Office accompany the Minister of State to Europe to remind him that Northern Ireland fishermen have great difficulties? It is strange that the Minister of State's boss refuses to meet a deputation from the Northern Ireland fishing industry. No wonder there is great concern in Northern Ireland when the industry's voice cannot be heard.

The Northern Ireland sea fishing industry is largely dependent on the Irish sea. The Northern Ireland fleet is concentrated at the three main ports of Ardglass, Kilkeel and Portavogie. The representatives of those areas are in the House, and no doubt they will be pressing home some of the points that have been put to me.

I have been told that the fleet comprises more than 260 vessels over 10 m overall length. During 1991, the value of landing of sea fish at Northern Ireland ports was down by £1·4 million. That is a terrible loss for the fishing industry in Northern Ireland. More than 2,400 people are employed in the sea fishing industry, including people employed in the fishing fleet and related ancillary sectors such as processing, wholesaling, boat building and harbour duties.

As Northern Ireland has the worst level of unemployment in the United Kingdom, the Minister must be concerned that those jobs are protected. When we talk to fishermen about sea fish conservation, they say that we are talking more about the destruction of their jobs than about conserving them.

British legislation gives officials the power to tie up British vessels when they believe that stocks are low. The legislation is applied according to the strictest possible interpretation of the European Community's conservation policy. That application is extremely invidious and oppressive to Northern Ireland when proper consideration is given to the low quota and projected quota given to Northern Ireland.

After the meeting in Brussels, the Irish Fisheries Minister, Dr. Michael Woods, said that he had won special dispensation which would avoid cuts in the Irish fishing fleet. So the southern Ireland Minister can come out of a Brussels meeting and boast that he has won a special dispensation which would avoid cuts in the Irish fishing fleet. That breakthrough for the Republic of Ireland came about after years of pressure by the Republic's Government. What pressure are Her Majesty's Government putting on the European Community to protect the jobs of Northern Ireland fishermen?

Small communities in Northern Ireland such as Portavogie, Kilkeel and Ardglass depend on fishing to survive. On 20 November, Lord Arran met councillors and fishermen from Newtownards and Portagovie to listen to their complaints. Was that meeting reported to the Minister? Was he given a list of those complaints? Was he told that Portagovie is a major fishing port with 97 boats and a turnover of £7 million last year? Was he told that, in Portavogie, employment in the fishing industry provides about 800 jobs in the village, 400 on the boats and a further 400 in associated factories? Was he told that much capital funding has been invested in the harbour over the years —£750,000 in 1955 and a further £5 million in 1985?

The right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor) was a Member of the European Parliament with me at the time when representations were made and money was provided for Europe to help. Money has been invested in the fishing industry. Will that investment now be lost?

The EC regulations allow foreign boats from Spain, France and Belgium to fish the Irish sea, although there is not enough fish to sustain the local fleet. Already, 10 to 12 boats are tied up because their owners cannot achieve enough catch to sustain them. The hon. Member for Aberdeen, North said that the fishermen rightly say that their quota is larger than that for the ships from the other countries, but if their men have to tie up, why can the other countries continue fishing? The Minister must come clean and tell us the reason for that, because it goes to the very heart of this debacle.

The problem is exacerbated because some countries do not enforce the regulations—allowing, as in the case of some Spanish boats operating on a British licence, the taking of small fish, thus further reducing the available adult population. Many of the remaining boats face dire circumstances. They have made heavy capital investment, and they do not earn enough to pay for the borrowing —never mind make a living. That is the fact of the matter. The fishermen have their backs against the wall.

The Government must take effective action, not oppressive action. They must listen to the fears of the fishermen, and produce an effective management regime which offers the opportunity to fish and preserve stock. To make the industry viable once again, the fleet at Portavogie would need to be reduced by 30 per cent. That is the figure that the fishermen have given me.

I am pleased to tell the Minister that I will not be absent when he responds; I will be here to listen to his answers. I understand that hon. Members have other duties, and I am not passing any judgment on them. Many a time I have had to apologise for being absent, but I will be in the House tonight to listen. I will be using the ears which my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Robertson) told another hon. Member to use. I will be using my ears, and I may have to use my mouth as well if the Minister does not give me satisfactory answers.

Many owners are prepared to opt out of the industry. I agree entirely with the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North that, if compensation is given to farmers through set-aside, and if the fishing boats cannot earn enough to make them viable because of regulations over which they have no control whatever, the Government must start a scheme to take out of commission those boats that cannot be managed on a viable basis. The time has come for the Government to provide the money. I call on the Government to make the necessary funds available to finance a proper decommissioning scheme.

Can the Minister explain what happened to the amendment that was to be made to the conservation Bill? My papers show that, during discussion of the Sea Fish (Conservation) Bill, the Minister said that, if the hon. Member for Tynemouth (Mr. Trotter) would withdraw his new clause,

[Rev. Ian Paisley]

"the Government will table an amendment in another place to insert those provisions in the Bill."—[*Official Report*, 14 July 1992; Vol. 211, c. 1027.]

I understand that the proposed new clause was not moved, but Lord Howe explained how that would be covered without having an amendment.

Mr. Curry: If the hon. Member can stay even longer tonight, he will have the opportunity to vote for that amendment which fulfils the Government's pledge. The fact is that we tabled an amendment in the other place which fulfilled that pledge. The amendment is complex in form. I am willing to let the hon. Gentleman have the long dissertation which my lawyers produced to explain why it had to be in such a form. I assure the hon. Gentleman that the practical effect of the amendment is precisely as I promised to the House.

Rev. Ian Paisley: I am glad of that. I will be in the House for as long is it sits, for one reason—I cannot get home, because there is no aircraft to take me after the House rises. I will be here, and I should be grateful if the Minister could give me what he has promised, because the matter has been raised with me by people who are worried about it. As the Minister knows, I do not put this in a critical way. I want an explanation that I can give those people.

Mr. Curry: I think that the hon. Gentleman is asking me to write to him with a detailed explanation. The matter is complicated for debate. I undertake that I will write to the hon. Gentleman.

Rev Ian Paisley: I will weigh up what the hon. Gentleman says when we come to the amendment.

I want to ask the Minister about the Hague preference and how it affects the fishing quota regime, especially for the Northern Ireland fishermen. According to the fishermen who have lobbied me, Northern Ireland is suffering because our so-called EC partner, the Republic of Ireland, applied the Hague preference against our fishing rights to cod, plaice and white fish.

There is no intergovernmental co-operation, although we are told that we have wonderful co-operation with the Irish Republic. We have an Anglo-Irish agreement. Now we are told that, despite that agreement, the Irish Government are unable to fulfil their fishing quota, yet we are not permitted to obtain that quota, which we could very well do with. I ask the Minister to apply himself to that difficulty tonight.

This is an important debate. We are all worried about the matter. It goes to the heart of the well-being of the fishing communities. Everyone knows that no community around our coasts is as tightly knit as the fishing communities. There is a peculiarity about fishing communities: they deserve the Minister's best. I warn him that, if he does not give them his best when he goes to the negotiations in Europe—if he comes home and tells us that he could not get what we know he must get to allow the industry to continue to be viable—he will be in serious trouble.

5.40 pm

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): In both his opening and concluding remarks the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) referred to the unity of interest of the fishing industry throughout the United Kingdom. The names of the ports may be different but his descriptions of an industry with its back to the wall and of the anger of fishermen who, while their boats are tied up, see continental fishermen fishing in close waters apply to fishermen throughout the United Kingdom.

I also share the hon. Gentleman's frustration that there is no aeroplane which will take me back home after the hour at which the House rises. So there is common feeling in the debate on many matters.

The Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir Hector Monro), reminded the House of the tragedies with which the fishing communities have become all too well acquainted. The number of occasions on which the House expresses sympathy with communities who have lost people at sea reminds us of the price paid for the supply of an important commodity.

For generations, fishermen have been acquainted with the ups and downs of the fortunes of the industry. But few would quibble with the claim that today the industry faces a dire crisis in terms of morale, its current fortunes and its prospects. The hon. Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Robertson) queried whether some Opposition Members, and especially the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond), lived in the same world as he did. I wonder what world he lives in if he has not caught the mood in the fishing industry.

Today a flotilla of fishing vessels is accompanying the royal yacht Britannia to make their protests known. We have also seen the blockade of Lochinver today and on Friday fishermen from ports throughout the United Kingdom, including 54 from my constituency in a chartered plane, will come to Edinburgh to demonstrate their fury and justifiable anger with a Government who impose unreasonable restrictions on the way in which fishermen can prosecute their livelihood.

The protests show the sense of need, anger and crisis in the industry. So the debate comes at a critical time, against the background not only of the protests but of the mid-term review of the common fisheries policy and yet again the annual review of our total allowable catches. There was an exhaustive discussion of the mid-term review in one of the European Standing Committees recently. I do not wish to go over that ground again, but since that time there has been a meeting of the Council of Ministers. While relative stability was affirmed, some weasel words were attached to it in the original draft, which seemed to qualify it in several respects. I know that the Minister was worried about that. Perhaps he could tell us what progress has been made in taking those words out.

I believe that the north of Scotland box has been established for a continuing period. The Minister knows my views on that. We should have liked further measures to be taken in that respect, but undoubtedly that is an argument to which we shall return on future occasions.

Mr. Curry: I thought that I would give the hon. Gentleman an appetiser. He is right. We have safeguarded the Shetland box.

Mr. Wallace: If the Minister thinks that because of that I shall let him off lightly later, he has another think coming.

We also wish to know what progress has been made on the multi-annual basis for total allowable catches. This evening we are also debating the TACs for 1993. They are

a little like a shopping list. I hope that the Minister will be well informed about the views of the House before he goes to the critical negotiations. We may say things which will strengthen his arm in the negotiations.

We welcome the increase in the North sea haddock TAC. However, as I said to the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, we urge the Government to keep down the volume allocated to an industrial fishery. The more fish that is taken for the industrial fishery, the less there will be for fishing for human consumption. The Minister must also take into account that it may yet be necessary to obtain some haddock from Norway in the negotiations which have still to be completed.

Why does the TAC for Clyde herring appear to be so low? There is a strong argument for maintaining the status quo.

The west coast fishery seems to be a hardy annual. There is only a precautionary TAC for hake, monkfish and megrim, and there is insufficient scientific evidence that the TAC should not be increased to provide fishing opportunities for the many fishing communities who want to fish those species.

It has already been accepted in the debate that saithe is in poor shape. However, there is some evidence that it is a clean fishery and that large fish are being caught. That begs the question whether the scientific evidence justifies the severe reductions in saithe fishing. I would appreciate the Minister' comments on that.

As the hon. Member for Antrim, North said, it would be helpful if the TAC agreed for Irish sea whiting was such that it was not necessary to invoke the Hague preference rules, which would disadvantage United Kingdom fishermen.

We await the outcome of the negotiations with Norway on mackerel and herring. Last year the Minister achieved a satisfactory arrangement. Until last year there appeared to be a creeping increase in the additional amount that Norway sought each year. I hope that that will be resisted again this year. If the Minister succeeds in doing that, he can expect plaudits and congratulations.

Mr. Curry: I intervene in the constructive spirit of the debate. The hon. Gentleman will know that the Norwegian negotiations will be particularly difficult this year because of the European Economic Area agreement. The Swiss vote means that the agreement will not proceed on 1 January. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary has already said that we have asked the Commission to adjust its proposals on imports and tariffs, because they are clearly affected. The Norwegians are fairly twitchy on the matter as a result of agreement and the negotiations will be difficult. I am sure that the objectives which he is about to outline are those which we shall undertake to fulfil.

Mr. Wallace: I am grateful for that explanation. There is a feeling that concessions have already been made to Norway on the EEA arrangements and that there should be no duplication. People sometimes use the term "trading paper fish", but real fish should not be added to the paper fish. I am sure that the Minister will seek to achieve that objective.

It is useful to recall that after the December meeting of the Council of Ministers last year it was acknowledged that the deal secured by Ministers was a reasonable one. I recall urging Ministers to grasp the opportunity to sit down with leaders of the fishing industry and co-operate on future policy. Twelve months ago, we see that that opportunity was tossed away, with the resulting appalling consequences for fishermen, their families and their communities.

Only a few weeks after Ministers managed to get that deal, we at long last had the decommissioning package unveiled. But, as has already been said, it was too little, too late. One did not have to be a cynic to note its timing just a few weeks before the general election. One did not need more than a fleeting acquaintance with the industry to recognise that the amount on offer was too little. One did not need to read the fine print too closely to note the strings which the Government attached to the offer. I am sure that many hon. Members who represent fishing communities will agree that the Government's insistence on effort limitation, or tie-up days, was one of the most contentious strings.

The Government will prohibit people from pursuing their livelihoods on certain days and, if one takes stock of what they are doing in this Session, that takes a fair bit of brass neck. The other day, the Home Secretary told us that the Government will introduce legislation in this Parliament to allow shopowners to trade on Sundays, but they have introduced legislation in the same Session to stop fishermen from fishing on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays. We should be under no illusions about what their legislation will do—it will stop people from earning their livelihood, and that is what has built up such resentment in the fishing industry.

Mr. Curry: The hon. Gentleman is normally extremely sensible, but the comparison between shopping and fishing was the daftest that I have heard him make for a long time. No natural resources are at stake in shopping—we are not short of customers or of the real estate to put shops on. Fishermen are fishing for a natural resource—that is the problem.

As I have made clear throughout the passage of the Sea Fish (Conservation) Bill, we are not depriving fishermen of their livelihoods. We intend them to catch the quota, the whole quota, and nothing but the quota. There is nothing in the Bill to stop them from catching their legitimate entitlement, and I can categorically give that pledge.

Mr. Wallace: Clearly, I have touched a raw nerve. The Minister's answer begs the question: why does one need a tie-up? If they fish the quota, the whole quota and nothing but the quota, fishermen could fish 365 days of the year and it would be up to them to manage their quota over the 12 months. By that answer, the Minister has shot a hole through his tie-up proposals.

There is a connection between fishing and shopping. My argument was about the opportunity to pursue one's livelihood and it is right to put it in a context that people will understand. One sector of the community will be allowed greater opportunities to trade, while another vital part of our community will be denied that opportunity.

We were relieved to hear that the Government intend to resist the Commission's tie-up proposals. I wondered how they would square the circle if they did not intend to resist the proposals, given the Minister's undertaking on 14 July that there would be no increase in restrictions in 1993. We should not be carried away by the fact that the Government have given us that understanding. While they say that they will not accept the proposals, and that they

[Mr. Wallace]

will argue against the Community tie-up scheme, we are left with the home-made scheme established by the Sea Fish (Conservation) Bill.

What has angered fishermen more than anything else is the fact that there are restrictions on British fishermen, but their European counterparts will not be subject to similar restrictions. There are enough let-out clauses in the Community proposals to mean that, even if the scheme were carried through, it would mainly affect British fisherman, and particularly Scottish fishermen. We should not lose sight of the fact that European fishermen will be able to carry on fishing when British fishermen will not.

Tie-up rules were first introduced because of a shortage of cod and haddock. No one is claiming that the cod TAC has increased significantly—there is still a problem there. The haddock TAC has increased enormously, but the Government are still applying the tie-up rules. Will there be sufficient opportunity for British fishermen to catch their quota, their whole quota and nothing but the quota? If anyone can do the figures before 9.30 pm, it would be interesting to find out what proportion of the value of the total catch is contributed by haddock, for those fishermen to whom the haddock catch is significant. I suspect that fishermen derive their living from many other species, which they also ought to have time to fish. It is not merely a question of the increase in haddock; there are other stocks.

Is the tie-up scheme intended as a conservation measure —as the Minister says, and as Earl Howe said in another place last week—or is it part and parcel of the Government trying to get their multi-annual guidance programme targets? We should not overlook the fact that, while 20 per cent. has been negotiated, which is less than was originally proposed, the backlog from the existing five year target also has to be met. That means that United Kingdom fishermen will have to bear a larger burden of the reduction in capacity than those in almost every other EC country.

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): Except Greece.

Mr. Wallace: Yes, apart from Greece. The Government have not said how they will balance effort limitation or tie-up days with decommissioning. If they say that both will contribute to meeting that target, we ought to know how many days tie-up equals how many hundred horsepower of capacity. Otherwise we shall be led a merry dance and there will be no way to quantify or to make an objective assessment of the Government proposals. The Under-Secretary of State omitted to answer that question, and I hope that the Minister of State will come up with a convincing answer.

As my right hon. Friend the Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) said in an intervention, the Government are hooked on tie-up and have become blind to every other option. We do not hear much about square mesh panels or gear options these days. The Government even managed to apply the one-net rule insensitively. The Under-Secretary at the Scottish Office suggested to my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) that his fishermen could return to port to change nets before they went back out to sea. That observation received the proper reaction in fishing circles.

Does the Minister honestly believe that his policies will achieve conservation? The hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) said that in many cases there will be decommissioning through bankruptcy. Apart from the fact that the scheme is an ad hoc way to bring about decommissioning—it is likely to bankrupt those who are most heavily indebted, which could lead to an aging fleet —those who administer the bankruptcies are unlikely to surrender licences. The chances are that they will be passed on to be aggregated with someone else's licence. That is how fishermen from other countries obtain British licences. At the conference on the common fisheries policy in Shetland earlier this year, someone asked why France does not have that problem. Why do British fishermen not buy up French licences? One of the Commission's representatives answered that question. Even though there is nothing in French statute to prevent it, the French do not give their licences away.

The only reason why we have Spanish vessels fishing under flags of convenience is that someone has sold them a licence. One cannot blame fishermen for doing so if they are under tremendous financial pressure and Government policies are putting them under that pressure. The fact that the Government do not propose to tackle the running sore of foreign vessels buying up British licences is the most glaring omission in their proposals for reform of the common fisheries policy. The whole purpose of that policy and the principle of relative stability is undermined by such practices.

Mr. Curry: I am as sensitive as anyone else to that extremely sensitive issue. Is the hon. Gentleman saying that he wants me to take measures to prevent fishermen from selling their licences to foreign owners? That is the key of the argument. How would that square with European Community rules, to which his party is particularly attached?

Mr. Wallace: The underlying principle of the common fisheries policy and of the principle of relative stability is the allocation of national quotas. In many respects it could be said to be the converse of what the Community has sought in almost every other area in which we are pursuing the single market. The Community has reached an agreement that there will be national quotas. I understand that a recent court decision affirmed that one can distribute quotas on a national basis. One cannot allow leakages to continue if the integrity of that quota system is to be maintained. It is the responsibility of the Community to sort that out, but we have had no lead from the British Government, who hold the presidency, in proposing any constructive ideas as to how the Community might do that.

Mr. Salmond: Given the concern that is shared in all parts of the House, is it not rather disturbing that the action on flags of convenience proposed in the original Commission document a year ago seems to have disappeared from the most recent document that we have seen, which was produced during the United Kingdom's presidency of the Council of Ministers?

Mr. Wallace: That is very disturbing. I have debated the problem of flags of convenience often enough with the Minister to know that he is concerned about it. However, the real matter of concern to the House is that if we do not

raise the issue, as the country most aggrieved by it, who will? It has not been raised under the British presidency and we have had no satisfactory explanation why.

It is self-evident that the industry is confused and angered by Government policy. I assure the Minister that if he returns with a sensible package on next year's TACs which meets many of our concerns, he will be given due credit for it. However, he should be under no illusion that that alone will be enough.

The abandonment, even tonight, of the Sea Fish (Conservation) Bill—perhaps a forlorn hope—would be the most sensible thing that the Minister could do to help the fishing industry. So long as the Minister refuses to do that, he will be left with an industry which has every right to feel angry about a Government who, so far as it can judge, and in reality, have basically sold out its interests.

6.1 pm

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): As has already been said tonight, too often we must start speeches about fishing by marking a tragedy in our respective constituencies. I know that the House would wish to convey its sympathy to the families of the five Cornishmen from the constituency of the hon. Member for North Cornwall (Mr. Tyler) who were lost at sea last week. I know that the hon. Gentleman has had to leave the Chamber, but I know that we would like to convey our sympathies, through him, to the families in the Padstow area who lost men in two tragedies within the space of a single week. One can hardly think of anything worse that could happen to such a tight-knit fishing community than to suffer two tragedies in such a short time.

It is always a tradition in such debates to consider the problems from a constituency point of view. That is natural, and it is right and proper that we speak up for our fishermen. Perhaps I could start, however, by speaking up for a fishery that is a long way from us, although I believe that I am the Member nearest to it—the Falklands fishery.

I am sure that various hon. Members have received representations from the Falkland Islands Government about the threat that that fishery could face because of an agreement between the European Commission and the Argentine, which has been initialled by a Commissioner without the backing of our Government.

I have had the privilege to visit the Falklands and to study that fishery, which is managed well. It is perhaps significant that £6 million a year is spent on research on and management of that important resource. Therefore, the Falkland Islands Government are disturbed, to put it mildly, that, apparently, under the new agreement a number of boats from the Community, particularly from Spain and Portugal—which is no surprise to anyone—are likely to go down to the Argentine waters that abut the Falklands waters and fish without restriction. That would have serious implications for the neighbouring Falklands fishery, because squid pay no respect to lines on maps, any more than cod, haddock or any other species do. I hope that my hon. Friend will take up this issue with the Commission; perhaps he will reply to my concerns tonight.

At home, it is important to consider some of the issues that are, to put it mildly, worrying Cornish fishermen. In the past two weeks, we have witnessed the premature closure of the hake fishery. Suddenly, without warning, that fishery was closed. The Cornish Fish Producers Organisation, which is responsible for managing the sectoral quota, estimates that fishermen still have about 16 tonnes of hake to catch. To the uninitiated, that may not seem a big deal, but it is equivalent to fish worth £100,000. Cornish fishermen could well do with that money, particularly in the current economic climate.

The fishery has been closed because others have overshot. My hon. Friend the Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Kynoch) was right to draw attention to the fact that there has been considerable overshooting in the non-sector. I suspect that that is due, in part, to the Spanish boats and the belated returns from Spain for hake caught.

Mike Townsend, the chief executive of the Cornish Fish Producers Organisation, believes that his fishermen are being penalised for their good management of the sectoral quota. They have tried to maintain that fishery right through the year, but, because others have managed it badly, they are being penalised and the fishery has been closed. Its closure will not just affect Cornwall.

When I raised this issue with my hon. Friend the Minister at Question Time last week, he said that, if there was a single fish to be caught, the fishery could be reopened. I should like my hon. Friend to check the figures, because I understand that there are still fish to be caught. We seem to be heading towards an overshoot of the hake allocation, but I believe that the closure of the fishery was not only precautionary but premature.

Cornish fishermen have managed their own fishery superbly in accordance with all the guidance laid down by the Ministry, and it is unfair on them, and no doubt on others, for that fishery to be closed suddenly. I demand of the Minister that he confirms that that penalisation will not carry forward to next year. I hope that the fishermen will be allowed to catch extra fish to compensate for the fish they have lost. I hope that the sectoral quota for next year will not be cut as a result of my hon. Friend's decision, or that of his officials, to close the fishery.

Mr. Curry: My hon. Friend knows that I sent him a brief note about this. It is true that the hake sector was approaching the point at which we had to close the fishery, because it was clear that it would be exhausted. I have a list of all the closures around the coast, which I do not wish to go into. However, it shows that a decision to close is reached when it is near certain that, by the time the results come in, a sector is at, or in some cases over, quota. The United Kingdom has got quite a strong record of going over quota.

On the latest figures for hake that date from Monday —there is a gap of two to three weeks before all the figures come in—the sector was taking 98 per cent. of the quota and the non-sector was taking 93 per cent. Therefore, the landings at that point—the whole quota allocation—had reached 6,797 tonnes against an allocation of 7,140 tonnes. Given the necessary time lag, it is certain that the quota would be met.

I accept that, in some cases, it is the non-sector that catches the fish, and that the producer organisations suffer, but in some cases the POs appear to go over the top of the allocation. We try to organise the guidelines on catches sensibly, but no one can tell how much fish a man will catch on a particular trip.

I have two points to make about the compensatory mechanism. First, nobody's track record suffers because he has been obliged to take less than he might otherwise

[Mr. Curry]

have taken. Secondly, those who have gone over the quota must pay back in the subsequent year to those who were forced to stop fishing under the quota.

Mr. Harris: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making that clear. As he said, he did so in a note earlier today.

The hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) mentioned Ireland and the Hague preference. There is no doubt that Ireland got a good deal from the agreement on the multi-annual guidance programme in its targets for reducing the effort of the member states' fleets. O that we could have had the same deal. However, my concern is not confined to that aspect. I am worried about how Ireland is building up its fleet and pressing, on the basis of the Hague preference, its need for extra quota. This worries not only hon. Members who represent Northern Ireland but fishing interests in the south-west.

We have discussed the Hague preference many times in the House, and it featured largely in the debate in Standing Committee A when we discussed the mid-term review. I know that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are thoroughly familiar with the Hague preference, but I remind you that it was a political deal—there is no other way to describe it—struck before we entered the common fisheries policy. It was a trade-off, as most such issues are.

Some parts of the Community were given a special status because it was said that they were particularly dependent on fishing, and other regions were denied it. It is a continuing matter not just of controversy but of discontent, particularly in the south-west and other parts of England——

Mr. Austin Mitchell: Including Humberside.

Mr. Harris: Certainly. We can all name our own areas which were denied that status and look to other parts of the United Kingdom with envy. Scotland has special status, and good luck to it. But it cannot be said that Cornwall is any less dependent on fishing than many parts of Scotland. It was simply a crude political deal.

I have never been corrected in the past when I have said that, surprisingly, that deal was signed by the present Lord Owen, who was at the time the Member of Parliament for Plymouth and a Foreign Office Minister. He signed it in the latter capacity because fishing was then negotiated by the Foreign Office. Responsibility for fisheries was rightly taken away from the Foreign Office and given to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

Lord Owen dealt an awful blow to the fishing industry in the south-west, because the consequences of our being denied the Hague preference did not lead simply to a six-mile limit, compared to the 12-mile limit in force in many parts of the country: it goes through to the present day. Grants were paid to our detriment, and it is now being operated in the form of the preferential deal that Ireland is trying to negotiate on the basis that it has Hague agreement status. That is terribly wrong.

The problem should have been dealt with in the mid-term review. I know that the Minister would argue that, overall, it is in the United Kingdom's interest that we should maintain Hague agreement preference for certain parts of the country. I have heard that argument before. That is all right, but it is doubly unfair to areas such as Cornwall, which have been denied that assistance. In considering new mechanisms proposed by the European Community, I urge my hon. Friend to redress the balance so that areas dependent on fishing, which have been denied the advantages of Hague agreement status for all these years, are given what they are entitled to.

On the mid-term review of the common fisheries policy, I agree with the sentiments expressed by the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) about flag of convenience vessels or quota hoppers—call them what you will. We regard it as a missed opportunity of our presidency, as the Government should have taken a political lead on the issue to get a resolution——

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): To suggest what?

Mr. Harris: To suggest, during the presidency, that we should at least try to reach an agreement with the other member states to outlaw the terrible practice of countries transferring their boats to our register.

My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) and I make common cause on that issue, because the ruling of the European Court of Justice torpedoed the Government's laudable but belated attempts to deal with the issue on the basis of British legislation through section 2 of the Merchant Shipping Act 1988, which got rid of quota hoppers. But when we lost that central part of the case before the European Court, some of those quota hoppers returned to our register, with all the consequences we know about.

That brings me to the vexed question of the Sea Fish (Conservation) Bill.

Sir Teddy Taylor: Does my hon. Friend agree that the only thing that we have in common on that issue is our belief that the 630 Members of Parliament can do absolutely nothing about it? Although we all scream, complain and moan, the plain fact is that the European Court overturned a law that was passed through this Parliament, and we are utterly powerless.

Mr. Harris: My hon. Friend's assessment of the position is right, but I do not accept that Members of Parliament and the Government can do nothing about it. The Government should have done something about it when they held the presidency. *[Interruption.]* If my hon. Friend will contain himself for a second, I shall tell him that our job is to press the Government to take action, through the presidency, to try to achieve a political arrangement within the Council of Ministers to deal, once and for all, with the pernicious practice of quota hopping. That is what I have been urging the Minister to do. I would have welcomed some support from my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East. That is the only way forward.

The Minister will confirm that our European partners have had a change in attitude. I have been fighting the battle for nearly 13 years. Whereas, at the beginning, they did not want to know about it, at least a number of other member states have now woken up to the dangers of that practice to their own fishing interests. We should have capitalised on that during the mid-term review.

I know that it was not done simply because the Government were afraid of opening up, during their presidency, a huge Pandora's box of fishing issues to the United Kingdom's detriment. I do not think that I am misstating the case. They wanted a fairly limited mid-term review, and I disagree with them on that point. I entirely agree with the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland that

we have missed an opportunity at least to try to get a resolution to a problem that has bedeviled the fishing industry.

It is not simply a question of boats coming on our register, fishing against our quotas and fishing in our waters, as my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East would put it. We have a problem with the multi-annual guidance programme, because some of those boats have returned to our register. I am sure that Her Majesty's Government could have told the Commission, "We have reduced our fees," and then whispered, "because we have got rid of 100 wretched Spanish boats so that the number in the fleet has been reduced." That argument has been denied us, so the Government have had to consider other ways to meet the multi-annual guidance programme. As we all know, they have failed to do so until now. Therefore, they have been forced, wrongly, to adopt the tying-up policy.

To answer the question posed by the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland, I believe that tying-up has more to do with meeting our MAGP than true conservation. I have a common cause with the hon. Gentleman in that I have opposed the Sea Fish (Conservation) Bill, and will continue to do so. It does not meet this country's true conservation needs. I shall not repeat all the arguments, but I believe that the tying-up policy is unfair and unworkable.

I quarrel with some of my good friends in the fishing industry when they say that the answer lies almost completely in a decommissioning scheme. I do not buy that argument. The Government are correct to argue that, if one places total reliance on decommissioning, those left in the industry will intensify their efforts and fish, if not in all the space created, in much of it. I accept that other methods are needed. I agree that the figure of £25 million is too low, but that is not the fault of the Minister. We should take up that matter with the Treasury, where the constraint lies, not with the Ministry of Agriculture.

What are the answers to the central issue of how to conserve fish and obtain a better balance between increasing catching capacity and declining fish stocks? Decommissioning should play a greater role in achieving that balance. I also agree with Opposition Members who said that gearing, net sizes and the technical measures could undoubtedly make a greater contribution.

However, we should consider another factor. I have been advancing this argument to the industry ever since the impressive rally in Westminster hall. I said then that the Bill would be passed even though neither I nor those at the rally would want it to be—I suspect that it will pass through its final stages tonight. However, even at this late hour, the industry should produce measures that it considers preferable to tying up—I know that many people are doing so. It should consider the designation of closed areas, particularly during spawning time, so that boats do not fish there then. That would be a positive conservation measure, in tune with the wishes of many fishermen. When I discussed the subject with them, they said that they used to do so on a voluntary basis years ago.

I plead with the Minister, even at this late hour—the Bill will no doubt be enacted, but I do not want the Act to be implemented—to begin meaningful discussions with the industry, as sections within it want to do so. My hon. Friend should make his experts available so that there can be sensible discussions about policies other than tying up. I am afraid that he will not do so and may, in the new year, introduce orders to implement the tying—up policy below the 1991 levels of effort. If he does introduce those orders, I shall, with sadness, vote against them.

6.24 pm

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): I generally agree with the hon. Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris), but I emphasise that we faced the EC Factortame judgment largely because of the slow and clumsy way in which the Government framed the legislation. Their crucial failure was to allow the Spanish vessels to get a foothold and then use that fact to appeal to the European Court. That was a mistake made by no other European country, so Spain does not have a base anywhere else from which to launch its appeal. That has been the problem in the past, and the Government must take responsibility for that failure.

The debate is being held while the fishing industry is in an atmosphere of gloom. I do not think that the debate will add much good cheer before Christmas to an industry that is in crisis. In various parts of the country the industry still has quota to catch—for example, the Grimsby cod quota —but the fishing has been abruptly stopped by Government intervention.

An increasing number of vessels are already being tied up even before the Sea Fish (Conservation) Bill is enacted and implemented. According to the documents that we are discussing, the Commission wants to increase its role and powers; it wants to take more responsibility for regulation away from national Government in defiance of the principle of subsidiarity. Increasingly, Europe is giving us mechanistic, rigid structures. Barmy measures that are not suited to local circumstances will become more common if the Commission is allowed to do what it wants.

The United Kingdom Government are desperately trying to rectify the mistake that they made in delaying the introduction of a proper decommissioning scheme so that our industry could be restructured in a managed way. That delay means that the Government are now required to try to catch up, using the desperate measure of imposing on the industry the authoritarian regime set out in the Sea Fish (Conservation) Bill. They are attempting to restructure the industry through bankruptcy. Their policy is to stop fishermen fishing by driving them to bankruptcy as they are unable to make an adequate living.

To add to those follies and problems, we have what the Minister calls "successful" negotiations on capacity. If he considers the negotiations successful, he must be using Euro-speak. I do not know why he did not use the phrase "game, set and match" on his return from the Brussels negotiations. If that is what he considers to be success, I should like to hear his definition of failure.

In the press release on the agreed fishing fleet reductions the Minister states that they

"will ensure that the burden adjustment is equitably shared."

Yet other states have come away from those negotiations with lower and much more achievable targets than have the Government and this nation. The reduction in gross tonnage faced by the United Kingdom fleet will be 19 per cent. I do not think that many people have noticed that the figure will be more than 19 per cent.—28 per cent.—if we include the penalty for the reductions that we have not achieved in the multi-annual guidance programme. That is the second largest reduction requirement; only that of Greece is higher.

Mr. Curry: The hon. Gentleman has mixed up the figures. The figure of 19 per cent. refers to the cuts with the backlog—without the backlog, the figure is 10 per cent. The 28 per cent. is mythical.

Mr. Mitchell: Even if I accept that point—I shall think about it and may argue with the Minister later—the estimates for percentage changes in gross registered tonnage give us a 19 per cent. reduction, France an 8 per cent. reduction, Denmark 6 per cent., Italy 7 per cent. and Spain 4 per cent. Spain has a huge, marauding armada —the biggest fleet in the Community—which is largely unpoliced. Many of its vessels have secret fish rooms in which to conceal the catches. The vessels land in Spain where the catches are not properly controlled—a sort of British privateering of the 16th century in reverse.The Spanish fleet is the main threat and has been the cause of the greatest pressure on our agreements with Norway. It was the main problem and the main cause of the breakdown in the relationship with Canada. Yet this fleet is to be reduced in size by only 4 per cent.

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): Is the hon. Gentleman aware that the problem is actually much worse than he thinks? Not only are the Spanish responsible for the quota hopping, but the catch that they take back to Spain would certainly be regarded as illegal by our fishery inspectors. English fishermen who visit the Spanish markets are astonished by the size of the fish on sale there—they would clearly be illegal here.

Mr. Mitchell: The hon. Gentleman has access to secret service reports about what is going on in Spain. I have heard similar reports, and he is of course correct. The fact that the Spanish fleet has managed to achieve its MAGPs in the past was partly due to the number of Spanish vessels transferred from their register to ours.

Even worse, there has been a massive crisis in southern hake stocks, which has prompted the suggestion that there should be a 90 per cent. reduction in catch. Where will the Spanish vessels do their fishing?

Ireland's fleet has been granted an increase of 1 per cent. Ireland gets a higher quota at the expense of British fishermen by means of the Hague preference. Our fishermen in the Irish sea are having their numbers cut by 20 per cent., while the Irish numbers are to be cut by only 11 per cent., with corresponding gains for them on the west coast of Ireland. That is an inequitable deal for Britain —despite the Minister's description of it as successful. I can see no element of success in it. It will cause a disproportionately large reduction in this country's fishing effort.

The Minister will know that I am no friend to regionalism because it works against the interests of Grimsby's vessels. I therefore regard the Shetland box as a load of blah. It is totally unnecessary; it was designed to build up Shetland's industry to the exclusion of vessels from Humberside. It has no biological justification. It is interesting that the Commission's own scientific and technical committee, looking into biological boxes, decided that Shetland was unworthy of consideration because it was not a biological box.

Mr. Wallace: The hon. Gentleman will know that the box operates so as to restrict the number of vessels from member states that can be in it at any one time. Can he tell me of any vessels from Humberside in the past 10 years that have been unable to enter the box because of the restrictions?

Mr. Mitchell: If I had the statistics to hand, the hon. Gentleman would need a biological box to protect himself from them. I cannot quote any such examples, but the box is still a restriction on the overall opportunities available to the Humberside fleet, and it is wholly unnecessary.

As other speakers have said, we should have taken this opportunity to deal with the problem of the Hague preference, which discriminates against not only Grimsby but other areas to the south. The definition of north Britain is ludicrous, reaching as far down as Flamborough Head but not including Grimsby and other communities that depend on fishing. Grimsby is, par excellence, such a community, but it is not included in the Hague preference. Hence we are redistributing catches to Ireland, and our fishermen are suffering as a result. The preference is unfair and we should have taken the opportunity to get rid of it. It penalises large areas of England——

Mr. Alnger: And Wales——

Mr. Mitchell: —and Wales which should not be thus treated.

The Minister should tell us now that he will resist any reductions and keep the North sea cod TACs above Hague preference levels, so that we will avoid futher problems in that area.

Mr. Curry: My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State said earlier that we would seek to edge up that quota without triggering the Hague preference. We can only do that if we are convinced that we can do so within sensible conservation limits. I certainly hope that that will be possible in this case.

Mr. Mitchell: I thank the Minister for that: I hope that it materialises.

I do not know why we are not making more of subsidiarity when it comes to fishing. In fishing matters it is crucial that we defend and expand the power to use national conservation measures, including gear options and exclusion from grounds at certain seasons of the year. We need to employ real conservation measures of that sort, not the phoney conservation measures that we will discuss later tonight under the Sea Fish (Conservation) Bill. We must protect smaller, younger fish, and protect our grounds at certain times of the year.

As for relative stability, given the losses sustained from the 1983 agreement on quota shares we must prevent further incursions by the Spanish fleet into the North sea and north European waters. The Minister said in Committee that he thought he had successfully fought to keep the six and 12-mile limits.

I dread the Commission's proposals for even further cuts in days at sea. Such cuts, coming on top of the Bill, will mean that the industry is tied up for much of the year. That is monstrous. European measures are compounding British measures to restrict the sort of fishing that our men go in for and their ability to put to sea. We should counter such ideas with arguments for selectivity and for gear measures, and for the sort of conservation-conscious passive fishing that Grimsby boats go in for. As for tie-up days and restrictions on effort, there should be a bonus for

ports such as Grimsby that use conservation-effective measures. We should concentrate on alternatives to tie-ups, including technical mesh options and closed areas.

We should have taken the opportunity of our presidency to deal with the problem of industrial fishing. It is monstrous that the political influence of the Danes has been used to resist any change in industrial fishing. We cannot allow mass industrial fishing to continue while stocks are so low. The Commission document whitewashes industrial fishing, saying only that there is a need for more research. That is what people always say when they want to do nothing. Banning industrial fishing from the North sea will improve cod and haddock stocks by 20 per cent. or more. Why, then, must MAFF and the Commission prevaricate on an issue on which there has been prevarication for far too long already? We desperately need urgent action to ban the crime of industrial fishing on the scale that is permitted.

Mr. Curry: The hon. Gentleman said that the Commission report is a whitewash. We have just received it; we will analyse it closely. We have to be able to prove our case. All my instincts are the same as the hon. Gentleman's on this matter. Even *Fishing News*, a newspaper which the hon. Gentleman is likely to find more sympathetic than I would, carries an article about industrial fishing in which one of our leading scientists says that the case is not yet proven. We have not yet been able to sustain a categorical case, even though I should like to be able to do so because, as I have said, my instincts are the same as those of other Members who have spoken on the subject. I must point out, though, that the subject is a little more complicated than we sometimes portray it to be.

Mr. Mitchell: I accept that. I accept that we think alike on the issue. None the less, any argument is difficult to prove in scientific terms. It is difficult to know what is taking place biologically in the North sea. We do not know, for example, why the haddock stock is improving. We do not know why the consequences of colder water that have hit Canada and Iceland are not being experienced in the North sea. Scientific proof will be an onerous burden but, a priori, rational observation must show the need to give preference to fishing for human consumption rather than for industrial purposes. By-catches must have a long-term effect on stocks. I accept the Minister's support or agreement in that context, but the onus should not be placed on scientific argument; if it is, the argument will be difficult to establish.

I shall conclude with a problem that will face us and that will arise following the enactment of the Sea Fish (Conservation) Bill, which we shall debate later tonight. I assume that it will be enacted because it is more than likely that the payroll vote will be trundled in. One of the results will be horrendous. It is untenable that large sections of the British fleet should be tied up—they will be prevented from fishing for a substantial, and perhaps increasing, number of days a year—when at the same time an increasing European effort is rippling across the North sea. It is a fishing activity that has been displaced from grounds to the east. It is moving over into our waters and into our limits and displacing the British effort, which is tied up.

What will our fishermen feel when they are tied up, as it were, and unable to fish as a result of Government measures? They know that the European effort in the waters in which they have always fished will increase for ever. That is not tenable and it is a problem that the Minister must tackle. He can do so by envisaging a rapprochement—a compromise or arrangement—with the industry by mobilising it for a purpose that seems to be paramount in the title of the Bill which we are to consider later tonight, that of sea fish conservation. He must work with the industry to achieve that.

The Minister must introduce some measures to control the European effort that is fishing in our waters so that it does not increase. We must establish a track record such as a days-at-sea limitation on fishing in British waters and restrict the European effort to it, so as to satisfy our fishermen that when they are prevented from fishing the stocks will not be taken by an increasing European effort. If that is not done, the industry will face a nightmare. Indeed, something must be done along those lines.

The Commission proposes that we should go ahead with satellite surveillance. There has been talk of 50 per cent. funding by the Commission. The EC-Argentina agreement, which is designed largely to help Spanish development, establishes the precedent of the Commission paying 100 per cent. of the costs. Why should it not pay 100 per cent. of the costs of the satellite scheme, if it is to be established? If vessels are to be observed by satellite and must carry equipment to enable their position to be established by satellite, why should we not have access to the system for national purposes? We could then establish how many days vessels fish in British waters. Why should we not be able to inspect their log books to establish what their effort is in British waters and to restrict the growth of their activities? That is probably the only concomitant or quid pro quo that the British industry would accept as reasonable if it were to be limited in its efforts.

There must be some measure to police and control the landings of other vessels fishing in British waters, whether they are operating under flags of convenience or are registered in the country of origin; I am talking of vessels fishing in British waters and landing at ports in other parts of Europe. My hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) suggested that British inspectors could be attached to those European ports. Indeed, we could have any system. There could be designated ports at which British inspectors would be present. There could be designated ports for members of a European inspection force charged with policing vessels coming in from British waters. We must know what has been caught. Catches must be accurately recorded. Other European vessels must be treated in the same way and made subject to the same inspection and enforcement procedures as our vessels when they return to our ports from our waters. The same terms should apply to the European effort in our waters so that we can be satisfied that it is not increasingly taking up the catches that our vessels are precluded from taking.

The Minister must co-operate with the industry, and that brings me to the problem of discards. The European document deals with it in a somewhat meandering and hand-wringing fashion without producing any proposals. I think that the Minister will agree that the system of total allowable catches—TACs—is an inherently bad one. We are using it because it is a faute de mieux. The total allowable catch becomes the catch to aim at. It becomes not the total allowable catch but the total catch that hits the market; in other words, it is the total marketable catch. If that catch is exceeded, fish are dumped overboard. That

[Mr. Mitchell]

is disastrous. With certain species, we are dumping almost as much overboard in discards as we are landing. None the less, stocks are decimated. Something must be done.

Can we think of a way in which we increase the allowable catch by estimating the current level of discards and then requiring vessels to land everything at their home ports? That could be coupled with a limitation on landing and possession size to stop the catching of smaller fish. The French are especially adept at catching smaller fish. I see increasingly small fish at the Grimsby market, and there are large quantities of small fish in Scotland. Earlier this year, there were large quantities of small haddock which could not be dealt with, and accordingly they were dumped. It is ludicrous that so many small fish are being caught when we could increase the permissible landing size.

Mr. Curry: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will forgive me for interrupting his conclusion, which has been going on for some time now.

None of us is possessed of absolute truth on discards. It is a problem that all of us must face. The hon. Gentleman suggests that we should compel fishermen to land all their discards and to make discards a special part of the quota. He says also that small fish should not be landed.

All of us, including Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen, recognise that we are faced with a major problem. The same can be said of the diagnosis of the problem. If a fisherman must land his catch, and if discards and small fish must be part of the quota, there will be a temptation to ensure that his quota is made up of the best quality and most marketable fish. That means that there will be discarding. If we say that such fish must be landed but they will not count against the quota, the incentive for conservation fishing will be removed and a secondary market will be created in discarded fish. That will hang over the marketplace and depress the value of the fish that have been landed.

I am open to all suggestions. I have said previously that TACs and quotas constitute the best hole that we can find for the moment. I wish that we could find a better one. We shall carefully consider all suggestions in this context. We would like to find a more effective system. In the long term, conservation fishing and mesh sizes may be part of the answer. We must be cautious in thinking that there is one formula that offers a complete answer. I recognise and share the hon. Gentleman's concern.

Mr. Mitchell: I accept the difficulties.

The procedure that I have outlined, coupled with an increase in minimum landing sizes, would force fishermen to use better or more conservation-effective gear and larger mesh sizes. That would be better for fish stocks than having them caught and dumped. The minimum landing size of sole, for example is 24 cm. I am no scientist, but I understand that if the size were increased to 26 cm, that would allow all the male sole, and most of the female, to mature. The sole would then have the most enjoyable part of their lives. They would mature and breed and we would get more fish—*[Interruption.]* Why not give the sole all that happiness? It is ludicrous to keep the minimum landing size so small.

The Minister rightly remarked on the length of my concluding remarks, which have run to about three pages. He will get his Bill passed later tonight, but I shall oppose it, as I think it is monstrous. I hope that he will use the opportunity provided by the Bill to talk to the industry and rebuild the bridges that have been so badly burned over the past few months. He must work to have the Bill accepted rather than impose it by brute majority, as he did in this House and, from what I have read of the proceedings, in the other place.

The Minister must give as well as take and he must make some concessions. He must get together with the industry throughout the country, and in particular with the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations, to discuss how the Bill can be implemented without causing war between the industry and himself.

Mr. Curry: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman knows that we cannot use brute force to get a Bill passed in the other place, where not a single amendment that went to the fabric of the Bill was pressed to the vote. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman should talk to his noble Friends.

Mr. Mitchell: I accept that using brute force in the other place is like using straitjackets in a geriatric ward. I am glad that the Minister is enjoying my speech so much that he wants to prolong it.

The point that I make is important. There is open conflict between the Government and the industry, which does not want the Bill. Contrary to what the hon. Member for St. Ives said, the industry has offered alternatives and made a whole series of proposals, but the Minister rejected them in favour of his restrictive Bill. The opportunity must now be taken to get together with the industry, and especially with the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations, to discuss proposals for compromise.

Why not take into account in-built conservation measures and give a bonus of more days at sea in return for bigger mesh sizes? Why not take into account the type of gear used by vessels and, again, give bonuses to those who bind themselves to a one-net rule? Why not give bonuses to vessels that land their catches in British ports? We could count the days spent steaming to and from foreign ports as days at sea.

Why do not the Government come up with effective proposals for restricting the European effort in our waters? Why does not the Minister put forward proposals for financial compensation for an industry that is being held back from its work, in the same way as farmers are held back when agricultural land is laid up? The difference is that the farmers are compensated, but the fishermen are not. They always get the worst of the deal. The Minister should discuss that matter.

Let us make no mistake—the Minister is forcing a reconstruction of the fishing industry through bankruptcy. Restricting the time that our fishermen can go to sea will bankrupt them. It will not help conservation, because they will still try to catch as much as they can while at sea. To impose the Bill without further negotiations, further compromises or further agreements with the industry, especially at a time when the increasing European effort in our waters is unrestrained, is a formula for a civil war and for a sulky industry.

The Minister is trying to undermine and cheat the industry. He has both bridges and nets to mend and I hope that he gets on with it.

6.54 pm

Mr. Phil Gallie (Ayr): My speech will be a great deal shorter than the conclusion of the speech of the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell). I made my maiden speech on Second Reading of the Sea Fish (Conservation) Bill, and on that occasion the hon. Gentleman followed me. He is indeed the life and "sole" of the House of Commons.

I had not intended to speak in the debate, but the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Dr. Strang) stirred me to do so. He said he would not take any interventions. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland imposed no such block during his speech; indeed, he was generous in giving way. The hon. Member for Edinburgh, East was over-defensive, and I wonder why.

The hon. Gentleman criticised the Government for failing, over a number of years, to introduce a decommissioning scheme. The one reason why I shall support the Bill tonight is that, finally, they are introducing one. Labour Members say that the £25 million set aside for that is not enough, but it is a start. Many Scottish Conservative Members have pressed for such a scheme for some time, at the insistence of the various fishing organisations.

I understand that my hon. Friend the Minister will accept the amendment passed in the other place——

Mrs. Ewing: That is a different debate.

Mr. Gallie: I am talking about the Bill and about the amendment passed in the other place—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. We are not yet discussing the Lords amendments to the Sea Fish (Conservation) Bill. We are debating another matter, which, although related, is not the same.

Mr. Gallie: I accept that point, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I shall come closer to home and discuss the interests of the west coast and the implications of the Bill for that area.

We are discussing European proposals for quotas, but this year's quotas have been an absolute shambles because they were set early in the year and then changed. I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to ensure that that does not happen again.

The Bill will impose a limitation on days at sea, something that has proved controversial on previous occasions. It is certainly controversial now. The proposal is rejected by the fishing organisations, and I accept that they have genuine anxieties. Even if the Bill is passed tonight and goes on to receive Royal Assent, it is not necessary to impose that limitation. There will be time for further discussion between the industry and my hon. Friend the Minister. I hope that good advantage will be taken of that time.

I want to raise a point about the current proposal for hake quotas for the west of Scotland. The quotas are still being reduced, so there is still a job to be done by Ministers. I want them to re-examine the figures.

The tie-up rules must be clear when the days at sea are allocated. If a skipper were allocated 240 days at sea a year, to take an arithmetical example only, that would amount to 20 days a month. If he did not use his 20 days a month, his annual figure should not be reduced accordingly.

That brings me to the means of equating days at sea from track records, the base reference year being 1991. I should like to draw hon. Members' attention to a letter from my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) dated 16 October:

> "We realise that some vessels had to undergo major repair works (other than annual services) during 1991. It would clearly be iniquitous if these days were disallowed from their days at sea allocation. Fishermen will therefore be able to bring forward evidence of time that vessels were laid up for major overhaul or other such repairs."

I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to take that point on board, and say that it will be honoured.

Many hon. Members have mentioned the policing of the regulations. The United Kingdom's officers take pride in enforcing the regulations enthusiastically and efficiently. What is the situation elsewhere? I suggest, as many hon. Members have, that there is a problem in Europe. We tend to implement agreements; others simply agree. The enforcement of fishing regulations is a joke. We have talked about the excessive number of small fish landed in Spanish and French ports that do not count against allocations. We have seen these things on television programmes, and for once those programmes have got it right. There are excessive landings of under-size fish.

I draw the House's attention to a report by *Fishing Business International* on the policing efforts of other nations. In the United Kingdom, 21 fishing vessels, 180 inspectors and three aircraft enforce the regulations. France has eight vessels, and understaffed and undertrained inspectors, catch data arrive far too late from Brussels and there are almost no effective sanctions against offenders. Ireland has five vessels and the service is understaffed, undertrained and underequipped. False declarations are the rule rather than the exception. In Portugal, landings are not controlled, there are few inspectors at ports and regulations on minimum mesh sizes are ignored. The Spanish fleet fishes extensively off the shores of the west of Scotland. Seventeen inspectors monitor landings—all of them in Madrid. It is a joke, but it is a sick joke for our fishermen.

The hon. Members for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) and for Great Grimsby referred to the inspection of European ports. I suggest that there might be some advantage in our negotiating to ensure that catches made in quota blocks are landed at quota-block ports. That would meet many of the concerns that the hon. Member for Great Grimsby expressed.

The hon. Member for Aberdeen, North mentioned throwing fish back into the sea. Small percentage catches can be consequential catches. I can think of nothing worse than the waste of throwing dead fish back into the sea. That must be wrong. I wrote to the Minister recently asking that fishery officers consider the situation with some compassion and common sense. Small catches of, for example, hake should be regarded as consequential catches and ignored.

Fishermen deserve the utmost encouragement; they certainly have my fullest respect. My hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) said that he had been fighting their corner for 30 years.

Mr. Harris: Thirteen years.

Mr. Gallie: I thought that my hon. Friend looked younger than that. It is still a long time compared with the six months during which I have been dealing with the problem.

[Mr. Gallie]

I see fishermen as small business men who have invested their all in their capital project. They need to use that cash to earn their living. They must have fish to catch, but I recognise the Government's concern about conservation methods. The Government feel so strongly about achieving the conservation objectives in the Sea Fish (Conservation) Bill that they are stretching the faith of some Conservative Members. However, the proposals that have appeared from Europe recently go way beyond the Government's proposals. I suggest that the Government have second-guessed the Europeans.

What is happening to fishermen goes against my natural instincts. We are cutting across market forces, in which I have believed for many years, but we must recognise the reality that we are now part of the EC's rules and that there is only limited room for Ministers to move in.

May I, finally, draw attention to the comments of the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes)? He chastised my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Robertson) for not attending the fishermen's rally in Edinburgh on Friday. I do not want to attend the rally and block up the streets of Edinburgh, but I should like to attend a meeting at Tynecastle. Having listened to pleas from the Opposition for an all-party approach, if any hon. Members can get me from Ayr at 2.30 pm to Tynecastle by 3.30 pm, I shall be delighted to attend.

7.9 pm

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): There is an offer! Perhaps one of the hon. Gentleman's colleagues will lay on a ministerial car to take him there——

Mr. Austin Mitchell: Or a helicopter.

Mr. Salmond: —or even a helicopter.

We hold this debate in an atmosphere of crisis in the fishing industry. The hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) almost suggested that I had instigated the demonstration at Lochinver, but that was not so. It was very spontaneous and I am happy to support it. I may have at least helped to instigate the demonstration in the Forth today when a flotilla of Scottish fishing boats will provide an escort for the royal yacht Britannia. I was very pleased to participate in the march and rally in Aberdeen a few weeks ago and shall be delighted to participate in the march and rally in Edinburgh on Friday.

The events of the past two weeks or so have been very successful. We have had more publicity and attention drawn to the industry's problems in the past two weeks than in the past two years or more. We shall have to do without the presence of the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Robertson) at the rally on Friday. He seems to be frightened that Scotland will in some way embarrass the Government. The issue at the European summit is not Scotland embarrassing the Government but the Government embarrassing Scotland by its treatment of the fishing industry.

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Salmond: Before the hon. Gentleman gets back on his feet, I shall extend to him a courtesy which he would do well to follow—I shall give way to him.

Mr. Robertson: I remind the House that I gave way to the hon. Gentleman. I am not worried that Scotland will embarrass the Government. Unlike the hon. Gentleman, I want the world to see Scotland in the very best light—I want the best for Scotland. I am proud and chuffed that the European Community summit is to be held in our capital city. It is a chance for us to show off to the world rather than to bring Scotland down.

Mr. Salmond: I hear the hon. Gentleman's excuses for his non-attendance on Friday, just as I have heard them for his non-attendance at recent fishing rallies. They carry no conviction, but I shall be fairly gentle with him. It is possible to be a Conservative and to represent the fishing industry. That was demonstrated by the late Alick Buchanan-Smith who did so with distinction for many years. It is also possible to be a Conservative and to be hostile and antagonistic to the fishing industry. The test of the hon. Gentleman's approach is not getting elected for the first time in a fishing constituency but getting elected a second time when his constituents have got his measure and have assessed his contribution to the industry.

The Government are wholly out of touch with feelings in the fishing community. I caution Ministers not to believe that all they have to do to reach calm water is to get through this debate and pass the Sea Fish (Conservation) Bill which, I remind the hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie), we shall debate later this evening. The demonstration on Friday will not be the end of the fishing industry's campaign against the Government; it is the beginning of a campaign which will continue into the new year.

There is no doubt that fishing Ministers have lost the confidence of the fishing industry. If they were paid by results, their salary would not only be nil—they would be giving us money back. If their political futures depended on the fishing industry, the two Ministers whom we have heard this evening would be spending more time in their constituencies.

I offer three reasons why the industry is incensed. The first concerns discards. A few minutes ago, the Minister tried to tell us that we face a difficult problem which cannot be solved even though everyone is trying to do so. Especially in recent weeks, the issue has been the unnecessary discard of perhaps thousands of tonnes of haddock into the North sea.

I shall read to the House some remarks made by two constituents, Peter and Stephen Bruce, the skipper and mate of the Buddy Rose. Peter Bruce, the skipper, explains his predicament in the following terms:

"I've been tied up for the past 18 days hoping that we would be given a small amount of haddock to see us through to the end of the year. That's a personal decision I made because I didn't want to do something that is totally alien to all fishermen. Some of the stories I've heard about lads having to throw fish back are heartbreaking. Even in the whiting grounds, they're pulling in loads of haddock. But now I have no choice. I have a young crew who haven't had a wage for three weeks. They have bills to pay the same as everybody else and Christmas is coming up."

His brother Stephen, the mate on the same boat, says that fishermen would rather give fish to charity than have to discard them—dead—into the North sea. He states:

"With the threat of a £50,000 fine, it's just too much of a risk to take. That could finish some boats off. But with so many people starving in the world, it's an absolute tragedy

that this fish is being wasted. This Government has done nothing for the industry and they're doing nothing to create jobs anywhere else. If we had fishing Ministers who were prepared to fight for their fleets the way the Spaniards do for theirs we might have a chance. Fishermen aren't asking for the earth. Just the chance to go out and make a living."
That is the genuine view of the fishing industry at the moment.

If Ministers are so out of touch that they believe the nonsense spoken by colleagues in the north-east of Scotland, they should know that the industry is incensed. It is on the march; it will demonstrate and command public support until the Government change their disastrous course.

An hon. Member said earlier that I could not conjure up fish that were not there, but that has not been the position in the past few months—there are huge quantities of fish in the North sea, although thousands of tonnes of them have perhaps ended up dead and been discarded in the sea.

The second reason involves the tie-up scheme. There is perhaps a place for effort limitation as a mechanism in a fisheries policy. If, in the short term, capacity was clearly out of tune with available stocks, there would of course be an opportunity to employ effort limitation, perhaps a compensated lay-up scheme as applied in other Community countries. However, that is not what is being suggested in the so-called Sea Fish (Conservation) Bill. What is being suggested is making tie-up a permanent feature of the fishing industry.

When the Bill was introduced, it was argued that we needed tie-up because haddock and other fish stocks were scarce and could not possibly be fished. There has now been a virtual doubling of the haddock quota, but it is still being argued that we need tie-up. It is suggested that if fishermen are allowed to fish, they will catch too much. If there is a tie-up scheme when haddock is scarce and when it is plentiful, the inference is that such a scheme is not a short-term solution but a permanent feature of the Government's fisheries policy.

Mr. Curry: The hon. Gentleman is employing his usual technique of extrapolating to the point of nonsense. There are more haddock, but they are small—on the margin of the minimum landing size. It would be different if they were large, mature fish in the spawning stock biomass and were able to deliver a stable catch for years ahead. As our scientists predicted, we have had two good year classes. It is essential to ensure that the fish grow and supply stock for future years. If they are pounded now, they will not and we shall shortly find ourselves back where we were two or three years ago.

Mr. Salmond: The Minister has defeated his own argument. Earlier, he said that nothing in the lay-up scheme would impede the catching of the very high haddock quota for next year. If it were a question of the amount of fish available to be caught, the haddock quota would be sufficient. However, he is now saying that we need a lay-up scheme in addition, not to decrease the number of haddock caught but because he accepts that the quota will be fully utilised. The Under-Secretary appeared to suggest earlier to my hon. Friend the Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) that a tie-up scheme from Brussels was not acceptable but that a home-grown tie-up scheme would be more acceptable to fishermen, but that is nonsense. Any scheme that introduces as a feature of fisheries policy the permanent limitation of effort, with no compensation, is bound to be regarded throughout the fishing communities as a grievous injustice.

The third factor causing despair to the fishing communities is discrimination—not positive discrimination for the fishermen of this country but the Government's apparent discrimination against their interests.

The Minister was asked earlier about the commitments that were or were not given during the earlier stages of the Sea Fish (Conservation) Bill. Those of us who remember the debate have no doubt that the burden of the amendment tabled by the hon. Member for Tynemouth (Mr. Trotter) was the argument that it would be unfair if restrictions were imposed on fishermen in this country without the same restrictions being imposed on fishermen in other Community countries.

I see that at least one of the Conservative rebels from that evening is in the Chamber. Many of us thought that those rebels were rather foolish to be bought off by what we considered an inexact ministerial guarantee. I am sure that the Minister can stand on the words that he deployed that evening and say, "I am sticking to the words." But those who attended the debate have no doubt that the spirit in which the amendment was moved was clear: discriminatory measures would not be introduced for fishermen in this country until there were effective guarantees that such measures would apply equally and properly across the Community.

Mr. Curry *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Salmond: I see that the Minister is shaking his head, but there is no doubt that that was the burden of the argument on the amendment. The Minister may get around the words of the amendment; he may manage to dance round what the hon. Member for Tynemouth said —but he must not underestimate the resentment caused in the fishing communities by the fact that with that parliamentary technique he has deliberately defeated the argument advanced, which was resoundingly supported in those communities.

There is a similar attitude to the successful Lords amendment on decommissioning. Of course it is correct to say that a literal interpretation of the amendment can mean that the Minister has only to give proper consideration to decommissioning and then, having done so, he can continue with his existing policy as if nothing had happened. But the purpose of the amendment was to accelerate decommissioning, to advance it in ministerial priorities and to persuade the Government that it should be introduced on its own merits, rather than its being contingent on the acceptance of an otherwise unacceptable Bill.

Last Thursday, the Department said that the amendment would not cause it any inconvenience and that it would not be reversed in the House of Commons because the Department could effectively ignore it when the legislation was implemented. That is to treat the amendment and the sentiments behind it with something like contempt. The fishing industry is up in arms because in policy after policy, and measure after measure, that is the only interpretation of the conduct of the Minister of State responsible for fisheries.

There are other questions which we should be debating but which have been mentioned only in passing. The first

[Mr. Salmond]

is the common fisheries policy review. Why do Members of Parliament have to depend on the Minister to give us helpful insights—a little nugget here and a little nugget there—into the current position? The review is fundamental for the next 10 years of fisheries policy, yet we do not have the current documents, nor the right to know what the policy will be. It is deplorable that hon. Members representing fishing communities are debating fisheries without knowing what the most up-to-date proposals are. The first time that we shall be allowed to debate those proposals will be when they are a fait accompli, when the Minister and his colleagues have signed, sealed and delivered the new CFP in Brussels during the next 10 days.

I shall ask the Minister several questions. First, has the question of flags of convenience been reintroduced into the new CFP revision? Is it in or out? Secondly, is the Hague preference in or out? Has the Minister defended that preference, which many people from fishing communities think is a useful, indeed essential, measure?

Has relative stability been protected in the new proposals, or has it been allowed to be downgraded, as many of us suspected had happened with the previous proposals? With regard to the Spanish accession and Spanish access to Community fishing waters, has anything in the new proposals allowed Spain to get around the accession agreement which would take matters forward into the mid-1990s? Have the loopholes been effectively closed? We have the right to know now.

Has additional action been taken against industrial fishing? Several hon. Members have asked whether the Minister, as president of the Fisheries Council, has made any proposals to bring the issue to the top of the CFP review. Multi-annual quotas appeared in the document which we saw, but I understand that they have subsequently been removed from the new proposals. Is the multi-annual quota proposals still in the current document?

Those questions illustrate the fact that the House is debating blind. We do not know the current state of the fundamental policy which will dictate the livelihoods of our constituents over the next 10 years. It is disgraceful that the Minister has not even revealed his current proposals and has not given us the chance to debate them on a level footing with him.

Real resentment against the Minister and the CFP is running through the fishing communities. I believe that it is possible to get a much better deal out of the CFP. Neither the CFP nor Europe made the choice that the Minister would not fight for decommissioning, which has been available in every other European country over the past few years. Other European countries did not choose that the Minister and his Scottish colleague should refuse at the Fisheries Council even to table the proposals for the roll-up of the haddock quota for which we had asked.

I ask the Minister to tell us during the debate what exactly he meant when, in Standing Committee, he claimed that opinion in the industry was divided on the policy. It was not the policy of other European countries that introduced discriminatory legislation against our own fishing industry, which the Minister will reintroduce later today, when we discuss the Sea Fish (Conservation) Bill. All those initiatives were taken by the Government against the interests of our fishing communities. The Minister caused considerable offence among Scottish fishermen and fish processors when he argued in the Standing Committee that the industry had not shut up shop as a result of the starvation of the haddock quota over the past few weeks and months. I tell him in all seriousness that, unless he understands the mood of anger sweeping through the fishing communities as their livelihood and their future are sacrificed and jeopardised, it will not be the fishing communities that shut up shop but the Minister and his colleagues who are called to account.

7.27 pm

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): I try not to interfere too much with Scottish affairs, although I formerly represented a Scottish seat, but I must tell the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) that, although I have not the slightest doubt that he will have a great demonstration, and will shout a great deal with the fishermen, saying "scandalous", "shocking", and "appalling", nothing could be worse for Scottish fishermen than for the hon. Gentleman and his Scottish National party friends to lead them up the garden path, pretending that there is some easy solution which a Scottish National party Administration could provide. We should not listen to such twaddle, which we hear from time to time from hon. Members on both sides of the House.

We must face the sad fact that there has been an embarrassing nightmare of devastation for the fishing industry, and that there is precious little that we can do about it. Unless we get that simple point across to the fishing industry, unless we are prepared to tell people about things as they are, they will lose faith not only in politicians but in democracy.

Although he is on the other side of the House, I must say that the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) is a great fighter for fishermen; but to hear him speak as he did tonight makes us realise how desperate the situation is. The hon. Gentleman said that we should treat fishermen like farmers. Quite honestly, I can think of no more monstrous protectionist racket than our present system for protecting farmers. He wanted EC funding of a satellite, which I am sure would do some good, but he also wanted British police or Euro-policemen at every European port to ensure that fishermen were not landing British fish without our knowledge.

I am sure that that could be done at big ports with big flashy offices—the operation would no doubt be funded with EC money, which would not exactly help matters—but I remind the hon. Gentleman that fish seem also to be landed without anyone knowing about it at the Portpatricks—the little ports of Europe. The fact that the hon. Gentleman, who is a great battler for fishermen, should have to advance such arguments shows us how serious the position is.

The hon. Member for Banff and Buchan told us that we should march and demonstrate. He will not remember—he was probably at primary school at the time—our great march on Friday 17 September 1971. On that great day, plenty of fishermen came to London from Southend-on-Sea, Leigh-on-Sea and all over the south-east of England to demonstrate. They appealed to the Government, saying, "Please watch out. Our industry is in danger. The 12-mile limit is at risk. The fishing fleet could be wiped out. We shall have foreign vessels coming from everywhere.

The industry will be devastated." They said that clearly and precisely. We have seen for ourselves what has happened since that great march.

I should not like to give the impression that those fishermen were not misled. Only today, fishermen handed me letters that they had received from the Foreign Secretary of the time and other Ministers, saying, "Don't worry; it will be all right. You will be safeguarded." Unless we are prepared to face the fact that things have gone appallingly wrong since then, we shall never get things right for fishermen—in Scotland or in Southend-on-Sea. We saw what happened shortly afterwards—in a separate context involving EC interpretation—to the deep sea fleet at Grimsby, where the hon. Member for Great Grimsby has fought so hard. We saw a fleet of 500 vessels suddenly reduced to a fleet of 18 and 100,000 fishery-related jobs disappear.

We thought that we had 60 per cent. of the offshore waters and 80 per cent. of the available fish, but somehow our share of the value, at least, seems to have diminished from 80 per cent. to 12 per cent., although it is said that we have a greater percentage of the weight. Our share of the quota has diminished and we now have an appalling problem with the Spanish: because they were given the power not by the British Government but by the European Court, foreign vessels now control a huge part of our quota.

The Minister cannot escape the fact—he will discover from the Court of Auditors report that the same is happening in agriculture—that, in some areas of Europe, supervision is simply a joke. How can anyone justify the fact that we have 200 inspectors for the British fleet, such as it is, whereas the Spanish fleet, which is eight times the size of ours, has only 17 or 18 inspectors? I repeat that inspection is a joke, but the concept of Euro-policemen flying around would solve nothing at all.

What really worries me is that the only effective action that the Government now appear able to take is to propose decommissioning and a reduction in days at sea. I hope that the Government accept the simple basic point that, once they have introduced the concept of selling days at sea—selling licences—we shall move towards the disappearance, step by step, of the British fishing industry. Licences for days at sea will be bought up by foreigners, who have already taken over a great deal of our fishing.

We must not seek to mislead fishermen into thinking that there is something we can do. We cannot have British policemen going around every European port. We cannot suddenly say that we want to extend our fishing limits. It would be infinitely better, more sensible and more honourable if, instead of debating daft ideas—which could not work, and which would in any case be illegal in European terms—suggested by a few Members in a Chamber that is virtually empty because the great majority of hon. Members are embarrassed at what we have done to fishing, we simply told people things as they are.

Hon. Members should be in no doubt that I have a fishing industry in my constituency—in Southend-on-Sea and Leigh-on-Sea—which has a great little fleet, operated by people who do not go out in the North sea or to all kinds of strange places but who simply fish locally. I find it most embarrassing having to meet the fishermen of Southend-on-Sea, because they constantly hand me assurances that they have received not only from this Government but from previous Governments.

They fish for sprats, among other things, and, only today, they handed me a letter that they had received from the Foreign Office dated 6 January 1972. It stated, in relation to the agreement of the time, that it was terribly important.

"to understand that under this agreement we have, as a result of maintaining full jurisdiction over the whole twelve miles, complete control of our conservation measures."

But I received a letter from the Minister—who is one of the most courteous in the Government—dated 1 December stating:

"the Commission issued a Regulation closing the fishery to all EC vessels, as they had information to suggest that the EC quota had been taken. Such Regulations have direct force in the United Kingdom, and so Fisheries Departments had no choice but to suspend fishermen's licences."

There is a world of difference between our being in charge and a Commission official—not the Council of Ministers—saying stop, and Southend stopping, with all that that entails.

We must also bear in mind the many special problems that face Southend. We are stuck at the end of the cod fishery year, so that when all the cod come down our way, we often have no quota left to fish. The Minister will know that the industry has effectively been shut down for a few weeks, and will remain shut down until mid-January. I have a little suggestion to make to him. It may be unlawful and may not be acceptable to Mr. Delors—indeed, it may be a waste of time my mentioning it—but would it not be possible to have a system whereby, if people are fishing locally off a local port—not going way out to sea with big nets—he could say, "That is for them."? It would make a huge difference to Southend-on-Sea if we could say that the Thames estuary was for Thames estuary fishermen.

I do not expect the Minister to be able to do anything at all about controlling the abuse of quotas by foreigners. I do not seek in any way to give the impression that we can do anything about the big problems or save the British industry. I think that the decision has been made; it is sad, but it is irreversible, and we must not kid ourselves about it. But might it not be possible in the negotiations to find some way to safeguard our little fishing industry—a terrific, long-standing industry which has great successes and innovations to its name and which is made up of hard-working, decent, honourable people? If the Minister could give us such an assurance, it would be a great step forward.

The Minister is a decent, honourable person. I say that without any lack of conviction or sincerity. I know him to be a straight, honourable politician, and there is a shortage of those on both sides of the House. I hope that he will therefore agree that the best way to deal with fishermen is not to ask them to march or to suggest putting British police at every European port, but to tell things as they are.

I hope, too, that he will bear in mind my suggestion that there might be some little procedure that we could introduce to help local fishing in Britain. If we can do that, and so save something of the fishing industry instead of trying to mislead fishermen and tell them to protest, march and make fools of themselves and us, we shall have done something.

7.38 pm

Mr. Eddie McGrady (South Down): I am grateful for the opportunity to participate in tonight's debate coming, as I do, from Northern Ireland and from a constituency within the boundary of which is to be found 60 per cent.

[Mr. Eddie McGrady]

of the Northern Ireland fishing industry. The constituency also has a unique geographical position because it is contiguous with the Republic of Ireland and that will impinge on my later comments.

All of us who represent fishing ports and industries are experiencing depression because the industry is depressed. The industry has served all our nations greatly over many centuries. It is unique because it has not been criticised, as other industries are, for the quality of its product or for lack of efficiency. The industry is being cut back solely because of the run-down of natural resources. We should not try to attribute that to the industry itself.

As a nation, we must share responsibility for that. That is why I see no contradiction in seeking special assistance for the fishing industry. I seek not self-centred aid, but assistance that will benefit the entire fishing community of this generation and of generations to come. That is why we are addressing a unique and very special problem of our times.

Like many other hon. Members, I can say that for the fishing towns and villages of my constituency, the fishing industry comprises the whole economic and social fabric of the community. If it breaks up and disappears, I do not doubt that a similar catastrophe will befall the communities themselves. The fishing communities in my constituency do not have the capacity to industrialise in any other way. Their whole ethos is of the sea and fishing —the landing, selling, processing and exportation of the harvest of the sea. It has been that way throughout man's memory.

After our last debate on the issue, a fisherman told me that fishermen have had the right to fish in the Irish sea since long before the Magna Carta was signed. I thought at first that that was an exaggeration, but when we think about it, it is probably quite true. The right to fish for a livelihood is almost a civic right in terms of the people who have plied the seas for centuries. In that context, I hope that the Minister will take on board some of the suggestions that have been made today.

The fishing organisations and fishermen to whom I have spoken have not been anti-conservationist. Without exception, they are deeply conscious of the need to preserve the stocks of the sea which, in turn, will preserve their way of life for themselves and for their families who come after them.

There seems to be a lack of consultation between the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the fishing organisations. I cannot speak with authority about what is happening here, but there is certainly a lack of consultation between the fishing industry in Northern Ireland and the Ministry responsible for it. I hope that that will not be reflected here. Although I accept that the Minister responsible for fisheries in Northern Ireland cannot take part in the debate because he is a Member of the other place. I am disappointed that there are no civil servants from the Ministry in attendance tonight to listen to what Northern Ireland Members wish to say.

It is a matter of grave concern to us that that voice has not been heard. That voice, united in consultation with the Government, is capable of producing solutions which I, as a layman, cannot suggest in this debate. That voice is the forum through which the future of the industry can be worked out properly in terms of restrictions, quotas, decommissioning and all the other negative impositions that have been and will be placed on the fishing industry.

The fishermen in my constituency are annoyed about the operation of the national quota allocation for the Republic of Ireland and about the Hague preference intervention. It is particularly galling for my fishermen because the fishermen in the Republic of Ireland do not fish the entire quota to which they are entitled. On one or two occasions in recent years there has been a transfer of surplus quota from the Republic to the fishermen in Northern Ireland. I urge the Minister in his next round to extrapolate that generosity of earlier years. That practice occurred in respect of nephrops last year.

When the fishermen of Kilkeel and Ardglass are tied up in harbour, they can look out across a couple of miles of water and see fishermen from the Republic plying the same waters, catching fish to their hearts' content and not fulfilling their quota. That will be even more alarming because the fishing fleet of the Republic of Ireland is increasing, however slight that increase may be. That is occurring against a backcloth in my constituency of a fishing industry which has, over the past two years, opted for a reinvestment programme in terms of the number of boats, harbour and processing facilities. It is therefore all the more galling that they will probably now be forced out of business.

The consequences of the many restrictions and of the Sea Fish (Conservation) Bill will be, as many hon. Members have said, the strangulation of parts of the industry as boats will be put out of commission due to financial hardship because they cannot maintain an economic and viable fishing unit. That is no way to repay the fishing industry in terms of its future. If at all possible, the Minister must ensure that a proper decommissioning scheme is introduced. It cannot be beyond the bounds of human endeavour for a proper, fair and comprehensive European-wide decommissioning scheme to be put into practice.

The fishermen and their organisations who have made representations to me are convinced that such a scheme is a viable way forward. There is no antagonism towards it. There is realism and an acceptance that the fishing fleet must be reduced if the quantities of fish are also reducing. There seems no other practical way of taking out the fishing capacity without taking out the boats allied to those catches, however that may be defined and wherever it may be allocated.

I hope that the Minister will reappraise the Government's inadequate attitude to the decommissioning scheme. Although I do not want to transgress into our debate on the Sea Fish (Conservation) Bill, all the fishing organisations in Northern Ireland accept that that Bill deals with everything except conservation. It will not lead to better conservation practices or activities.

I echo the sentiments of the hon. Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris), who said earlier that if the Bill is passed, as it probably will be, the best thing to do with it would be —as one does with constitutions— to put it in the bottom drawer and forget about it altogether.

Mr. John D. Taylor (Strangford): Reference was made to our large rally during the summer in opposition to the Sea Fish (Conservation) Bill. If the 20 Conservative

Members who on that occasion sympathised with and supported the fishermen would also vote against the Bill, it would not automatically be passed.

Mr. McGrady: I am afraid that I do not share that optimism. I am sure that, one way or another, a sufficient majority will be found for the Bill to receive its Third Reading today.

Most people see the decommissioning scheme as the logical way forward, allied to other measures which can be agreed with the fishing industry. The fundamental factor is that the fishing industry is depressed and confused. The industry has directives, restrictions and licences thrown at it monthly. It simply does not know where it is or where it is going. Any other industry would have collapsed long ago due to lack of forward planning. The only way out of that malaise is for Government Departments and the Minister to initiate a proper round table conference so that all the vested interests can thrash out a meaningful, practical fishing policy which will take us into the next century. I believe that that can be done, even at this late hour, and that it can be promoted and piloted through the appropriate channels of Europe—if it is desired.

Will the Minister—in league, as it were, with his opposite number at the Northern Ireland Office—make some provision for the adequate training of fishermen in Northern Ireland, especially in those areas where training is not available? It is ludicrous that fishermen in Northern Ireland have to travel abroad to complete their training when there is an adequate possibility of providing that training within Northern Ireland, either on its own or in conjunction with the school at Greencastle across the border.

Having made many representations on the matter, I ask the Minister once again to take cognisance of the dangers to fishermen in the Irish sea from the non-compliance with the regulations established for submarines. Submarines endanger fishermen—their lives, vessels and gear. That has happened again in the past six weeks, despite assurances to the contrary. I should like the Minister to re-examine the matter in terms of normal safety provisions.

I understand that the Minister will be visiting Brussels within the next couple of weeks. The fishermen of Northern Ireland have asked me to ask the Minister to barter for the largest possible quota consistent with scientific conservation measures. Fishermen are conservationists at heart. Will the Minister negotiate with the Republic of Ireland the transfer of surplus quotas—especially those for cod, whiting and plaice—to its neighbours across the border? I do not say this in jest, but perhaps the Minister could take one of his ministerial colleagues from the Northern Ireland Office with him so that we can at least feel that he will have better knowledge of the problems pertaining to the Irish sea and the Northern Ireland fishing organisations at his elbow rather than at a distance.

I feel strongly that the answer to all of the problems that we are debating and the difficulties that we have is one of partnership. There must be a partnership based on proper, adequate and on-going consultation between the fishing industry, the various national organisations and the departments involved. I have no doubt that a partnership is the real way forward for a viable fishing industry, consistent with the stocks of fish that will be available to it.

7.53 pm

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): I have had the privilege of listening to every speech since the debate started about four hours ago. One of the great privileges of attending such a debate is that one is able to conclude that there is consensus in the House, with the exception of the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond). He stormed in here, whipped the fishing industry into a great lather, declared that he would march on Edinburgh, then walked out to have his supper. He is not here any more. As a result of the excellent speech of the hon. Member for South Down (Mr. McGrady), the debate has returned to the calm, sensible way in which it was proceeding before the hon. Gentleman's speech.

If one has attended the debate since the beginning, one is able to assess that throughout the House there is a strong sense of feeling towards the fishing industry. I do not represent the same number of fishermen as the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell), whose constituency backs mine. In the old days, many fishermen lived in my constituency. It was a convention that the skippers came ashore in Grimsby. In those days, the trips were fairly profitable and the skippers lived a good life. Traditionally, they lived in Cleethorpes. Sadly, as the years of decline have passed, fewer fishermen live in my constituency. Inevitably, if one's constituency wholly surrounds the town of Grimsby, one cannot help but become involved and be subject to the pressures and lobbies of the fishermen.

I do not claim to be the expert on the fishing industry that the hon. Member for Great Grimsby is—or, indeed, the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley), my neighbour on the other side. It looks as though south Humberside will score a double 20. It is the first time that I can remember that all three hon. Members will have sought to catch the eye of the Chair. The Opposition spokesman and the hon. Member for Great Grimsby bring a wealth of experience which I fully recognise. It is always a privilege to attend the meetings of the local branch of the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations which they attend regularly. They have certainly taught me a great deal over the years about the problems of the fishshing industry.

My hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Robertson) summarised the basic problem. We have a finite natural resource. We have a duty to conserve that resource, although we have a duty to provide an income and a living to a group of brave people who do one of the most dangerous jobs in the world. That has been the eternal difficulty of successive Governments in the past 25 years. It would not be right to blame every problem of the fishing industry either on this Government or on the Labour Government. The problems in the fishing industry started in the early 1970s, and successive Governments have fought with great difficulty to overcome them.

We must face the reality to which my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) referred a few moments ago: the fishing industry is in decline. However much we seek to create circumstances such as those outlined by the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan, we mislead fishermen if we hold out that some great march or rally or great quick fix, resulting from either a change in the European Community or a change of policy by my hon. Friends on the Front Bench, will somehow solve the

[Mr. Michael Brown]

problems. There is a basic dilemma—a dichotomy—which can be resolved, sadly, only by a decline in the fishing industry. It is not a decline that I want to see.

Mrs. Ewing: The hon. Gentleman has referred twice to my hon. Friend the Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond). If he had listened carefully to my hon. Friend's arguments, he would know that we are clearly saying that we seek equal treatment in the common fisheries policy. The difficulty that fishermen face, especially those in the north-east and north of Scotland, is that the common fisheries policy is not applied equally across the Community. All that we are asking for is that equality of treatment.

Mr. Brown: I know what the hon. Lady has said—I have heard every word of the debate. Unfortunately, the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan will not be able to say that because he is not here. *[Interruption.]* I have simply made the point that I have been here since the debate started and have heard every word of it.

Every part of the fishing industry in the United Kingdom—indeed, in the whole European Community—faces problems. I urge the hon. Lady to recognise that Humberside Members—I am sure that the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe will agree—feel that we are unfairly treated by the common fisheries policy and by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. We feel at a disadvantage because of the political clout that the Agriculture and Fisheries Department in Scotland seems to have.

If the hon. Member for Moray attended some of the meetings in Humberside that the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe and I regularly attend, she would realise that Humberside fishermen feel that they are more harshly treated than others.

Mrs. Ewing: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Brown: I give way for a second time.

Mrs. Ewing: I have not yet been invited to a meeting in Humberside. I reciprocate by inviting the hon. Gentleman to come to a meeting of fishermen in the north-east and north of Scotland and listen to the arguments made there. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that one aspect of the Government's fisheries policy that has militated against fishermen throughout the United Kingdom is the Government's failure to adopt the same attitude to decommissioning as other countries? Decommissioning would reduce capacity in the fleet and resolve some of the problems that we face, but the Government have consistently refused to introduce a decommissioning policy such as that adopted by other EC countries.

Mr. Brown: An invitation from the hon. Lady is always an attractive proposition. She is right to say that there are problems in the fishing industry, whether in Humberside or Scotland. However, we do the debate a grave disservice if we simply say that all the problems are caused by the Government's policies. The Government have a great dilemma: they would have to face an angry House in two, three or five years if they ignored actions which should at least be considered but which, in their view, must be taken to conserve fish stocks.

Fishermen fully expect to be able to go out and fish today, tonight and tomorrow; the Government must take a longer view. There is nothing right or wrong about either approach. It is entirely understandable that the fisherman expects to have the freedom to go out on his next trip. Equally, fishermen in four or five years would blame the Administration if they had failed to take the necessary conservation measures. I am sure that the hon. Member for Moray and other hon. Members who represent fishing constituencies would be the first to lay the blame at the door of the Government.

Mrs. Ewing: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Brown: I have been generous in giving way. As you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I always give way to every intervention when I have the Floor. I shall develop my argument a little further before I give way to the hon. Lady.

We may disagree with the method that the Government introduce to reconcile the dilemma to which I have referred. I have my own concerns. The hon. Member for Moray is right to mention the decommissioning scheme. I am glad that the Government have embraced the idea of a decommissioning scheme, which they previously resisted. That shows that they are very much a listening Government and that they have changed their mind.

I should like the Government to reconsider the opportunities for expanding the decommissioning scheme. I am attracted to the argument that we are dishing out hundreds of millions of pounds to pay the farmer to set aside his land, yet we do not do anything similar for fishermen. It is not fair to blame the Government or their immediate predecessors for that. Historically, fishermen have always had a raw deal on unemployment benefit, decommissioning and redundancy.

I could tell the hon. Member for Moray about the battles that we have fought in Grimsby and Cleethorpes in the past 15 years to obtain some justice on redundancy payments for all the fishermen who were laid off by the fishing companies in the mid to late 1970s and the early 1980s—the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe will concur with me on that point. Now, the *Grimsby Evening Telegraph* is running a campaign. It has invited all local people to sign a letter to the Prime Minister asking him 15 years on to consider the case for redundancy payments for fishermen who were badly treated in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

I am the first to acknowledge that historically fishermen have been badly treated on redundancy and compensation. Decommissioning might be one way of redressing the balance.

Mrs. Ewing: Undoubtedly, the hon. Gentleman and I could keep the House up all night talking about the problems faced by crewmen and skippers alike, particularly the way in which social security legislation applies to them. I think not least of the problems created in my constituency last year during the period of the eight-day tie-up as a result of the mechanisms in the social security system.

The hon. Gentleman began by referring to conservation measures and the importance which is attached to them. All fishermen in my constituency recognise the importance of conservation measures. The hon. Gentleman went on to say that the Government were a listening Government. Yet our Scottish Fishermen's Federation made effective proposals for conservation, which lay on the table for two years. Then the Government came up with the scheme of

the eight-day compulsory tie-up per month. That is not listening. Why cannot the Government listen to the professional advice of the fishermen on the most effective methods of conservation?

Mr. Brown: I said at the beginning of my speech that I was not as expert on fishing matters as other hon. Members. In Humberside I flow in the slipstream of the hon. Members for Great Grimsby and for Glanford and Scunthorpe. I do not profess to be an expert on the answers for the Scottish fishing industry. It looks as if the hon. Lady may yet seek to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and educate me and the House a little further.

I am not prepared to accept the general proposition that fishermen have had a raw deal not only this year and last year but in the past two decades. It is easy to blame Ministers. As the Conservative Member who represents the constituency next door to that of the hon. Member for Great Grimsby, I shall not forget his predecessor, Mr. Anthony Crosland. As Foreign Secretary, he negotiated in 1976 and 1977. If I wanted to make a cheap political point —which I do not—I might argue that it was thanks to Mr. Crosland selling the deep sea fishing fleets down the river to Iceland in the late 1970s that we were in the present position. But that would not get us anywhere in 1992. We must look forward and consider some of the measures which hon. Members have suggested today, many of which have merit which the Government should consider.

We must certainly do something about enforcement. There is a case for increasing the number of inspectors inside the member states of the European Community. There is also a good case for European Commission inspectors. My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East pooh-poohed the idea of inspectors from one country inspecting practices in another country. However, that idea should be considered. He suggested that it would be illegal, but some work should be done by Ministers to explore that idea with their colleagues in the Council of Ministers.

The hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Dr. Strang) was right to make it clear to Ministers that ultimately fishing policy should be resolved by the Council of Ministers and not by the European Commission. That is the only way in which there can be any accountability to the House. He was right to make that fundamental point.

Mrs. Ewing: The Council of Ministers is the most secretive organisation in western democracy. We do not even know the agenda when fisheries policy is discussed and we do not get a full statement afterwards to tell us what happened.

Mr. Brown: That is as may be, but I know that I should rather have my hon. Friend the Minister representing my interests and those of my constituents——

Mrs. Ewing: It is not the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland who will go.

Mr. Brown: I am referring to my hon. Friend the Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Curry), the Minister of State, who will be handling the Fisheries Council meeting in a week or so.

When those negotiations take place, whether in public or private, I should rather that he was negotiating on behalf of this country and my constituents and those of the hon. Member for Great Grimsby than any other Commissioner, even though they were nominated by member states. My hon. Friend the Minister of State is a tough negotiator and he will report to the House and submit to questioning.

The basic principle outlined by the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East, who opened for the Opposition, is right, but that principle appears to be under threat.

I agree with all hon. Members who have mentioned the need to phase out industrial fishing. That must be pursued with the European Community. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister of State will use every opportunity at his disposal to do so.

Fishermen face a grim time. Sadly, there will be further contraction of the industry, but I hope that it will not result from bankruptcies. If it has to happen, I hope that it will be supported and sustained by an increased decommissioning scheme.

8.11 pm

Mr. John D. Taylor (Strangford): I have spoken in many fishery debates during the past ten years. So often we seem to cover the same ground—total allowable catches, quotas and recently the multi-annual guidance programme; and now we have more problems with the Sea Fish (Conservation) Bill.

I have found our fisheries debates repetitive and somewhat depressing. It is no wonder that fishermen feel depressed and that they are staging demonstrations—there was one in Lochinver yesterday and one in the Forth today. That is symptomatic of the atmosphere in the fishing industry throughout the United Kingdom, and it is proof that the common fisheries policy is not working in Europe, or in the interests of the United Kingdom fishing industry.

The nation has to reconsider its position in relation to the common fisheries policy. Is it the way forward? I believe that it is not. I cannot see how Greek fishermen have anything in common with fishermen from Northern Ireland or Scotland. I cannot understand why Luxembourg is involved with the common fisheries policy when it is in the middle of Europe.

Fishing policy should be more localised in Scotland and in Northern Ireland; that is why the common fisheries policy is not good for our fishermen. The people will not think that it is good when they watch the film of the events at Lochinver last night, and see good fish being discarded into the sea. The common fisheries policy gives the ordinary man in the street in the United Kingdom the message that the policy is a disaster for the industry, and it is a disaster for people to throw away good food.

I am closely associated with the fishing industry in Portavogie, County Down—with both the fishermen and with processing plants. I shall be brief this evening, as I have spoken so often in debates on fishing.

Reference has been made to the fact that more than 2,000 people are involved in the fishing industry in Northern Ireland and that we have more than 200 boats over 10 m in length in the industry. However, the fact that more than 10 per cent. of them are now tied up in our ports, in Kilkeel and in Portavogie, on a long-term basis, was not mentioned. They are not just tied up for a few days —they are out of work. More than 10 per cent. of our fleet is inactive due to the present decline in the fishing industry.

The comments of the hon. Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris)—who has had to leave the Chamber—were music to my ears. He spoke at some length about the Hague

[Mr. John D. Taylor]

preference, which has worked to the great disadvantage of Northern Ireland and of many other parts of the United Kingdom. I know that Scotland has a different point of view on that issue.

Dr. Garret FitzGerald skilfully negotiated the Hague preference on behalf of the Republic of Ireland. He pulled a fast one for southern Irish fishermen. All power to him, but the trouble is that it is damaging the fishing industry in many parts of the United Kingdom, especially fishermen in Portavogie, because it is damaging Irish Sea cod and whiting stocks.

The Minister suggested that one could ameliorate the cuts in quotas by arranging swaps. That is all very nice, but it will require skilful negotiation, and one can only swap if there is something left to swap. In the winding-up speech, I want to hear whether certain swaps are likely to be available in the coming year.

We do not yet know who will be the Republic of Ireland's Fisheries Minister. They spent more than a week counting votes in the Republic. They have finally finished counting and will now spend a few weeks forming a Government. Then a Commissioner may be appointed from Dublin to Brussels, and we shall know whom to speak to about fisheries.

When we reach that stage, I hope that the new Fisheries Minister will not be as brutal in his application of the Hague preference to Irish sea cod and whiting. If he is, it will be disastrous for the Northern Ireland fishing industry.

If the Government fail to raise the issue of the Hague preference in the present talks on the reform of the common fisheries policy, we in Northern Ireland will be very upset. I hope that, when the Minister meets his Dublin counterpart, he will make a strong case for the Hague preference not being used to damage the Northern Ireland fishing industry. That hope has been expressed by several other hon. Members, including the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley).

Unlike the hon. Member for South Down (Mr. McGrady), I do not believe that the Minister should be accompanied by a Northern Ireland Minister who might know more about the Irish sea. I think that the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland knows far more about the Irish sea. Hon. Members must remember that Northern Ireland Ministers know very little about the Irish sea, because they are Members from England who come to Northern Ireland once a week.

The Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture was a colleague of mine at the European Parliament, and served with me on the fishing sub-committee in Strasbourg. At my invitation, he came to Portavogie many years ago. He had the foresight to see that he was going to be a Minister for fisheries. He knows Portavogie harbour and was well received by the fishermen. I am not sure that he would get the same reception now, but he is always welcome in Northern Ireland.

If the Minister fails to ensure that the Hague preference is not used against the interests of the Northern Ireland fishermen when he discusses the matter with the Dublin Government, I shall get involved personally. I got involved in communications with the Dublin Fisheries Minister last year, and we managed to arrange a swap for nephrops. I shall get involved again if I feel that the Government are letting us down. I have no hesitation about making direct contact with the Dublin Government on that issue.

I shall run quickly through some of the quotas. There has been little reference to the quota proposals for 1993, which I thought that we would debate in greater detail this evening.

I understand that it is proposed to increase the cod tonnage next year from 10,000 to 10,200. That is not dramatic, but at least it is an increase. That proposal is important to Northern Ireland, because we take 62 per cent. of the United Kingdom quota. However, we are already aware that the Hague preference would operate in a way that would result in Northern Ireland losing 873 tonnes of the cod quota.

Irish sea whiting, which is of great importance to Northern Ireland, has already been mentioned in the debate. There appears to be a definite proposal to reduce the whiting catch by 35 per cent., which means that the tonnage would be reduced from 10,000 to 6,500.

Mr. Salmond: An important detail should be flushed out. In last year's debate, we talked about directed whiting fisheries. The argument was that whiting was a predatory fish and that fewer whiting would be good for the rest of the fishery. A year later, we find that the whiting quota has been reduced, but for the life of me I cannot understand how those two arguments are consistent. Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman can enlighten me.

Mr. Taylor: I cannot, because I do not recall any such argument in last year's debate.

Irish sea whiting is extremely important to the fishing industry of County Down. We take up about 75 per cent. of the United Kingdom quota. The tonnage reduction from 10,000 to 6,500 is a large one, but, once again, the Hague preference comes into play and, eventually, the catch could be reduced to 2,000 tonnes. I hope that the Minister will take up my points about Irish sea cod and whiting when he attends the Council of Ministers meeting to decide on the 1993 quotas.

Northern Ireland also has an interest in the quotas for Irish sea plaice and sole. Although those fish account for a small proportion of our total catch, they are important to our fishing industry, which is small in relation to that of the rest of the United Kingdom.

The Minister has already spoken about swaps. It is true that we had a swapping arrangement with the Dutch on sole in the North sea. The Dutch took our plaice in the North sea, and gave us the sole that had been allocated to them in the Irish sea. Does the Minister envisage such swap arrangements continuing in the coming year? It has been suggested that all the plaice will be allocated in the North sea and that the Dutch will therefore be unable to make a swap with Northern Ireland for sole in the Irish sea. If we lost that Dutch sole quota, major damage would be inflicted on the Northern Ireland fishing industry.

The main part of the fishing industry in Northern Ireland is devoted to nephrops. Some 45 per cent. of the earnings of our fishing industry come from prawns. I hope that the Minister will remember that some 90 per cent. of the United Kingdom quota for prawns in area 7 of the Irish sea is allocated to Northern Ireland. I hope that he will continue to ensure that we receive a large quota for prawns in the Irish sea.

On the multi-annual guidance programme, there seems to be an argument between the Minister and other hon. Members as to what cuts are proposed. The figures have not been agreed, but there must be some clarification about that. My advice from the fishermen of Portavogie is that 24 per cent. of the Northern Irish trawler fleet will be lost over the next four years. That is serious in itself, but, at the same time, the Republic of Ireland's fleet will be allowed to increase.

The Northern Ireland fishing fleet has been hit by the Hague preference, which favours the south of Ireland, and now we find that our industry will be hit by the proposal to reduce the size of our fleet while that of the Republic will be allowed to increase. Relatively speaking, we in Northern Ireland are losing in both respects.

In the discussions on proposed cuts in the size of fleets, the Minister failed to take into consideration the special problems faced by County Down. The Hague preference was designed to deal with socio-economic problems. We suffer from such problems in County Down, which has a high rate of unemployment and few alternative means of employment. However, 2,000 good people employed in Portavogie, Ardglass and Kilkeel will find it even more difficult in the future to compete with other fleets. The Hague preference should be reformed to take into account the special problems that beset the east and south coasts of County Down.

When our Government negotiated and agreed the reductions in the size of the United Kingdom fishing fleet, they should have recognised the special problems that exist in rural County Down. The Republic of Ireland did very well out of those negotiations. It was the only country in the EC that managed to get the Council to agree to an increase in the size of its fleet. I am amazed that it was allowed to do that, but I congratulate its negotiators on that success.

The special position of the Northern Ireland fleet, which is only a few miles from the southern Irish fleet and fishes in the same sea, should have been taken into account. The British Government should have ensured that the size of the fishing fleet in County Down was likewise increased.

I look forward to the Minister's reply.

8.26 pm

Mr. Sebastian Coe (Falmouth and Camborne): I add nothing new to the debate when I say that there are deep-seated problems throughout the United Kingdom fishing industry. If I did not appreciate fully the complexities of commercial fishing inside and outside my constituency before, I certainly do now after six months in which I have represented a fishing constituency.

Neither do I make fresh comments when I say that fishing in the North sea and the Scottish waters is very different from that in the Western approaches and the Irish sea. In fact, so great are those differences that many argue that they may as well be viewed as two separate countries. It is those geographic and oceanographic differences which make finding the right balance for the United Kingdom fishing industry as a whole so difficult.

These differences also demand a regional breadth of solution. I do not believe that that solution lies in the Sea Fish (Conservation) Bill. For many fishermen in my constituency, that Bill sounds the death knell of their livelihoods. In Cornwall, it will sound the death knell not only for those fishermen but for many shore-based companies. One must recognise that the catching sector of the United Kingdom fishing industry is but the top of a large pyramid of associated industries, often located in areas where employment prospects are at best extremely limited.

The Bill is an escape clause which will not work as envisaged, for the many reasons which have been rehearsed today and on other occasions—the extra pressures, the risk of fishing in dangerous waters at dangerous times of the year, and the difficulty of policing regulations here and in Europe.

The key issue in my constituency is the fact that it is almost impossible to calculate accurately a days-at-sea entitlement because the majority of the local fleet is under 12 m in length and do not carry log books. Their landing tallies, which the Ministry has requested, may refer to several days at sea previously, especially for those boats fishing for shellfish. Even those who carry log books in boats over 12 m have not put in all their yearly landing data because much of the year is spent fishing for non-pressure stock species. The Ministry does not require such declarations. The paperwork will be a mess and it will be an administrative nightmare to an undermanned Ministry in which many are already uncomfortable with the rules that they are attempting to uphold at the quayside.

Juggling figures is not conserving stocks. Fishermen agree that the seas are being overfished and a valuable resource wiped out. They desperately want a conservation package to be brought in, but to do so with the proposed measures and tie-ups will take to the very edge of existence their fishing livelihoods. Nor will it selectively reduce the tonnage, as scientific advice now recommends.

8.29 pm

Mr. Calum Macdonald (Western Isles): More than one hon. Member has said today that the fishing industry has its back to the wall. That is certainly true, but it is true in different ways in different parts of the United Kingdom. Clearly, it is true for fishermen in the Falmouth area, the Western Isles and Northern Ireland, but the problems faced by fishermen differ according to the community. I have tried time and again in debates in the House to tell the Government that they cannot simply impose one solution which will work effectively throughout the United Kingdom. There is diversity in Europe's fishing industry, but an equal diversity within the United Kingdom.

Although communities in many areas rely on fishing for their livelihoods, that dependency is even more pronounced in some areas because people have no prospect of alternative employment, should the bottom fall out of the fishing industry. The Government must take that factor into account when proposing measures aimed at conservation.

I was pleased to find that point reflected in a document issued by the Commission in its review of the common fisheries policy. One of the disappointing aspects of the Minister's opening speech was his failure to take up the document's many interesting leads to issues other than the allocation of quotas. For example, throughout the document numerous references are made to social and economic implications of policies affecting the fishing industry. It showed an appreciation that the policies affect the fishing industry differently according to area.

[Mr. Calum Macdonald]

On page 50, the Commission says that traditional coastal fishing differs throughout the Community. In some areas, for example, fishing

"is often done part-time to supplement other traditional activities such as agriculture".

That is true for the west coast of Scotland. The Commission goes on to say that in such areas

"It is above all an exploitation of a resource close at hand in poorly developed regions offering little or no other employment or income. Its disappearance, even partial, would destroy the delicate equilibrium of the regions concerned."

I have tried to make that point time and again to the Government. In considering how to handle the fishing industry, they must appreciate that to undermine it in certain areas, notably on the west coast of Scotland and the north-west of Scotland, is to take away from those areas one of their few means of livelihood. There is then simply no alternative for the fishermen who live there. They cannot try to find a job in a different line of business in the future and their children have no hope of finding an alternative occupation because alternatives simply do not exist.

The Commission make that point emphatically in its report to the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament. It distinguishes between two zones in fishing policy:

"firstly, there are the developed and industrialized zones, with diversified activities"

where fishermen, at least in theory, have the potential of alternative activities. It describes the second type of zone as

"less-developed, often rural zones, where the problem is a social one, quite possibly determining the survival or otherwise of the communities concerned, since fishing is the only activity possible for a large part of the workforce."

The document, which was drawn up by supposedly remote bureaucrats from Brussels, shows a greater awareness and perception of fishing communities' special needs in the north-west of Scotland than I have heard from any Minister in any debate in this House. Such a perception has specific consequences. Several hon. Members have already said that the multi-annual guidance programme is proving to be ineffective in its task of reducing the capacity of the fishing fleet throughout Europe. Once one appreciates the different nature of the fleet throughout the Community, one understands that it is not good enough simply to set targets on a nation state basis. One must fine-tune one's policies to a greater extent and target specifically those areas of the fishing fleet which are genuinely over capacity. It must be realised that all areas of the fleet are not equally over capacity. There is certainly over-capacity on the east coast, but not on the west coast of Scotland.

In drawing up policies to tackle the problem of over-capacity, it is essential to distinguish between those different circumstances. The Commission has recognised that. The same document, in a section called "Structure of fishing fleets", says that the Commission has recognised that the policy to date has not succeeded in restructuring fishing fleets and reducing overall capacity. It indicated the possibility of a new approach and talked about the need to identify

"fleets defined separately and linked to specific stocks"

and specific areas. It discusses segmenting and differentiating between national fleets so that

"it will be possible to differentiate fishing effort reductions according to types of vessels, gear, areas, the state of stocks in the different fisheries".

The document was presented to the Council of Ministers last December and it is a great disappointment that the Government, despite the fact that they chaired the Committee of Ministers dealing with the problem, have failed to take up the Commission's initiative.

Another issue of relevance to the common fisheries policy is that of the north of Scotland box—the Shetland box. Various changes were proposed to the Shetland box by the fishermen of the Shetland district. I should have liked that box to be further extended—I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) does not agree with me. There is a great need to extend that box to cover much more of the west coast fishing grounds. I fear that, as a consequence of current trends in British and Community fishing fleets towards capacity aggregation and flagships operating in British waters, more and more large vessels of more than 26 m will be operating in British waters west of the Hebrides and on the west coast of Scotland. We must establish some control and safeguards to prevent that.

The mid-term review also presented us with an opportunity to tackle the problem. The Commission recognised that. Page 77 of its commission to the Council of Ministers states:

"the present arrangements for the Shetland area must be maintained and the concept could be extended to other regions under the conditions of Article 7 . . . Indeed, the box system offers a way of regulating access to resources which has not been fully utilised up to now."

The Commission was absolutely right. In that passage, it extended an invitation to the Government to push for a wider box, but unfortunately the Government have failed to take up that invitation.

We have recently been told that, for some reason, access to the shellfish stocks around the region of St. Kilda and the Flannan isles, and off the north-west of the Butt of Lewis, within the six to 12-mile band has been given to French fishermen. The French have not yet used that access. It is not clear why they were ever given it—they are generally excluded from taking advantage of shellfish stocks within the six to 12-mile band. To prevent the possibility of the French using that access in future, will the Government ask the Council of Ministers to remove that right of access on the basis that the French fishermen have not used it? That would prevent the matter from becoming a problem in future. I should be grateful if the Minister could comment on that in his wind-up speech.

Mention has also been made today of the recent blockade at Lochinver. There are two lessons to be drawn from that episode. The first has already been mentioned: the need for better monitoring of French landings in France. There is a suspicion within the fishing community that the reason why the French boats still have some quota left is simply that they have been able to evade the existing quota restrictions by landing their fish in France. I fully support the suggestion made by the Labour Front Bench team that a European Community monitoring force should be set up to regulate restrictions throughout the Community.

The second lesson to be learnt from the episode has not yet been mentioned today, although I raised it in Committee on the Sea Fish (Conservation) Bill: the need to assist and promote British participation in the potential fisheries of the far west waters of Scotland—the deep

waters out to the west of the Hebrides. It is those fisheries that the French fishermen have mainly been exploiting. There is now an opportunity for British fishermen to do so as well. However, if they are to be able to do so, they will need assistance from the Government to promote voyages of exploration to test the potential in those regions. European Community money exists to assist with such voyages. In Committee I suggested that the Government should urgently consider the possibility of providing such assistance to British fishermen. The Minister had an open mind and said that he would explore the subject, but I have heard nothing from him. Will he comment on that in his wind-up speech?

A small but profoundly important issue relates to the support from Highlands and Islands Enterprise for new boats to be built in the highlands of Scotland. I would appreciate it if the Minister would consult with his colleague from the Scottish Office on that subject. I understand that support for the construction of new boats in the highlands and islands—made available through Highlands and Islands Enterprise—has been withdrawn. Those new boats would not add to the capacity of the fleet, as they would be financed only if they resulted in reduced capacity through capacity aggregation.

The withdrawal of that support for new Scottish boats does not mean that there will be no new boats or capacity aggregation. However, it means that the new boats are likely to be not Scottish but Spanish flagships taking advantage of the opportunities which arise as older skippers want to sell licences. Unless the Scottish skippers can be assisted in buying licences, Spanish skippers will move in.

Mrs. Ray Michie (Argyll and Bute): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the withdrawal of support means that some of the new boats to which he referred might not now be built at Campbeltown shipyard, which is on the verge of closure? That will be a singular blow to that region. If such yards do not have the opportunity to build those boats, it will be a double blow for the whole Highlands region.

Mr. Macdonald: I absolutely agree with the hon. Lady. It is absurd for the Government to tolerate a situation in which Scottish boats do not come on to the scene in the highlands and islands, thus providing employment for Scottish fishermen and boatbuilders, but instead flagships come from Panama and elsewhere to exploit the Scottish fisheries. I ask the Minister to refer to that in the wind-up speech. Although it is a small and localised issue, primarily affecting the highlands and islands, it is also an important matter which reflects on the way the Government approach these problems.

8.49 pm

Mr. Ronnie Campbell (Blyth Valley): I speak for the small fishing industry in my constituency—for the men in the cobble boats of 12 m or less. At least 40 of them fish out of the harbour in my constituency. Yesterday morning they went to my constituency office. Unfortunately, I was in London, but my secretary took the message about their great fears for their livelihoods and their families. I was faxed their message, which I was asked to relay to the Minister in this debate.

Fishing has never been one of my strongest subjects—I have been a miner all my life. It might be said that fishermen work on top of the North sea whereas I work under it, but I knew many fishermen when they were still at school and I shall try tonight to deliver their message to the Minister.

My local fishermen are worried about the allocation of white fish quotas; they say that it is unfair. That has been said already many times in this debate. These small inshore 12 m boats fish for other species for part of the year and can catch cod only at the end of the year, but the quotas are all eaten up now and the men of Blyth harbour cannot go fishing. What is more, we are approaching Christmas.

The larger vessels that fish for white fish all the year round have already used up their allocation of the quota, thereby preventing small fishing boats from fishing for white fish, so their crews have to sign on the dole, just before Christmas. They feel strongly that this bad conservation management is causing unnecessary hardship for good crews, and that this activity threatens the very existence of the small-boat, inshore fishing industry. That industry is honourable, and it has existed off the north-east coast for many years.

My constituents are worried because, they say, they are the ones being put out of business even though they do not catch much fish. A few months ago I asked them how much they caught in these little cobble boats of 10 or 12 m. The answer was, only a couple of boxes of cod a day—an amount bringing in between £40 and £50 a day. Generally, there are two crewmen to a vessel.

Inshore fishermen have always recognised the need for conservation; they understand that their future depends on it. I like that attitude. These men know that conservation must be practised, and they say so. These are seasonal fishermen, fishing for certain species at certain times of the year. They would argue that the best time for this fishing is the winter—that people should not fish in April, in the spring, when the fish are spawning. Of course, at the end of the year, in the winter months, the quotas have been exhausted, so the men cannot go fishing just when they reckon the best time to fish has arrived.

These men have only been in the industry all their lives, so I suppose that, like the miners, they know nothing! Some civil servant or Minister in Whitehall, on the other hand, knows it all, and forces measures on them.

Do the Government intend to turn the management of quotas over to the producer organisations? If so, surely the POs should be duty bound to accept all fishing boats into membership. Some of these small boats have applied for membership and been turned down; the POs seem to be becoming a closed shop. Why cannot boats of 12 m or less become members of the POs? I need an answer to that question to be able to reply to the inshore fishermen of my constituency.

The POs have stressed that they do not feel that joining would be a satisfactory solution to the problems experienced by the owners of small boats. I do not know what that means, but I think that it means that small boat owners are being made scapegoats for the fishing industry. They will be put out to work and will have to sell their boats and sign on the dole, while the big boats continue to fish. I do not like that idea. There is room enough in the North sea for all. Conservation is rightly on the minds of inshore fishermen.

I have heard stories about black fish and paper fish and about fiddles that have gone on in the North sea, so the Minister should take a close look at what is happening. I do not want fishermen to be divided by these measures. I

[Mr. Ronnie Campbell]

hope that all the fishermen of Scotland and elsewhere will work together, but I have a funny feeling that policies are being followed to divide the fishermen so as to get rid of some of them from the North sea.

The inshore fishermen believe that they are the ones who will be sacrificed. I hope that the Minister has some answers for them this evening.

8.57 pm

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): The Minister and his colleagues do a splendid job in Europe. The problems that we face with fishing are not the fault of my hon. Friend or his colleagues in their negotiations. The problem lies with the structures under which they have to negotiate. They are another example of the failures of the Community. It is probably timely that we should be debating this subject today, since the Edinburgh meeting takes place this week.

Scotland's fishermen quite properly feel that they were led up the garden path when they entered the Community. Things have not turned out as they would have hoped or wished.

The drift netting of salmon off the north-east coast of England has an effect on my constituency. Indeed, it has a substantial impact on its economic well-being. Scotland banned the practice many years ago and my constituents look to the Government to do exactly the same in the north-east of England and to take whatever measures are necessary to ensure that that comes about. If that is not done, we run the risk of closing down some of the most profitable tourist-related activity that we enjoy throughout the central belt and the north of Scotland.

8.58 pm

Mr. Nick Ainger (Pembroke): I shall speak for six minutes and no more because I know that others wish to contribute to the debate.

I received a letter and press release from the Minister on 2 December. In talking about the multi-annual guidance programme targets, he said:

"These are fair targets which strike a realistic balance between what is needed to conserve fish stocks and what can be achieved through the Government's decommissioning and effort controlled policies. Corresponding programmes for other Member states will ensure that the burden of adjustment is equitably shared."

I refer the Minister to what is proposed for other member states. The United Kingdom is expected to take a 19 per cent. cut in gross registered tonnage but it is proposed that the French take only an 8 per cent. cut. For the Spanish it will be 4 per cent. while the Irish will enjoy an increase of 1 per cent. If that is an equitable distribution, I am sitting on a massive majority and not one of 755.

I shall talk about two issues that directly affect my constituency. The first is quota hoppers. My constituency office is in Milford Haven, which used to be the hake capital of the world. It was possible to walk across the port on the decks of trawlers. At present, there are only three such vessels working out of Milford that are owned and controlled by Welshmen. The others are controlled by Spanish interests. The 20 per cent. of the people of Milford who are unemployed are naturally angry when every day they see tonnes of fish—British quota fish—being landed from supposedly British-registered vessels that are owned by Spanish interests. They see them loaded by the Spanish crews of the "British" ships into Spanish lorries driven by Spanish lorry drivers. No jobs are created on the dockside by the loss, as I see it, of the British quota, yet still no action has been taken by the Government.

The hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) said that the British Government can do nothing because of the European Community. The European Court has made a decision on European law. We need to change that law and the accompanying regulations so that the court can make a ruling on quota hoppers. Everyone accepts that. It is generally agreed that the practices that are taking place are unacceptable. The situation is becoming worse and worse. My colleagues in Scotland fear that what is happening in the waters of south-west England, Wales and the Irish sea will happen in their waters.

In the Minister's press release, and in his letter to virtually every hon. Member who is interested in fishing, he states that the MAGP cut for the United Kingdom of 19 per cent. will be achieved by a 10·5 per cent. cut in tonnage and engine power as a result of decommissioning, and that the remaining 8·5 per cent. will be achieved by a reduction in effort.

I assume that the Minister has read the report of the House of Lords Select Committee on the common fisheries policy, which responds to the Government's proposal to invest a paltry £25 million in a three-year decommissioning programme. The report states:

"The Committee accept that £25 million is not even enough to prevent the fleet from expanding; four or five times that amount is now needed to make up for the lack of a decommissioning scheme in the UK during the last decade. The scheme which was announced must regretfully be described as too little too late."

If the Select Committee's opinion is correct and the British fleet will continue to expand even though we have a £25 million decommissioning programme, how will the Minister achieve his MAGP cut of 19 per cent.? Will there be more and more tie-up time? Will there be more and more effort control measures? As the hon. Gentleman knows, in their present form they are entirely unacceptable to the industry.

In my final minute I shall talk about the proposed total allowable catches in the Irish sea, the Bristol channel and off the south-east of Ireland. They are entirely unacceptable. If the Minister thinks that they represent an equitable distribution that takes account of the problems that the industry faces throughout Europe, I must tell him that that view is not shared in Milford.

A 12 per cent. cut is proposed for whiting and 22 per cent. for plaice in the Irish sea. There is to be a 6 per cent. cut for plaice in the Bristol channel and south-east Ireland areas. For sole, there is to be a 32 per cent. cut in the Irish sea and 15 per cent. in the Bristol channel and south-east Ireland areas. There is to be a 53 per cent. cut for anglerfish in the whole of sector 7.

At the same time as those cuts are implemented, Irish capacity is to be increased. Because of the Hague preference agreement, presumably Irish quotas will remain the same or even increase. Welsh fishermen fish in the same waters as Irish fishermen and they cannot accept the Minister's agreement to allow Irish quotas to remain the same or to increase while they and English fishermen have to make massive cuts.

The Minister will be negotiating again in Europe next week. I hope that he will come back with a better package.

9.5 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke (Mr. Ainger) for truncating his speech to allow me a few minutes in the debate. I fully realise the importance of the fishing industry to his community.

I want to say something about whales—who does not today? I tabled an amendment, which was not selected, which called on the Government

"to withhold its consent to a new EC fish prices agreement until such time as the Community draws up a comprehensive policy for the protection of whales, dolphins and other cetaceans in EC waters and makes adherence to such a policy a pre-requisite for enlargement of the Community."

I realise that the EC fisheries policy recognises the needs of the ecosystem within the marine environment and I welcome that. I also welcome the Government's strong support for the International Whaling Commission ban on commercial whaling. However, that worldwide ban is now under threat from a number of countries—regrettably and specifically Norway. Norway is seeking greater access to EC fishing waters and also entry to the European Community. In no circumstances should either application be given even passing consideration while Norway expresses the intention to recommence commercial whaling in 1993.

The Norwegians are aiming for the minke whales in the north Atlantic. They say that the stocks have now reached a level at which they can be safely harvested. Of course, "harvested" is a euphemism for slaughter because the Norwegians—and, indeed, any other nation—have had nothing to do with husbanding stocks. If the stock of minke whales in the north Atlantic has increased, it is because all other nations have adhered to the IWC moratorium on commercial whaling. Why should Norway alone benefit from the self-denying ordinance of other countries? If they took the same attitude as Norway, the stock of minke whales would again be imperilled.

A Greenpeace petition with 500,000 signatures has been presented to the Prime Minister at No. 10 Downing street. It was delivered by Members of Parliament representing the three main parties in the House. That coincided with the visit of the Norwegian Prime Minister, Mrs. Brundtland, who was in this country specifically to discuss a possible application by Norway to join the EC.

I draw the attention of the House to early-day motion 536, which has been signed by more than 160 hon. Members from both sides of the House. It effectively expresses not only how I and the majority of—perhaps all—Members of Parliament feel, but how vast numbers of our citizens feel about commercial whaling and, specifically, Norway's attitude.

I have sent a letter to Mrs. Brundtland on behalf of Members of Parliament, especially those who delivered the petition to No. 10, in which I make it quite clear that we find her Government's proposal wholly unacceptable. Norway has never fully respected the IWC ban; indeed, it has killed more than 900 whales since the ban was introduced in 1986. This summer alone, despite the IWC's request not to do so, Norwegian whalers killed 95 minke whales for so-called scientific research. Where does the meat of whales that are slaughtered in the so-called interests of science go? It goes to Tokyo, because whale meat is purchased at great expense for some of the best restaurants and diners in Japan. The Japanese are involved in commercial whaling.

Mr. Harris: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is the debate about fish or mammals?

Mr. Banks: The hon. Gentleman makes a good point that is fairly obvious to us all—whales are not fish but mammals. However, whales are regarded in the same way as fish stocks. We talk about whaling fishing, and that is the whole point. Of course we know the difference. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will join me in saying that it is unacceptable.

I support the Government's attitude to the IWC ban. Norway hopes to join the Community yet is intent on taking up commercial whaling in defiance of public opinion throughout the world. I hope that when the Minister meets his Norwegian counterparts he will make the feelings of the House very clear.

9.10 pm

Mr. Elliot Morley (Glanford and Scunthorpe): This has been a good debate, in which more than 20 hon. Members have spoken with some knowledge and depth of feeling about the crisis facing the fishing industy which, sadly, it has been facing for some years. It is depressing that many of the arguments advanced tonight were reruns of previous debates, and the industry faces many problems that it has faced for a number of years. In many cases, the problems are getting worse rather than better.

The Minister will have heard that there is to be a national demonstration in Edinburgh on Friday. I intend to be there, on behalf of the Opposition, to join with the Scottish Fishermen's Federation and the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations, which are organising the rally and speaking on behalf of the fishing industry. It is a shame that those organisations are having to do so, because they are not negative; they have not been critical or argued against the Government for the sake of doing so. They have often made constructive proposals to deal with the problems that the industry faces. I am only sorry that the Ministry has not adopted their proposals more often.

I invite all hon. Members to read carefully the amendment tabled by the official Opposition. It calls for British interests to be protected in the current mid-term fisheries policy review. It asks for structural changes to be applied equally to all fishing fleets throughout the European Community. It asks the Minister to reject measures which discriminate unfairly against British fishermen, to maintain the principle of relative stability and to ensure that our fishermen have the same right as others to an effective decommissioning scheme.

Hon. Members will have heard the criticism of the £25 million that the Government have made available. I explain to hon. Members who may not be aware that it is not £25 million of Government money but the total amount available taking into account the European Community's 70 per cent. contribution. It is a small sum —the Minister may wince, but he knows that I am correct —that the Government are putting into the pot for a decommissioning scheme. I endorse the Lords report which made it clear that it is not an effective or adequate amount.

Mr. Curry: I ask the hon. Gentleman the question that I asked the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Dr. Strang). He must have an idea of what would be an

[Mr. Curry]

effective amount. What would be the amount of money, up front, that the Opposition would be prepared to spend on a decommissioning scheme?

Mr. Morley: The answer depends on what one would want to achieve from such a scheme. One would have to consider the existing fleet size when a scheme was introduced and what one wanted to achieve in terms of capacity units and horsepower, but certainly there would have to be a more adequate scheme. Hon Members are inviting me to give a figure which Conservative central office can double, treble or multiply by the Chancellor's banker's card overdraft and then quote back at us later. If they think that I am going to fall into that trap, they are sadly mistaken. Seriously, we need a more adequate scheme. It should be drawn up in consultation with the industry, with due account being taken of the fleet. I greatly fear that by the time a Labour Administration come to consider the issue, there will be far fewer fishing boats left to restructure.

I am very concerned about the multi-annual guidance programme, and my fear is shared by many hon. Members who have spoken today. I always worry when the Government talk about "a great victory" and "a good deal" that it might not be so good as it appears. Let us consider what the Government have achieved. When one considers the reduction overall in the European Community, omitting Greece which operates primarily in the Mediterranean, it is clear that we have the second largest reduction of all the Community fleets. The Minister mentioned a reduction of 19 per cent. In summing up, perhaps he will say whether that figure includes the roll-over figure from the capacity that we need to reduce or whether we have to add further reductions to it. I should appreciate clarification of that point.

Mr. Curry: I have already given the House clarification —there is no need to wait until I wind up the debate. The answer is that it does.

Mr. Morley: I asked for that clarification because I have seen conflicting figures, but I accept the Minister's assurance.

I should also appreciate the Minister's comments on the fact that as part of the great MAGP deal our fishermen will have to remeasure their fishing vessels. That will involve costs of between £700 and £1,200 per vessel. Is that regarded as fair and equitable or, indeed, necessary?

I should also appreciate clarification of one of the worst proposals from Europe. After dealing with the motion, we are to discuss the Sea Fish (Conservation) Bill, under which it is intended to reduce effort in line with the MAGP of about 8 per cent. in order to meet our obligations under that programme. If the European Community introduces conservation measures which also include effort reduction by linking it with total allowable catches, will British fishermen face a double whammy? Will they have to have a days-in-port restriction to meet the effort reduction under the MAGP and also days-in-port restrictions to meet conservation targets? I should be grateful if the Minister would clarify that point so that British fishermen will know what they face—days-in-port restrictions as a result of Government policy, as a result of Community policy, or as a result of both.

Some hon. Members referred to the fact that under the MAGP the Irish fleet has been allowed to increase, and it is also arguing for an increase under the Hague preference. As the Minister will be aware, the Irish Republic fleet did not take up its full allocation, so it seems strange that it can make a case for an extra fish allocation under the Hague preference.

The Spanish have the largest fleets in the European Community, but they face a reduction of only 4·5 per cent. It is not as though there has not been a problem with the Spanish fishing fleet: the southern hake quota, which is a major quota for the Spanish, has been cut to just 10 per cent. of the allocation last year. That makes one wonder exactly where those excess Spanish vessels will go, and where they will direct their attention. Why has the largest fleet in Europe come away with a reduction of only 4·5 per cent. while we have to face a reduction of 19 per cent? That has all happened while the Minister has been president of the Fisheries Council.

We have heard of the quota hoppers, and have often discussed them. Another growing problem is caused by the sale of licences from British vessels, both in England and in Scotland, to people from other countries. When the Government operate a policy based on a fixation with applying the free market to everyone and everything, no matter how inappropriate, problems will inevitably be caused by other fishing fleets, which are given a great deal more support and stability by their Governments and are therefore in a stronger financial position, coming in and buying up licences from British fishing boats whose owners want to get out of the industry. Unless we have a policy to deal with that, the inevitable consequence will be that some fishing ports in this country will become dominated by foreign vessels.

We have already heard, in an excellent contribution from my hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke (Mr. Ainger), what happens when foreign vessels unload on to foreign lorries which take fish away to foreign ports, with little direct employment input for British people and little chance for the young people of our fishing communities to follow in their parents' footsteps.

We need a proper decommissioning scheme, which could be used to buy the licences so that they return to the sovereign nation state. They could then be reallocated, or used as part of the effort control and conservation policy. At the moment, no one is satisfied: the licences are passing into foreign hands, our conservation effort is not being helped, and our fishing ports are being seriously affected.

While we are dealing with the so-called quota hoppers, will the Minister tell us the position regarding the compensation claim by the people who, because of the slack wording of the Merchant Shipping Act, won their court case and are now demanding considerable compensation from the British Government? Where will the compensation come from? Will it come from the fisheries budget? What kind of figure are we talking about? I should appreciate any information that the Minister has.

As the Minister knows, during negotiations on the European Economic Area agreement Norway gave increased access to some of its cod stocks. Unfortunately, most of that went to the Iberian fleet, and we did not do well out of it. I understand that Norway is now seeking compensation from CFP fishing waters for that access. Will the Minister resist that idea? I feel that Norway got off lightly in terms of the waters allocated to EC fleets, especially ours, for membership of the EEA. I take the

point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks): if Norway ignores international laws and flouts international conventions, it should not expect to be treated sympathetically in relation to its application to join the EC or in other negotiations.

Subsidiarity is a buzz word in European negotiations these days. Although we agree that each nation state ought to have as much control over its own affairs as possible, in view of the Government's record I am worried that our fishing fleet may face restrictions which other European fishing fleets do not face—as, indeed, it already does with the days-at-sea restrictions. Will the Minister confirm that no other EC member state has days-in-port restrictions of the type that our fishermen have to put up with? If we are to have restrictions and conservation measures, they should be fair and equitable and our fishing fleet should not be put at a disadvantage compared with the fleets of other member states.

The question of the EC licensing policy has been raised in the mid-term review. The concept of a European Community fishing licence is a step forward. The Minister said that he regarded licensing as part of effort control. Would he care to expand on that when he sums up? Does he envisage introducing restrictions in terms of the banding and grouping of vessel types and the way in which licences can be used? Does he envisage tighter control of the allocation of licences in this country or in the EC generally? Will he undertake that, if such restrictions are imposed as a form of effort control, our country will not once again suffer adversely in comparison with other member states?

The principle of relative stability—an important element of any discussion of the Community—has been referred to. I acknowledge the Minister's assurances on that point, and I accept that he is arguing that the principle of relative stability should be maintained. Any efforts that he makes to achieve those objectives have the whole-hearted support of the Opposition.

The mid-term review recommends that the Hague preference should be maintained. We have no argument with the maintenance of the Hague preference——

Mr. Austin Mitchell: Yes, we have.

Mr. Morley: —although it has disadvantages for certain parts of the country, as my hon. Friend the Member for Great Grimsby has made only too clear. We should work towards a state of affairs in which the Hague preference, which should be regarded as a safety net, is not implemented and in which we have suitable stocks to which all our fishing ports have fair access.

The Shetland box is also to be maintained in its present form. I know the views of my hon. Friend the Member for Great Grimsby on that. The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) made the fair point, however, that in its present form the box has not placed restrictions on other vessels—certainly not on those from the Humberside fleet. There is an argument for the use of biological boxes as a conservation tool; they should not be used as a way of giving unfair advantage to a particular group. Would the Minister be willing to argue for the extension of the boxes principle, on a permanent and a temporary basis, to protect spawning stocks, sensitive areas and fishing grounds?

Mr. Salmond: I have some reasonably friendly fire for the hon. Gentleman. He is speaking with some confidence about the latest proposals for the revision of the common fisheries policy. Does he have them in his possession? Have they been made available to him by the Minister? If not, how can he be so confident about what they contain?

Mr. Morley: I am dealing only with the proposals in the papers made available to European Standing Committee A, which the hon. Gentleman has seen. I have seen no other papers or proposals apart from those debated by hon. Members who attended the sitting of that Committee. All the proposals were outlined in detail in that document. Perhaps it will be reviewed and revised. I remember the Minister saying that the wording was confused and somewhat inaccurate, so a further document may well be brought forward, but I assure the hon. Gentleman that I have seen no document other than what was laid before us. I am not aware of any other document, although I noted and listened with interest to what the hon. Gentleman said.

A careful consideration of regional policy as it applies to fisheries is needed. I hope that the Minister will consider European regional aid for communities in which fishing is of major importance. I refer not only to small isolated communities and fishing ports but to areas which depend heavily on fish processing, such as Aberdeen, Grimsby and Hull. Given the pressures and problems that the fishing industry faces—particularly if the proposals for still more days-at-sea restrictions go forward—it is important that we have an aid package which takes into account the communities and the crews and their families. Even with decommissioning, which I support as part of a package, the bulk of the help goes to the owner of the boat. We also need to consider crews, communities and families. I hope that the Minister will argue that assistance should be given to those communities via the relevant structural funds.

In respect of regionalism, we also heard about small boats which operate in inshore waters. I welcome the fact that the mid-term review proposes that the six-mile and 12-mile limits are to be kept, but I hope that the Minister will also consider small vessels which operate inshore close to their home ports and use highly selective gear. In that respect, I am thinking of the Cornish handliners, of longliners in general and of small boats which take small catches and are very selective, with next to no by-catch. In many cases, those very small boats suffer as a result of policies designed to catch much larger boats taking a much larger catch. As part of a regional policy, and recognising that those small boats operate a very environmentally friendly method of fishing, the very small quota taken by those boats should receive special consideration.

The news about total allowable catches is no worse than the news last year. There are proposals for a significant increase in the haddock quota. I appreciate that the Community and the Minister must be guided by scientific advice, but there is a problem when quotas seem to change dramatically from drastic cuts one year to drastic expansion the next. The Minister may argue that the past two years have been very good spawning years, particularly for haddock, but I hope that he will ensure that the Commission's scientific advice is reliable and the basis for a manageable quota so that we avoid difficulty.

As the Minister is aware, the Commission produced a consultation document on discards. I hope that more work will be done on discards, particularly in relation to the introduction of various kinds of conservation gear. Hon. Members will be aware of the arguments in favour of square mesh panels and the pioneering work carried out

[Mr. Morley]

on that in this country. Square mesh panels have been implemented unilaterally by the United Kingdom and I hope that the Minister, as president of the Fisheries Council, will argue for them to be included throughout the Community fleet as part of an effort to reduce discards.

There are some welcome steps in the mid-term review in respect of enforcement. I support the idea of multi-national teams and I was a little surprised at the comments of the hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor). If we argue about equality of enforcement, there is a good argument for a multi-national team entering member states to ensure that they are abiding by the regulations agreed within the Community. The best way to do that would be to have an impartial spot check by inspectors who have no connection with that country.

There may well be an argument for establishing a European agency directly responsible for that work to ensure that the rules are applied. I see the hon. Member for Southend, East wincing at that suggestion, and I appreciate that it would be yet another agency, but we are members of the Community and we have certain rules. It is important that those rules are enforced fairly in every country.

My colleagues have referred to satellite surveillance. There is an argument for that, but we would need a pilot study on it. The Minister will recall that I said in Committee that it might be possible to consider linking satellite surveillance to GPS satellite navigation systems. That would save many fishermen a great deal of money. The system would be more attractive to fishermen if it provided details of a boat's position and if it could be incorporated in satellite navigation systems towards which many fishermen are moving. We must also stress the safety implications of that equipment. There are advantages for fishing boats, as they would be tracked at all times. If the signal stopped, the appropriate national emergency services could be alerted.

Data transfer has also been considered in depth. In relation to new technology, it is a good idea to discuss the possibility in the future of electronic data transfer, perhaps even by signalling data to a central recording station where there could be an immediate update on catch position and what boats have been doing. That is a good idea, but one must take into account the cost implications for fishermen and the actual equipment, which soon becomes outdated. I would not want fishermen to be put under an unfair burden. I hope that the Minister will speak to his hon. Friends in the Department of Trade and Industry and alert some of the electronics companies that on the horizon is a potentially big order for the equipment. I hope that British electronic companies will bid for contracts for the provision of such equipment, which I suspect will be installed on EC fleets.

The Minister knows my views on industrial fishing. He knows that the Labour party has argued for many years for the phasing out of industrial fishing. I welcome the emphasis in the mid-term review that we need to examine fishing in the global context and take into account the whole marine ecosystem, and I accept that. Where does that leave industrial fishing? In Committee, the Minister told us to wait for the report. I have to agree with previous comments that the report appears to be a whitewash, in the sense that it merely says that we need more research into industrial fishing whereas I believe that we need action on industrial fishing.

During the summer, on my family holiday, I took the opportunity to go round Esbjerg and look at the fishmeal plants and their trawlers. One could say that I was sniffing around. I also visited Esbjerg fishing museum, which was excellent. In Denmark, I found that the support for industrial fishing is not universal. Even in the national fishing museum, there were critical comments about the role of industrial fishing and what it was doing to fish stocks in the North sea. So the Danes cannot claim unanimous support for industrial fishing, which is primarily used for pig food. The time has come to take some firm action on the matter.

I appreciate what the Minister said about research and the fact that it is not clear either way. There is such a thing as the precautionary principle. I hope that the Minister will argue for that principle. I refer to third country access.

I wonder whether the Minister could comment on the Falkland Islands position, which the hon. Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) has briefly mentioned. Is it true that the European Community has given 100 per cent. financial support to a joint venture between Spain and Argentina to develop the hake fisheries around the Falkland Islands? Such aid is normally 50 per cent. Does that support mean that a large Spanish fleet has registered as Argentinian, is operating around the Falklands, will have unrestricted access to EC markets, and will have a deterimental effect on the licensed income for the Falkland Islands? That licenced income has cut the overseas development aid payments from British taxpayers to the Falkland Islanders, whose income will now be severely dented. Was financial support given to the joint venture while the British Minister was president of the Fisheries Council? I would certainly appreciate the Minister's comments on that.

The need for conservation is real. Sometimes one has to take tough decisions, and sometimes those decisions must be implemented. The Labour party recognises and supports tough decisions on conservation if science dictates such decisions and if the measures are fairly applied. The root of the problem that we are discussing is that for more than three years we have argued for an effective decommissioning scheme but failure to implement that scheme has caused all the problems that we have been talking about. There must be a package including decommissioning as well as conservation gear, licensing enforcement and conservation management.

Fishermen are facing severe hardship. They feel discriminated against and ignored, and that they are not being treated fairly. We lack a structured and coherent policy. The industry has suffered as a result of a crisis management approach. Our amendment outlines the basic principles which our fishermen want to see. I hope that hon. Members from fishing ports will support their fishermen by backing our amendment. I hope that the Minister will also answer my questions. Above all, I hope that the Government will think again about their whole fisheries policy and recognise the awful consequences of a poorly considered and crisis management approach.

9.39 pm

The Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. David Curry): This has been an extremely reflective debate. I fear that I may not be able to answer all the points raised because the time available for my reply has been somewhat squeezed.

Several hon. Members asked me to talk to the industry. I look forward to meeting the leaders of the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations at 12 o'clock on Friday to discuss the forthcoming meeting of the Fisheries Council. We have a rendezvous with the NFFO for an open-house discussion on the whole conservation package in the new year. Of course, matters such as the sqauare mesh panel, to which my hon. Friends referred, will be discussed.

A couple of weeks ago, I had representatives of the industry from Hull in my office to discuss their problems. The deep sea Norwegian fisheries are particularly important to them. On behalf of Grimsby they said how pleased they were to see such a large Government grant going into the port of Grimsby. The hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) would not forgive me if I failed to mention that.

My hon. Friend the Member for Scarborough (Mr. Sykes) recently brought a delegation from Whitby to see me. I have received a delegation from fishermen who fish in the waters around the mouth of the Thames. I have visited Fleetwood. I have met the fish processors, to whom import duties are of particular importance. I inform the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) that I have met representatives of the industry which cans dolphin-friendly tuna.

So I have been fairly active in the past few weeks in meeting representatives of the industry. It is a constant communication and it will continue. There is no question of there being some terrible freeze on relationships. I have discussed the matters with the industry. My officials are in virtually daily contact on one issue or another and inevitably that will continue.

I recognise that the Irish sea presents particular difficulties to Northern Ireland fishermen. The Northern Ireland Members who spoke asked me to make sure that their voices were heard in the European Council discussions. If those three hon. Members are willing, I shall meet them separately before the next meeting of the Council to discuss matters relating to the Irish sea and Northern Irish fisheries. I have spoken to my right hon. Friend the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and he thinks that it is an extremely good idea.

I extend that invitation to those hon. Members. I shall ask my office to get in touch with them to make arrangements to have detailed discussions. I warn them that on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday I shall be at a meeting of the Agriculture Council in Brussels. But we shall have that meeting because I recognise the particular sensitivity of the waters in which Northern Ireland fishermen have to fish.

The hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Ainger) will be aware that the Prime Minister raised the matter of the Norwegian fisheries with the Norwegian Prime Minister when she was in the United Kingdom recently. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman's points will have been widely heard. I know how deeply he feels about the matter. Many people share his sentiments about Norwegian activities.

We usually have a pretty constructive debate across the Dispatch Boxes—I am flattering the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley); it is a pity that he is not listening, because I do not do it often. On occasions such as this we have a sensible debate. There is a large measure of agreement between many of us. There always tends to be a bipartisan quality to discussions on the European Community. I should like to see that reasserted.

It is helpful if I can go to Brussels and say, "The whole House believes this. I cannot sell this measure to the House. This is what I must deliver to the House." That is important because we are subject to a closer form of supervision and control than almost anyone who sits around the Council table. Other member states are beginning to acknowledge that that is the case.

The hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe referred to the Spanish demand for compensation. That has gone back to the European Court of Justice for clarification. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will accept that I should prefer not to be drawn into those legal waters.

The Labour party has kept its plans for decommissioning one of the most closely guarded secrets in the fishing industry. We went through a whole Bill this year without the secret getting out. We have gone through two Opposition spokesmen without the secret getting out. I am sure that we shall continue to go around that subject. At least we have put our money on the table—£25 million over three years. All we know is that Labour does not think that it is enough. Opposition Members think that the House of Lords is right in saying that there should be four or five times that much, but they will not say how much they will put on the table, and it is the amount of money that counts.

Mr. Ainger: In my short contribution to the debate I said that if we are right, if the Select Committee on European Legislation is right and the Minister is wrong, how will he deliver the multi-annual guidance programme?

Mr. Curry: I shall come to the MAGP in a minute, but the answer is simple. We shall deliver it by a combination of decommissioning and aggregation proposals.

We have delivered some of the percentage by cleaning up the register and we shall deliver the rest through the day-at-sea controls. I outlined how that will work during debate on the Sea Fish (Conservation) Bill.

The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) asked a detailed question about how the MAGP would work. It is complicated and concerns vessel capacity units. The hon. Gentleman will be familiar with the term. I shall write to him with details of how it will work because frankly it would sound like algebra if I produced it at the Dispatch Box.

There is the old canard about 70 per cent. Community money, but because of the Fontainebleau mechanism and the United Kingdom abatement it is three quarters British money. I have not detected any hon. Member advising the Prime Minister that he should not fight for the maintenance of the British abatement during the negotiations on the Community budget that he will undertake during the next few days.

The problem with the amendment moved by the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Dr. Strang) is that its central part states that we must not do anything that no one else does, not even in conservation. If the amendment

[Mr. Curry]

were accepted, I could not do many of the things that the industry has asked me to do unilaterally. The industry has told me that it thinks that the minimum carapace size for lobsters is too small and should be increased. It has demanded an increase in the minimum landing size for whiting because the Community has taken it too low. I could not do any of those things. Twin-rig trawls for prawns are mechanisms that the fishermen in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) want outlawed. Under the terms of the amendment we could not do that. I do not understand the last part of the amendment, which deals with the money in the Community budget, and I shall not recommend that anyone should vote for something that I do not understand.

I am confident that we shall see off the Community's effort reduction proposals, which would almost exclusively affect the British fleet. Again, they affect areas 4 and 6. The proposals would be wider and would take in about 800 vessels. Part of the definition is for vessels that do not catch any cod or haddock. The formulation is curious, we have been engaged in intense discussions and I believe that those proposals will not be pursued.

I recognise all the sensitivities of the Irish issue. Essentially, the Irish demanded more quotas, which would mean revising the keys of relative stability. We shall not revise the keys. The Irish will not get more quota, which is their key demand.

It is true that, under the MAGP, because the Irish do not catch their existing capacity, they have been able to sustain a demand that they should have a lighter regime than other countries. That goes back to 1982, when the quotas were distributed. However, the key is to get more fish. No one in the Community to whom I have spoken is willing to allow more fish to be caught, and I have spoken to many people on the subject because I know how sensitive the issue is.

Mr. Salmond *rose*——

Mr. Curry: If the hon. Gentleman will permit me, I shall not give way. I have been left little time to wind up and I want to cover as many matters as possible. The hon. Gentleman knows that I am not normally reticent in giving way.

The remarks of the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe on technical measures made a lot of sense. We are open to suggestions and I am willing to pursue his detailed suggestions on conservation measures.

I shall outline what I believe we will be able to achieve in the so-called revision of the common fisheries policy, or the next 10 years. I have put it in those terms because the final agreement has not been reached. Negotiations have reached a certain point. It seems that we will be able to achieve relative stability, as it is defined at the moment, which is similar to what I outlined in the Scrutiny Committee—the existing Shetland box. I know that the hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald) would have liked the box to be fatter, wider and larger, but many people—some are sitting next to him—do not like the box at all and the best bet seemed to us to be to maintain it as it was. We think that we have achieved that. We have preserved the zero to six and the six to 12-mile limit for another 12 years. That covers the exclusive zone, particularly the inner zone for coastal fisheries, which is important.

There is the possibility of multi-annual and multi-species TACs where they make sense. The proposed revision of the fisheries policy retains that concept. The use of such TACs does not become obligatory, but they may be used at the discretion of Ministers if they believe that a particular stock warrants that treatment as opposed to the current annual practice. The decisions will be kept at the level of the Council of Ministers; in other words, the idea that they should be floated off to some sort of management committee or a Commission-chaired body has disappeared.

Agreement has also been reached on the idea that all vessels should have a licensing system. There is some argument over the extent to which freshwater fisheries and non-commercial fisheries should be included. It embraces the Hague preference, but it does not embrace Spanish accession, because that is subject to a separate report, which, under the treaty of accession, must be delivered by the end of this year for further consideration.

I recognise the problems associated with the Hague preference. I know that for every winner there is a loser and that, sometimes, there seem to be two losers. On balance, as has been said, we estimate that the Hague preference is in favour of the United Kingdom. Therefore, we will continue to seek its application. I recognise the importance of swaps where the Hague preference applies —and, sometimes, where it does not. Swaps are becoming more difficult as quotas diminish in some fisheries and fisheries take their full quota. If my hon. Friend the Member for Waveney (Mr. Porter) were here, he would no doubt be inveighing against the swaps with the Dutch that we have arranged in previous years.

We must take a view, on balance, as to what is in favour of the fisheries when the time comes to take that view. We are particularly sensitive to the problems in the Irish sea and the swaps that would help to eke out a difficult fishery in that sea. We shall pursue those swaps where it appears to us that the balance of interest is in Britain's favour.

Mr. Salmond *rose*——

Mr. Curry: I shall give way very briefly.

Mr. Salmond: When will we see the latest proposal? The Minister has spoken about relative stability not being qualified by the Spanish accession. That means that there has been a change since we debated the specific document in Committee. When will the Minister table the new proposals so that we can see them and ensure that we are defending the interests of our fishing communities?

Mr. Curry: It is not my intention to table presidency proposals that will be put forward as part of the debate. It is impossible to conduct negotiations on that basis. In any case, most of it takes the form of amendments to existing texts. The role of the Select Committee on European Legislation is to scrutinise the proposals that the Commission puts forward. I appreciate the difficulties, but we are in negotiation. I have given the hon. Gentleman as full an account as I am able, as I did in Committee this morning on a different matter. He must recognise that I try to give the House the best and most accurate information available.

Mackerel flexibility is one of the traditional conditions for which we go in the negotiations. It is important to take a percentage of the mackerel catch east of the four degrees west line because of the change in the migratory pattern of the stock. Fish are tiresome because they change their migratory pattern. The cod that used to be found west of Greenland are now migrating to the east of Greenland and perhaps around the Icelandic waters. That has implications for our deep sea fishery.

I recognise that the closure of fisheries presents problems for many people. I took the precaution of checking the latest figures to see where we are making such closures. I have a list of all the closures that we have been forced to undertake. I shall not read through it, but it shows that in all the areas where a fishery has been closed, by the time the last figures are available, we will have hit the quota. Therefore, we have not closed a fishery prematurely without enabling fishermen to take their legitimate catch; we have closed where experience has taught us that we have exhausted our quota or will do so.

The allocation between the sector and non-sector group of fishermen is something that one cannot fine-tune perfectly. I am willing to do more to make that allocation more satisfactory. Closures represent difficult decisions, but I want to be sure that, by and large, we have got it right. The figures in the list, which I am perfectly happy to give to those hon. Members who are interested, illustrate that we have got it about right.

Norway presents a difficult problem. It has been mentioned by several hon. Members, but I hope that they will understand that, with the short time available, I shall deal with issues rather than individual speeches. We have five jointly managed TACs with Norway. If we have no agreement, we set autonomous TACs and quotas for the Community zone, which means that we have no access to Norwegian waters until an agreement intervenes, nor do the Norwegians have access to our waters. The problem with deferring the economic area agreement is that the 2·9 per cent. share of the cod quota, which we run as part of that agreement, does not necessarily trigger. That share may be modest, but it is a share of a TAC that is increasing to 500,000 tonnes this year, so it is a large amount of cod. Equally, the 6,000 tonnes of fish that Spain, Portugal and Ireland wanted for their first entry into that fishery does not trigger either, so the so-called "cohesion fish" does not trigger. When we get the deal, access will have to be restored.

The hon. Member for Great Grimsby has links with the processing industry because of his constituency interests. It will be necessary to renegotiate the terms that we negotiated last month because of the failure of the EEA to come into force on 1 January. I have written to the Commissioner asking him to put the new proposals forward so that we can act on them.

I do not wish to go over the grounds of the haddock quota, except to repeat that I am convinced that to catch small fish on the margin of the landing size would be a mistake. We wish to see that fishery preserved to go into the spawning stock and we want a healthy stock to emerge as a result. I am glad that Opposition Members understand those problems.

On the multi-annual guidance programme targets, if one considers what the United Kingdom must do, excluding the catch-up, one will find that we are extremely comfortably positioned. The United Kingdom has a 10 per cent. cut; Portugal, 10 per cent.; Germany, 12 per cent.; France, 10 per cent.; and Belgium, 16 per cent. Even with the catch-up—I do not pretend that there is no catch-up, and I am concealing nothing from the House—Belgium must do 34 per cent.; Greece, 24 per cent.; and the Netherlands, 21 per cent. The United Kingdom is in the middle of that pack: we shall manage to achieve a balance between the decommissioning scheme and the other measures that tackle capacity, and the measures related to days at sea.

Discards are a major problem for all of us as no one wants that to happen. As I explained in an earlier intervention, it is difficult to find a formula that does not present equal problems. It may be a technical conservation measure to some extent, moving in certain circumstances towards multi-annual TACs and multi-annual quotas. We shall explore all those to tackle a problem which we all admit brings a great deal of disrepute to the industry, which no one likes to see. I have outlined the difficulties that that presents for us.

Hon. Members have mentioned many matters that relate to their fisheries and the TACs and quotas in them. The House will understand that those are detailed matters. Regretfully, I cannot deal with them now, although I have copious notes to do so had I had enough time. If hon. Members wish me to give the details, I shall make the information available in a condensed form so that they can make a judgment.

On the Community negotiations, we shall have a session the weekend before Christmas. It will be a difficult session. Traditionally, many items are piled on to the agenda. The Norwegian problems will be an extra item on the agenda. Although we had already cleared it once, we must return to it. We have the TACs and quotas to sort out and it will be hard work getting the work done in time to have matters in place by the new year, simply because of the inevitable rush at the end of the year. We shall achieve it. We are working hard in Committee and my officials are working extremely hard. We want to ensure that the industry knows where it is as soon as possible.

Let me make one thing clear about the Bill. We have £25 million worth of decommissioning and we shall have effort control—those two go together. Without effort control, there will be no decommissioning. We have said that from the start of the Bill's passage and I repeat it today. The money was not secured without difficulty, and it is important that the two issues should be seen to go together.

As I promised, we are licensing below 10 m. We have a programme of technical conservation measures, which are known by, and by and large approved by, the industry. The measures form a package that is designed to secure the industry's future and that of the fishermen. The policy is based on conservation and common sense. I commend it to the House and ask hon. Members to support the Government.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 213, Noes 294.

Division No. 90] **[10 pm**

AYES

Adams, Mrs Irene	**Armstrong, Hilary**
Ainger, Nick	**Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy**
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*	**Ashton, Joe**
Allen, Graham	**Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)***
Alton, David	**Barnes, Harry**
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*	**Battle, John**
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*	**Bayley, Hugh**

Begga, Roy
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Boateng, Paul
Boyce, Jimmy
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dixon, Don
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Etherington, Bill
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Gapes, Mike
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hutton, John
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McCrea, Rev William
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McGrady, Eddie
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Hallam)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Hara, Edward
Oiner, William
Paisley, Rev Ian
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Raynsford, Nick
Reid, Dr John
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Tipping, Paddy
Trimble, David
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Eric Illsley and
Mr. Jack Thompson.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Allison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliff)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shr)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa

Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Horam, John
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Sydney Chapman.

Question accordingly negatived.

Main Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 9697/92, relating to guide prices for fishery products for 1993, the proposals described in the unnumbered Explanatory Memorandum submitted by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on 7th December 1992, relating to total allowable catches and quotas for 1993, and the Government's intentions to negotiate the best possible fishing opportunities for the United Kingdom fishing industry for 1993 consistent with the requirements for conservation of fishing stocks.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Motion made, and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business),

That, at this day's sitting, the Lords Amendments to the Sea Fish (Conservation) Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

Question agreed to.

Orders of the Day

Sea Fish (Conservation) Bill

Lords amendments considered.

Clause 1

LICENSING OF FISHING BOATS

Lords amendment: No. 1, in page 1, line 9, after ("conditions)") insert—

("(a) after the words "sea fishing" there shall be inserted the words "(including conditions which do not relate directly to fishing.)",
and
(b)")

Read a Second time.

10.17 pm

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): I beg to move, as an amendment to the Lords amendment, amendment (a), in line 3, after 'conditions', insert

'agreed upon by all member countries of the European Community, and'.

I make no apology for detaining the House. The Minister is looking slightly weary, if not punch drunk, following our good and important debate on fisheries policy. We will now deal with the equally pertinent and apposite final stages of the Bill before us.

The purpose of the amendment is fairly clear. The House owes a debt to the House of Lords, where there were full, detailed and well-informed debates on this important Bill. The other place certainly recognises, even if the Government do not, that the circumstances facing the industry have changed significantly since the Bill was unveiled earlier this year. The industry does not believe that those circumstances have changed for the better.

It is not easy to draft an amendment to a Lords amendment that is in order. I had a number of different attempts. I am sure other hon. Members have found the same difficulty. The amendment is not in the form in which I would have drafted it had it been left to a layman's common sense. However, I hope that the Minister accepts that is purpose is to achieve a level playing field—to use that horrible phrase—for the fishing industry throughout the Community.

My own experience was reinforced about a fortnight ago at a well-organised meeting called by the Scottish Fishermen's Federation in Eyemouth in my constituency. That meeting drove home to me, if I ever needed reminding, the fact that the industry is angry at the way that it has been treated. Fishermen feel that, to stay in business, they are obliged to break the rules, take short cuts and find ways out of complying with the schemes and regulations that govern the industry.

The meeting, which was both forthright and deeply heated, made it clear that the position that faces the industry need not have arisen and would not have done if the Government had paid a great deal more attention to the advice that the industry gave the Government at an early stage in the game. I have much time for the industry's pressure groups, especially the Scottish Fishermen's Federation. They are finding it increasingly difficult to restrain the more extreme voices that are now being raised in the industry and to make sensible representations in a moderate way, because the Government are ignoring everything they say.

People are at risk of going bankrupt and crewmen are being paid off, and the siren voices of those who are less responsible are becoming ever louder and threaten to drown out the representations of the established fishing organisations. That is a serious problem. If the extremists hold sway, the devil will take the hindmost. I believe that hon. Members on both sides of the House believe that the Government must start moving with the grain of the industry to achieve some of the improvements that are necessary.

Rather than amend the Lords amendment, I should prefer to seek to persuade the Government to withdraw the Bill and start again. The Bill does not pay enough attention to the importance of the fishing industry to the coastal communities around the shores of the United Kingdom. The hinterlands of fishing ports rely for their continuing prosperity on the wealth that is generated by the industry. The Government are not paying enough attention to that point.

In the past four or five years, a hotchpotch of piecemeal measures has been introduced, usually with insufficient notice, which has made it difficult for the industry to operate. There has been no sign of a long-term strategy.

I shall deal now with the amendment, because, although this is an important measure, there is little advantage in drawing out the debate. I hope that the Minister will understand that.

The fishing industry, as the Minister knows from doing the rounds of the ports, is intensely independent and competitive. What really riles fishermen about the Bill is that it is unjust. They are being asked to compete with other parts of the European Community with one hand tied unilaterally behind their back. They cannot understand the justification for that. The Bill has no positive conservation measures, but it introduces unfairness and discriminates against our home-based industry.

It also affects some fundamental civil rights. It interferes with and constrains people's right to earn a living. That liberty to earn a living should be removed only in special circumstances, and we do not think that the Government can justify such a move.

I try to keep up with social security laws as they affect our fishing communities. In view of the fishing industry's unusual circumstances—the fact that its earning capacity is being constrained at law on a statutory basis—I believe that the social security system should be amended so that crew who are laid off and denied an opportunity to make a living should be supported to a greater extent during their periods of enforced idleness.

We have just concluded a debate on the mid-term common fisheries policy review, but we must establish some fairly clear principles. The policy must be even-handed. Now that the Government have established the precedent of being prepared to discriminate against our own industry in important respects, the Minister must say what such unilateral action will mean in the remaining 10 years of the common fisheries policy.

I accept that the amendment may be technically deficient, but I hope that the Minister will understand the constraints under which Opposition parties operate. It would ensure equality of treatment within the industries of the European Community—nothing more, nothing less.

As we see it, it is an incontrovertible principle that there should be fairness among the fishing industries. We face compulsory tie-up schemes, net regimes and single net rules, all of which are being imposed unilaterally at short notice. That is unfair, and discriminates against our industry.

I hope that I shall be supported by Conservative Members. If the Conservative party stands for anything, it should stand for fair competition. The Bill, even as amended, cannot ensure that under any circumstances. Even Conservative Members who do not have direct constituency interests in fishing should pay careful attention to what I have to say before they cast their votes tonight.

I look forward with great interest to hearing how the Minister justifies the Bill and how he tackles the amendment.

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): I congratulate the Government on the improvements that have been made to the Bill since Second Reading, but I am also in favour of the amendment, which goes to the heart of the difficulties —in fact, I would say the crisis—facing the fishing industry. I do not think that anyone would deny that there was a crisis; nor do I think that any fishermen—certainly not those in my constituency—would deny the need for conservation measures. Even professional fishermen accept the need for technical conservation measures, whether the details involve a different net regime, a change of tackle or compulsory tie-up.

However, fishermen are concerned that the measures should be uniformly accepted and enforced across the Community. The difficulty with the Bill, despite its laudable aim of trying to preserve fish stocks, is that it disadvantages our professional fishermen. If it were to be adopted throughout the Community, and if our fishermen could believe that there would be fishery inspectors throughout the Community to enforce it with the same enthusiasm and rigour as on the quays of our fishing ports, they would be prepared to discuss and accept much of it. The difficulty is that the Bill does not affect our competitors in the Community; it will simply disadvantage our fishermen. That seems a curious situation.

10.30 pm

I readily accept the idea of round table talks. I know that my hon. Friend the Minister has been assiduous in talking to the industry in the past—but although the industry is willing to discuss technical measures and effort control, it is united in its view that it has now become the victim of unfair competition.

When the issue of the single market is raised, I invariably use three criteria to judge whether it is working. First, I would hope that a Devon business man would be able to drive his car to France and use his cellular telephone there. The reality is that he cannot, because none of the European countries is willing to accept the allocation of radio frequencies across Europe.

My second criterion would be whether a Devon business man could catch a British Airways plane in Madrid and fly to Rome. The truth is that there is no single market, because British Airways cannot pick up passengers in second countries and take them to third countries.

The third criterion that I use to judge whether we have a free Community is whether Devon fishermen can fish in French waters. The truth is that, in this country, fishing regulations are enforced with a single-minded enthusiasm not matched by our competitors anywhere else in Europe. We have heard all the apocryphal stories on the theme that we have 180 fishery inspectors in this country whereas there are only 18 in Spain—and they are all based in Madrid. The fact remains that our fishermen are severely disadvantaged.

The intention behind the Bill is laudable. It is clear that it will go through tonight, and the Minister is well aware of the depth of feeling in our ports, and the concerns about the future expressed by our fishermen. In all honesty, they do not have a future at the moment. So long as the French and the Spanish continue to quota-hop, our fishermen's future is bleak indeed. They uniformly oppose the Bill, not because they oppose conservation but because they oppose Europe. I failed to catch your eye during our earlier debate, Madam Deputy Speaker, but several hon. Members talked about the fact that foreign fishermen can fish in our waters. Nothing has been done about that, and there is nothing in the Bill to deal with the problem.

I welcome the conservation effort that the Bill will make, but I wish that it could be applied throughout Europe. I should like an assurance from the Minister that he will ensure that our European partners are willing to enforce the same kinds of effort control and tie-up regulations as will be achieved through the Bill. If he can give me that assurance, he will certainly receive my support.

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): I have been involved in the proceedings on the Bill since they began. It started off as a bad Bill; it has not finished up as a much better one. Now that it has reached the limit of its consideration in the Commons, it is almost certain to be passed—by the brute votes of Conservative Members and because Conservative Members representing fishing ports have effectively betrayed their fishing constituents by voting to deprive them of the right to go to sea and to impose a closure on them.

I am sympathetic to what I assume to be the intention of the amendment—I say "assume", because the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) told us nothing about what the amendment would achieve or how it would achieve it. Presumably, he is trying to ensure that the days-at-sea limitation will not be introduced unless similar limitations are operated in respect of other European Community member states. I agree that it is utterly wrong that our fishermen should be limited in the amount of time that they can go to sea but that similar limits should not be imposed on other fishermen—who will come in and clean up the grounds while our fishermen are compulsorily tied up under the Government's proposals.

The principle of the amendment is exactly right, but the way in which the hon. Gentleman has gone about drafting it is incomprehensible to me. The Bill amends the Sea Fish (Conservation) Act 1967, which allows the imposition of conditions on licences. The Lords amendment to those conditions on licences says that they can include

"conditions which do not relate directly to fishing".

The amendment would insert after "conditions" the words

"agreed upon by all member countries of the European Community"

and so would not exactly achieve what the hon. Gentleman tells us it would achieve. It is the product of a noble

[Mr. Austin Mitchell]

aspiration, but the hon. Member and his party have gone about things in an incomprehensible fashion, and I do not see that it would achieve what it sets out to achieve.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): Let me speak in support of the amendment. The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) has already admitted that it is technically imperfect but it nevertheless drives at the very important principle of equivalence. It is all very well the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) noting that the amendment is technically imperfect. He will see from the amendment paper that the amendments tabled by the Labour party are starred because they were not tabled in time. Far be it from me to have to defend the Liberal Democrats, but I felt it right to make that point. I repeat that, although the amendment is imperfect, it drives at an important principle.

A few minutes ago, the Minister was saying what a great consultation process he had engaged in with the fishing industry. He gave us a long list of meetings that he had held recently, as if that proved that he was a Minister who consulted the industry. But that of itself is not consultation. Consultation involves not just having meetings but listening at those meetings and then taking the appropriate action. I presume that it is no coincidence that the Minister's next meeting is to take place simultaneously with the huge fishing demonstration that is to be held in Edinburgh on Friday.

The Minister says that he is engaged in a process of consultation. The challenge for him this evening is to show us that the process is meaningful. All of us from fishing communities and constituencies remember the Committee stage of the Bill, during which the Minister finessed Conservative Back Benchers' concern by apparently making commitments in connection with the question whether restrictions would be imposed on fishermen in the United Kingdom without similar restrictions being imposed on fishermen thoughout the European Community.

Some Opposition Members may argue that it is not all that difficult to fool those on the Conservative Back Benches, particularly when they are of a mind to allow themselves to be gulled. Even so, there is no question but that what the Minister has done does not provide for the sort of undertaking that was sought when amendments were being debated in Committee.

I am sorry that the hon. Member for Tynemouth (Mr. Trotter) withdrew his amendment on that occasion, and allowed himself to be taken in by the Minister's apparent assurances. There is no doubt, however, that the intention behind the amendment was to ensure that the principle of equivalence applied and that restrictions were not unilaterally and discriminatorily imposed on fishermen in this country.

May I turn the Minister's attention in particular to the letter that he has been sent by the chief executives of both the Scottish Fishermen's Federation and the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations? That letter, dated 17 November, deals directly with the point at issue in this debate. The two federations are quite reasonably asking why the assurances that were apparently given have not been translated into the Bill and what guarantee there is that "effective steps"—the words that the Minister used on that occasion—will be taken in other countries.

What guarantee or objective criteria can the Minister cite to show that effective steps are being taken in other Community countries? The Minister can gainsay me if I am wrong, but I understand that the letter of 17 November has not yet received a reply. In line with the process of consultation, when will those two chief executives receive a reply to that letter? Will that reply be anything more than "taking note", "having meetings" and, apparently, "listening", with still no effective action being taken to redeem the apparent promises that the Minister was prepared to make from the Government Front Bench when he thought he was in trouble when the Bill was debated some months ago?

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): I had not intended to speak in this debate, but I do so in response to the point that the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) has just made. I am one of those Conservative Back Benchers who, on Report and Third Reading of this Bill, was involved in a series of consultations and possibly negotiations with my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

What the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan has just said is true to the extent that I was told that, before the Government acted on tying up, the Minister would have to convince the House that equivalent measures were being taken by other member states. As the hon. Gentleman said, when my hon. Friend the Minister of State replied to the debate on the amendment tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Tynemouth (Mr. Trotter), the phrase was changed to "effective measures" being taken by other member states. I do not view that with great suspicion. Perhaps the significance had not dawned on my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food of the difference between the words "equivalent" and "effective". I believe that there is a difference.

The amendment moved by the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) puts me in some difficulty, because I fully support the sentiments behind it. However, the hon. Gentleman will forgive me if I say that, like a lot of things about the Liberal party, the intentions are good, but it will not be very good in practice. Indeed, the hon. Gentleman rightly admitted that the amendment is very defective.

However, I will vote for the amendment tonight. Despite all the imperfections in the amendment, it is important for the industry to be convinced that somehow or other it will not have imposed on it tying-up measures that are not going to be imposed—to a degree at least—on other member states. I will support the amendment, although I do not think that it will be carried.

As I said in our earlier debate, the really important vote will not be taken tonight on any of the amendments. The really important vote will be taken some time in the new year, when the order is to be laid before this House and another place to introduce tying up—if the Government go ahead with it. As I have already said, I will vote against that order.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): I welcome the fact that the hon. Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) wants to tie up the Minister of State, because he is guilty of a lot.

The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) referred to representations that he has received from fishermen in Eyemouth. He will be aware that a number of fishermen from my constituency work out of the harbour at Eyemouth; that was why I attended a public meeting in that town two weeks ago. I listened very carefully to what the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire had to say on that occasion and I am sure that we both listened very carefully to the strong feelings expressed by fishermen, their families and others from the community who depend heavily on the fishing industry.

The anger of those people was clear. I got the impression that they would like the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire to vote against the Government perhaps even more consistently than he does. The anger of those people and their families was clear. They certainly do not want the Bill to give any more powers to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food or the Scottish Office to impose arbitrary restrictions on the industry. They do not trust the Minister and his Government. Understandably, they are apprehensive about the possible effects of such legislation. They do not want more draconian powers to be imposed under the Bill.

10.45 pm

I am profoundly concerned about what is happening to the fishing industry. Of course we must have conservation, but it must be seen to be fair and rational. Frankly, the way in which it is imposed is neither fair nor rational. When fishermen are required to reduce their fishing effort as a consequence of conservation measures, they should be entitled to at least the same level of transitional support which farmers receive. I am worried about the problems which processors and consumers face.

I was shocked by a letter I received from a constituent the other day. He had been told by the fishmonger who regularly goes around the doors in the village by van that he would not be coming until next year because fish supplies had dried up. He wrote to ask whether the Tory Government had introduced food rationing on top of all the other deprivations that we have at present.

We need a fair approach to the fishing industry throughout the European Community. If the amendment can help to achieve that objective, it is worth supporting.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): I endorse the comments that have been made, not only by my hon. Friend the Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) in moving the amendment but by the hon. Members for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) and for St. Ives (Mr. Harris). The essence of the amendment, albeit perhaps not with technical perfection, is to emphasise that our British fishermen resent the fact that they—to use the words that my hon. Friend the Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) used yesterday to describe the position in Lochinver in his constituency—have been put into the brutal straitjacket of limited fishing days at sea. The same restriction does not apply to their continental competitors. It is frustrating for them to be tied up and not allowed to prosecute a fishery when some of their competitors from other EC countries are allowed to do so.

The hon. Member for Banff and Buchan referred to a letter which has been sent by the Scottish Fishermen's Federation and the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations to the Minister in which they give some colouring and substance to the undertaking which the Minister gave during the debate on the amendment of the hon. Member for Tynemouth (Mr. Trotter). The Scottish Fishermen's Federation and the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations suggested an amendment to the noble Lords in another place. When their Lordships sought to move that amendment, they were told by Earl Howe that it was a wrecking amendment, although they were trying to give substance to what the Minister had said.

In an earlier debate this evening, the Minister said that there were Lords amendments which honoured his commitment. We will be interested to know what those amendments are. The Minister said that we would need his lawyer's briefing to explain them to us.

In moving the Third Reading of the Bill in another place, Earl Howe referred to two important developments

[Mr. James Wallace]

that had taken place in the Bill while it was being debated elsewhere. The first development was that there would be parliamentary scrutiny. Such scrutiny must be welcomed. The second was that there would be greater powers to enforce the provisions of the Bill. At no time did Earl Howe refer to any amendment which was significant and would bring continental fishermen in line with the British fishing industry.

I believe that the undertaking that was given has not been honoured, certainly in the spirit, and I am doubtful whether it has been honoured in the letter. For that reason, my hon. Friends and I wish to press the matter tonight. Both sides of the House agree that it is important that stringent rules should be applied fairly to fishermen throughout the Community.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I promise that I shall be brief, Madam Deputy Speaker. I support amendment (a) to Lords amendment No. 1. The Lords amendment is a fine amendment because it relates to conditions other than those specifically defined as fishing. I support amendment (a) even though I am not happy with the way in which it was presented. I am not happy that fishermen were described as extremists. The fishermen whom I have met in discussions have been angry men. That does not make them extremists. They were angry, but they should never be seen as extremists. They are fine, decent and honourable men who have been pushed to the limit by a rotten Bill.

If restrictive regulations are to be imposed in the framework of what we must now call a European Community fleet, those restrictions should not be applied against the United Kingdom segment of that fleet. I said earlier that I hoped that, if the Bill became an Act of Parliament, it would be challengeable in the European Court of Justice. It places an unequal and unfair burden on the fishermen of the United Kingdom vis-a-vis other EC fishermen, who fish—dare I say it these days?—in our waters. Perhaps that is too chauvinistic for some of the fervid Europeans on the Conservative Benches, and one or two on the Opposition Benches.

If restrictive regulations are to be imposed on fishermen, they should be European Community——

Mr. Austin Mitchell: Universal.

Dr. Godman: I thank my hon. Friend. The regulations should certainly be EC-wide. They must be seen to be fair and reasonable if they are to be obeyed. For a law to work effectively, it must in the last analysis engender the acceptance of those whose behaviour will be restricted by it. The Bill is rotten for our fishermen. The amendment improves it slightly. That is why I support it, with the regret that the label "extremists" was used against our fishermen.

Mr. Elliot Morley (Glanford and Scunthorpe): I concur with the point made about the Minister's assurances. It was said that they were not fulfilled in the spirit in which they were given. It is a matter of regret that some hon. Members took those assurances and did not take the chance to table amendments on Report, when we had a better chance of being successful than now, when we must seek to amend amendments, with all the restrictions that that brings.

For the record and so that there is no misunderstanding, will the Minister make clear what he means by the phrase

"do not relate directly to fishing"?

Fishing interests need to be clear about what that phrase means.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): My hon. Friends the Members for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) and for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) well deployed the arguments in support of the amendment. But as my fishermen in the port of Lochinver demonstrated yesterday in a manner which was understood throughout the United Kingdom to be a demonstration against the policy of the Government and not against the actions of French fishermen, it is incumbent on me to speak in support of amendment (a). I must also make it plain that we seek equity of treatment between our fishermen and those of other EC countries.

A common fisheries policy with the purpose of conserving stocks around the littoral of Europe cannot be implemented if we repatriate to this country the power to treat our fishermen less well than do the other member countries of the EC.

I have heard it suggested that the drafting of the amendment is defective. It seems to me to be quite well drafted and its purpose is clear. The issue behind the amendment goes to the heart of the debate in this country.

I hope that the spirit of support evinced by the hon. Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) will be broadly based on the Conservative Benches. His speech should have moved a number of others to follow the cross-party lead. One of the best aspects of a debate of this kind is that it tends to draw in those hon. Members who know a little about what they are debating, which is not always true at this time of night. It is a pity that more Conservative Members are not present to reflect the strength of feeling, but there certainly are some rare birds on the Conservative Benches.

When the Minister of State replies to the debate, I hope that he will not—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. I am seeking to follow the hon. Member, but there seems to be an underlying buzz of conversation.

Mr. Maclennan: I hope that the Minister will not rely on defective drafting as a reason for attacking or for refusing to support the amendment. He must deal with the principle behind it, which is one that all hon. Members concerned with the future of the fishing industry are attached to.

The Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. David Curry): I shall certainly not take refuge in drafting, however defective it may be. Amendment (a) would require Ministers to seek the agreement of all other member states to all the licence conditions attaching to United Kingdom fishing licences. Our present licensing system is used to implement certain European Community requirements, but its management rests entirely with the British Government. It would be wrong for other member states to have a say in matters of national Government. The amendment shoots away the national management of our fisheries policy, and we have spent a whole debate being told that the House does not want that, and that we must not pass control to management committees, as we want it all in the hands of Ministers.

Mr. Salmond: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Harris *rose—*

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro) *rose—*

Mr. Curry: No, I shall not give way; I shall answer the questions. The hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) asked me—

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I think that hon. Members know the rule well. If a Minister or any other Member does not give way, Members must resume their seats.

Mr. Curry: I cannot commend amendment (a) to the House. I commend Lords amendment No. 1, which the House will have to consider in response to what has been said, and I shall take the opportunity to explain it.

The Sea Fish (Conservation) Act 1967 empowers Ministers to regulate sea fishing through a licensing system. When fishermen receive a fishing licence, they are required to observe all the conditions and rules contained in it. That is primarily to enable fisheries departments to administer and to enforce compliance with the fishing restrictions set out in the licence and to cover fishing and non-fishing activities. For example, it is a condition of the licence that skippers always carry it and its variations on board.

Recently, the sheriff at Banff decided that a licence condition, which requires fishermen to radio in when they cross the 4 degrees west line, to the north of Scotland—this is all part of the mackerel flexibility question—was ultra vires under the enabling legislation, as the Minister has no power to impose a licensing condition other than when the vessel is fishing. We believe that under section 4(6) the powers go wider than that, but if the sheriff's decision were sustained on appeal it could have serious implications for the administration and enforcement of other licensing conditions which do not relate explicitly to fishing, such as visiting conditions for quota hopper vessels.

Because of those potential implications, the Bill has been amended to put the matter beyond doubt. Under Lords amendment No. 1, section 4(6) of the Sea Fish (Conservation) Act will be amended to include an explicit reference to the fact that licence conditions may cover non-fishing activities, provided that they are for the purpose of regulating sea fishing. I commend that amendment to the House, and I do not commend that tabled by the Liberal Democrats.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: I had not intended to intervene at this time, but the Minister's attitude is extraordinary and unacceptable. I have never been so angry about the way in which the Minister has responded to any other amendment.

The amendment directly affects the livelihoods of many men. In the past couple of weeks in Cornwall men have drowned, arguably because they felt forced to go out to fish in all weathers to make a living. If that was not a factor in those two recent cases, it may be in the future as a result of measures adopted by the Government.

11 pm

I have spoken to friends of those who lost their lives and, understandably and rightly, they feel deeply upset. They associate those deaths with Government policies. I find it extraordinary that the Minister should refuse to give way to any intervention from his hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris), from my hon. Friends and from the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond), who represents the Scottish National party. The only possible conclusion is that the Minister feels that he has no proper response to the arguments made.

Mr. Salmond: We have heard from the hon. Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) how the wording "equivalent measures" was changed to "effective measures" after assurances had been given in the House. Does the hon. Gentleman judge that the Minister refused to give way because of the way in which the Government managed to get round the concerns of their own Back Benchers who represent fishing communities? They managed to get themselves off the hook by using parliamentary chicanery.

Mr. Taylor: I agree. I believe that the Minister has misled hon. Members; we did not place such an interpretation on his earlier comments. The hon. Member for St. Ives has already said that he believes that there is a crucial difference between the two sets of wording. I do not know whether he feels that that difference was directly misleading.

Mr. Harris: I do not want any misunderstanding about this point. The word "equivalent" was used to me, but I do not in any way impugn the reputation of my hon. Friend the Minister as the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond), in typical fashion, has tried to do. I do not believe for one moment that chicanery was involved. There is a considerable difference in the wording but, on the part of Ministers, it is an honest one. I do not believe for one minute that we have been deliberately misled.

Mr. Taylor: I accept that the hon. Gentleman may hold that view, but it is not shared by hon. Members on the Opposition Benches. If things had been put differently, votes might have been cast in a different way. The Government do not have a great majority and the outcome might have been different.

The hon. Member for St. Ives tried to get the Minister to give way. I hope that the hon. Gentleman agrees with me that it is not acceptable for the Minister to treat the House as he has, especially on an issue of such sensitivity which affects the livelihoods of people in so many constituencies. By any stretch of the imagination, those people do not have an easy livelihood to make at the best of times.

Given the time of night, the number of hon. Members in the Chamber is large and reflects the degree of concern felt by Members who represent fishermen whose livelihoods are at risk. All those on the Opposition Benches who heard the Minister's appalling response will be keen to vote on the amendment. I hope that Conservative Members in the Chamber will feel the same and will express their opinion of the way in which the Minister has sought to respond to the amendment.

Mr. Paul Tyler (North Cornwall): I wish to intervene briefly because I am shocked at how the Minister, who is usually fair-minded, has responded to this debate. He has made no substantive response to the points made by Opposition or Conservative Back Benchers.

Last week I spent several hours in Padstow, a small fishing community in my constituency where five men have lost their lives at sea in the past two weeks. I do not

[Mr. Paul Tyler]

necessarily suggest that economic conditions have driven people to take risks that they should not have taken, but how can I return to that community and say that the Minister has failed to deal with the vital issue of equivalence between our fishing fleets and those of the other member states of the European Community?

The Minister was given an opportunity to explain fully and clearly why the equivalence promise that he gave to the House will not now be fulfilled. He should have explained how he would guarantee that our fishing fleets would not have to operate with one hand behind their backs, but he failed to deal with the issue. Indeed, he did not even begin to deal with it but indulged in the pettifogging that one expects from other members of the Government but not from him. In the past he has been a good friend of the fishing industry. Will he now try to meet the requirements, not only of hon. Members who represent fishing communities but of the nation at large, which feels that the fishing industry has been badly let down and looks as though it will be let down still further in future?

It is not simply a matter of legalistics—the difference between "equivalence" and "equal effectiveness". The industry and the general public are asking for a cast-iron guarantee that the Minister will not put in place measures which cause our industry to work at a disadvantage to other member states and competitor industries.

Question put, That the amendment to the Lords amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 154, Noes 216.

Division No. 160] **[11.6 pm**

AYES

Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allon, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Barnes, Harry
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beggs, Roy
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Betts, Clive
Boateng, Paul
Boyce, Jimmy
Bradley, Keith
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coe, Sebastian
Coffey, Ann
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dixon, Don
Dowd, Jim
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Etherington, Bill
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fyfe, Maria
Gapes, Mike
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harris, David
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Leighton, Ron
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McCrea, Rev William
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McGrady, Eddie
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Mullin, Chris
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'shire)*
Oiner, William
Paisley, Rev Ian
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Raynsford, Nick
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rooney, Terry
Salmond, Alex
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Trimble, David
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Wilson, Brian
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Archy Kirkwood and
Mr. Nigel Jones.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Booth, Hartley
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcl)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shr)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Durant, Sir Anthony
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*

Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hargreaves, Andrew
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Hendry, Charles
Horam, John
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jonkin, Bernard
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Oppenheim, Phillip
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shephard, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tim Boswell and
Mr. Andrew MacKay.

Amendment to the Lords amendment accordingly negatived.

Lords amendment agreed to.

Lords Amendment: No. 2, in page 1, line 16, at end insert—

("(6C) The Ministers shall by order make provision as to the principles on which the time which vessels may spend at sea is to be arrived at for the purposes of any condition included in a licence by virtue of subsection (6)(c) above.")

Read a Second time.

Mr. Kirkwood: I beg to move, as an amendment to the Lords amendment, amendment (a), in line 2, after 'provision' insert
'implementing any European Community agreement'.

Madam Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss amendments (d), (b) and (c) to the Lords amendment, and Lords amendments Nos. 5, 6, 12 and 16.

Mr. Kirkwood: In our previous debate, we dealt with equivalence. Amendments (a) and (b) were designed to support our earlier arguments, and there is no purpose in rehearsing them. I detect that the Minister is slightly punch drunk, as I suggested earlier. He has been sitting on the Front Bench for a good many hours without food, water or respite of any kind. If he can find it in his largesse to take up the question of equivalence, I shall be grateful. It is an extremely important issue.

As the hon. Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) said during our debate on the first amendment, it is important that, when orders are laid that flow as a consequence of the Bill's enactment, the House should treat them extremely seriously. There is usually a one-and-a-half-hour debate in circumstances, such as tonight, when right hon. and hon. Members want to get home to their beds, which is understandable. We should have a guarantee, however, that the procedure will be affirmative rather than negative. The Minister may say that amendment (c) will not achieve that objective, but it is my best stab at requiring the Government to bring before the House orders that flow from the Bill to be considered under the affirmative procedure.

It must be borne in mind that the Bill will give unfettered powers to the Government for 1993 and for all time. These draconian powers should be exercised only if orders are brought before the House, when changes are sought to be made, under the affirmative procedure. I hope that the Minister will accept the amendment on that basis. I hope also that he will say a wee bit more about the substance of it than he did when dealing with the previous group.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: It would be wrong to let these matters pass so that we might the earlier return home to bed. It is a bad Bill, and the principle that is set out in the amendment is a good and important one. The amendment is far better than amendment No. 1. I think that we should divide the House also on amendment No. 2. It is more sensible than amendment No. 1 and it goes straight to the point.

It is impossible and wrong to impose on the British fishing industry restrictions on its ability to go to sea when those restrictions are not equally imposed on competing fishing industries—competing for the same stocks in the same grounds in the North sea—with which it has to deal. There should be a limitation on days at sea only when the industries of other European countries face a similar limitation.

The Minister proposes to go ahead because of his failure to implement a decommissioning scheme early enough to reduce the British effort to the levels dictated by the multi-annual guidance programme. That is his fault

[Mr. Austin Mitchell]

and responsibility. It would be far better if he admitted that and said that the measure would be introduced, if necessary, in the interest of conservation ony if a similar restriction were to be placed on other European countries. The bitterness and antagonism of British fishermen when tied up and seeing grounds still fished by competitors unrestrained and unrestricted would be unacceptable.

Amendment (d) sets out one of the best arguments that we deployed in Committee, which is that the Bill is not a conservation measure. Instead, it will encourage vessels to put to sea to catch as much fish as they can during the time that they are allowed to be at sea. It would be far better to encourage the use of better gear, larger meshes and square mesh panels—to insist on gear options—as an alternative to preventing vessels from going to sea. We must encourage vessels to catch bigger and more marketable fish rather than catching massive quantities of small fish. That would be best achieved by a gear option.

The Minister could make better use of his sanction on days at sea by insisting that vessels employ better gear and then giving exemptions from the days-at-sea limitation to those that comply. That is the sensible way to deal with the problem; it is the carrot-and-stick technique. However, that can be achieved only if the amendment is accepted.

I hope that the Minister will clarify what is promising to be a most interesting argument about exactly what assurances were given to Conservative Members of Parliament to get them to support the Bill the last time that it was before the House. The hon. Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) said that he was assured that the Bill would not be implemented until equivalent measures were introduced in the other member states—as the amendment would achieve.

On Third Reading, the Minister said:

"We should not introduce such a resolution unless we are satisfied that member states which share our fishery stocks are taking effective steps".—[*Official Report*, 14 July 1992; Vol. 211, c. 1027.]

He also gave the private assurance to Conservative Members that he would not take action until he was convinced that our European partners were taking steps as stringent as Britain's to ensure that they abided by the quotas.

Those are three different matters. It is clear that Conservative Members wanted to be persuaded, encouraged or tricked into voting for the Bill. It is also clear that there is a strange ambivalence that will leave a curious smell about the Bill unless we are told exactly what was said and why that assurance has not been incorporated in the Bill.

Mr. Salmond: When I suggested during our previous debate parliamentary chicanery, it was obvious from the Minister's demeanour that he was not too pleased. As the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) said, the House is entitled to know how the word "equivalent" came to be translated into the word "effective". They mean two different things, as we now know.

The Minister could defend himself by making the point that the hon. Member for Great Grimsby made very well—that people can be fooled only if they want to be fooled. Those of us who did not want to be fooled and who wanted an assurance that equivalent steps would have to be taken in every other member state are entitled to know what assurances were given by whom to whom. In other words, what did they know, and when did they know it?

I sincerely hope that the Minister will answer that question rather than try to sweep it aside and without discussing what every hon. Member from every fishing constituency is entitled to know.

Mr. Maclennan: The Lords amendments, which amendments (a), (b) and (c) would amend, are a move in the right direction. However, they could provide an opportunity for the Government to make proposals for decommissioning without actually implementing them. In the absence of any action on decommissioning, the Government could simply make orders that would affect time at sea. The two matters have to be linked, because it is the linkage that has bought off some of the opposition.

Amendment (a) on equivalence relates to the previous debate, so we do not need to linger long on it. It goes to the heart of the dispute between the fishing industry and the Government, which led to the demonstration in Lochinver. It is of immense concern to the fishermen in my contituency that, if the Bill is not amended, the Government could introduce a restriction on days at sea and require consecutive days to be spent in port, at the Government's behest.

Similar provisions do not apply to boats from other EC countries. At least a third of the Scottish fleet could be destroyed, and it would be unconscionable if measures comparable to those in force were perpetuated beyond this calendar year without the House having a direct say on what is being done.

Amendment (c) would provide that a debate takes place, so that the House could consider whether the Government had discharged their obligations to give due consideration to a scheme of decommissioning and whether, in the circumstances of the stocks available, it made sense to introduce a scheme to limit effort. Without amendments (a) and (c), the fishing industry will be left in a parlous predicament, unprotected and unprotectable by the House.

11.30 pm

Mr. Nick Ainger (Pembroke): I support the amendments tabled by Liberal Democrat Members but wish to speak to amendment (d), which stands in the names of my hon. Friends.

In our earlier debate, it was revealed that the Irish capacity to fish, and therefore presumably their total allowable catch, will increase. My constituents who fish out of Milford Haven will experience a significant reduction. The Minister will tell us that next year they will face the problem of tying up while still trying to earn a living with a reduced TAC.

There are only 60 miles between my constituency and the coast of Ireland. What do I tell my constituents whose boats will have to be tied up when their Irish colleagues are fishing waters that my constituents have fished for decades?

It is unacceptable that, despite having had the presidency of the Fisheries Committee for six months, the Minister cannot give an assurance that our partners in Europe have at least agreed in principle to discuss the days-at-sea limits. He has not been able to offer that assurance, because they know that from a conservation point of view the proposal is a load of rubbish. It is only

a sop to enable the Government to introduce a limited decommissioning scheme. If it could be such a wonderful success, why are our partners not adopting it, and why has it not been proposed before?

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): I want to deal with a problem that arises from the days-at-sea idea. Before doing so, I must say that the whole idea is viewed by fishermen in my constituency as quite absurd and as ineffective a conservation measure as set-aside, but without the compensation. It has all the disadvantages of encouraging people to make the maximum productive use of the time—or, by analogy, the land available to them—while affording no compensation to those who are affected. It is not a sensible conservation measure, so I support the continued pursuit of the gear option, to which the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) referred and to which I sought to refer in the earlier debate. It is ludicrous that we should devote so much time, legislative attention and civil service activity to unselective so-called conservation measures that do not have the right effect and do not ensure that the fishing effort concentrates on mature fish and avoids harming future stocks.

The Minister is well aware of the effects of the proposals on people who will in future be denied their traditional right to fish for salmon and who, under present plans, will not be allowed to have their days-at-sea for salmon fishery counted towards a white fishery in the future even though they are precluded from continuing their salmon fishery. That applies especially to the sons of existing fishermen who, thus far, have had every reason to expect that, under the law, they would be granted licences to continue their salmon fishery. They now see that salmon fishery being phased out. They will be driven to another fishery, not through choice but because of the effects of a Government decision with which I and they disagree profoundly.

The Minister of State recently listened to my representations on that subject at a meeting in the presence of the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. Both Ministers led me into believing that they were making strenuous efforts to devise a scheme under which the problems of the salmon fishermen could be recognised. It is the Minister's jobs to ensure that the officials in their Ministry work out a scheme. Whatever bureaucratic obstacles are placed on the Minister's desks, it is their job to say what must be done in the interests of common justice. If people have been deprived of a fishery because of a decision that the fishery would be better managed if it were conducted without their participation, and those people then have to turn to the white fishery, they are in effect tied up because they do not have an entitlement of days from the base year of 1991. I do not know whether the Minister can deal with that issue tonight, but I want an assurance that he will find a solution.

Mr. Morley: I want to speak to the amendment tabled by my hon. Friends which refers specifically to the gear option. On Report, the Minister gave assurances that the conservation measures in the Bill would be equivalent to European measures. If that is so, why is a gear option available in European Community proposals on effort controls, which might involve days in port, whereas no such option is available in the Bill?

Mr. Curry: I am certainly not punch drunk, but nor am I quite as fresh as I was this morning. Some of my colleagues have been with me all day since we started in a Committee which was scrutinising bananas, which is more attractive even than the problem of Scottish haddock.

What did I promise? During the passage of the Bill, I made it absolutely clear that the criteria were effective measures to meet MAGP targets. I did not whisper that or scratch it on a piece of paper behind the Box. Everyone who subsequently voted heard those words clearly. The only criteria by which we can judge are the MAGP targets. We have agreed the targets and a mechanism to achieve them. The Commission has undertaken to produce annual reports on the implemention of the targets.

There will, of course, be an order to implement the initial freeze, as my hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) clearly stated. In line with all the rules in the Bill, the negative resolution will be employed. *[Interruption.]* We have accepted the case for an affirmative resolution with respect to any subsequent reduction to days-at-sea or extension of the under-10 m fleet. That is entirely in line with the promises that I gave. In other respects, they are in the mainstream of fisheries legislation.

In response to the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley), the difference between the gear option and that included in the Bill is that the Commission's measure would affect 700 or 800 vessels. We do not intend to accept it, but that is what it would do. One can control that to some extent, although the hon. Gentleman must admit that there have been difficulties with previous gear options. The measure will affect 4,000 vessels; clearly, to try to monitor and sustain a gear option over so many vessels is a different matter. However, technical conservation is an important element in our fisheries policy. That is precisely why I shall hold a forum on it with the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations in the new year.

I acknowledge the question asked by the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) about the salmon fishery. We are working hard and we shall try to find a solution, because that matter is close to my heart.

Mr. Salmond: The Minister cites the *Official Report*, and we can all read that—but we would like to know what assurances were given elsewhere, by whom, to whom. All hon. Members are entitled to know whether assurances were given about equivalent measures in any other place by any other Minister, and to whom.

Mr. Curry: The pledge that was given was given from the Dispatch Box, on the record, with all hon. Members present to listen to it, all fully aware of what the promise would be. That is what I promised, and that is what has been put into the Bill.

I commend to the House the amendment passed in another place, but not the amendments tabled to it.

Question put and negatived.

Lords amendment agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 3, in page 1, line 16, at end insert—

("(6D) Before considering what action to take under subsection (6C) above, the Ministers shall first give due consideration to a scheme of decommissioning in order to achieve a significant reduction in the capacity of the fishing fleet.")

Read a Second time.

Mr. Wallace: I beg to move, as an amendment to the Lords amendment, amendment (a), in line 3, leave out

[Mr. Wallace]

'first give due consideration to'

and insert 'implement'.

Madam Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to discuss amendments (b) and (c) to the Lords amendment.

Mr. Wallace: It will be obvious that there is a world of difference between merely giving consideration to something and implementing it—in this case, a decommissioning scheme. In many respects, my amendment goes to the heart of the issue underlying the Bill. I do not wish to rehearse all the arguments again. We have heard them on Second Reading, in Committee, on Report and on Third Reading. We have also had a fair debate on the issue earlier today.

We should not allow the amendment to be passed without again putting on the record the outrage that many fishermen feel at the compulsory tie-ups that the Bill will impose upon them. In our earlier debate, the Minister took exception when I contrasted what is happening to fishermen with what is happening to shop owners. Often, people engaged in the fishing industry have laid out considerable capital to buy their boats and equipment. If the Bill is enacted as it stands, they will not be allowed to earn a return on that capital for a given number of days in the year. That is a serious restriction to place on anyone's business. That is why the suggestion has caused such outrage and attracted such opposition.

Many of us have argued over the years that if the Government are serious about reducing capacity so that the capacity of our fleet is more in line with the fishing opportunities available, the best way of achieving that is by implementing a decommissioning scheme. That case has often been argued in the House, and the House of Lords Select Committee found that the scheme that the Government suggested in February was too little too late.

I believe that it is thanks to Lord Radnor that their Lordships accepted the amendment, so that the Government's mind would be concentrated on decommissioning and they would be obliged to consider that idea first before imposing days-at-sea restrictions. We are grateful to the noble Lord for that, and to their Lordships for supporting him.

However, when on Third Reading in another place the Government said that they would not oppose the amendment, many of us were immediately suspicious that they did so because the Minister could simply say, "I have given due consideration to the idea, but I shall not do much about it. I shall go ahead and introduce the order to impose days-at-sea". The Minister's smile is a giveaway. Clearly, that was the Government's intention. No doubt, if we could find proof that they had never given the matter any consideration, the Minister would be liable to answer a case for judicial review, but finding proof would be well-nigh impossible. That is why we believe that the provision should be tightened. We must implement a scheme of decommissioning.

Let me express considerable sympathy with and support for the other amendments in the group, tabled by the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley), which would provide for an effective decommissioning scheme involving consultation with fishermen's associations. The hon. Gentleman shied away when asked how much decommissioning would cost, however. The House of Lords Select Committee report suggests that it would cost four or five times the amount that the Government have placed on the table. During the general election campaign, the Liberal Democrats cited a figure of £100 million. It is a matter for regret that the new designer Labour party always seems afraid to put figures on its proposals. No doubt the electorate judges it accordingly.

11.45 pm

Mr. Morley: Does not the hon. Gentleman accept that, at this stage and given the flux in the fishing industry, it is not up to us to put a figure on the scheme? I can assure him that, when the time comes for the electorate to make its choice democratically, we will give it a properly detailed and costed fishing policy for the fishing ports.

Mr. Wallace: I heard what the hon. Gentleman said. I shall be happy to give way to him again if he will tell the House how much the Labour party suggested a decommissioning policy would cost at the last general election, when the electorate had precisely that choice. I do not recall any figure ever having come from the Labour party. The hon. Gentleman is under an obligation to give a ball-park figure. It is not a question of our waiting for the next election for an effective decommissioning scheme to be brought into being; we are trying to influence the Government today. Is the hon. Gentleman really suggesting that there is to be no decommissioning of any value or size until a Labour Government are returned to power? Heaven help the fishing industry if it has to wait that long. We are all under an obligation to try to persuade the Minister to cite a realistic figure for decommissioning. We believe that the £25 million, welcome though it is, is nowhere near enough to have the necessary effect.

Similarly, the Minister is under an obligation to tell the House how much of that £25 million will come from the European Community. Ministers have never told us how much would be returned to the Government through taxation of the sums paid to fishermen in decommissioning payments. We need that information if we are to get a proper measure of what the net effect would be. The Government have readily called into aid the amount that we would have to contribute under the Fontainebleau agreement, but they have never said how much they would recover in taxation.

The arguments for decommissioning have been advanced on many occasions and do not need to be laboured. In reply to the debate on the previous group of amendments, the Minister admitted that the purpose of the Bill was not conservation—as has been said in the past, and as Earl Howe said in the other place last week—but a way of reaching Britain's MAGP targets. We have already gone into that this evening.

We do not believe that an unreasonable limitation on people's ability to prosecute their livelihood is the proper way forward. A far better and more effective way forward is to reduce fishing capacity through a decommissioning scheme. This important amendment would oblige the Government to do that, rather than saying that they will do some decommissioning with the effort limitation string attached. We should be approaching the problem the other way round and putting decommissioning first.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: The amendment goes to the nub of the argument. If we had had a proper decommissioning

scheme three, four or five years ago, we would not now be having to pass the Bill. No other country in Europe has the limitation on days at sea that the Government seek to impose. Other countries are all much closer to their MAGP targets than we are. They are in that position because they have had decommissioning schemes that have been so effective in some cases—in the French case, for example—that they have been able to start building new vessels to improve the efficiency of their fleets.

If we had a decommissioning scheme, we would not need the Bill. Instead of enforcing on the industry the consequences of their folly after their slowness in introducing a scheme, the Government should introduce something much more substantial than the proposed £25 million scheme.

The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) made great play about the Labour party's proposal without telling us what the Liberal party was proposing in terms of a decommissioning scheme. I am sure that he would not want us to outbid the radical, daring nature of the House of Lords which said that the scheme should be four times bigger than the proposal and described it as too little too late.

The decommissioning scheme needs to be at least four times as big as the present scheme. If the Government hope to achieve the rundown in effort estimated in their latest press release, they will be sadly disappointed with a scheme as mean as this. The scheme will have to be substantially increased. We will then need less of a limitation on the number of days that vessels can put to sea.

Mr. Salmond: I make no apologies for detaining the House on these matters. Indeed, I believe that the House should be detained on matters of such importance.

I fully endorse the comments of the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace). The amendment is not just right in principle; it is right technically. It hits the nail right on the head in respect of decommissioning.

I do not need to rehearse the arguments that have already been made about decommissioning, but there are some points of considerable note. First, after some agonising, the Government decided last week to accept the amendment made in the other place that due consideration would have to be given to a decommissioning scheme. Presumably when the other place passed the amendment which the Government opposed there, their Lordships must have thought that something important was at stake. There was an argument, the Government opposed it, and the amendment was carried. It must have been felt that something significant was being debated and that something important was at stake in respect of the amendment.

When I was interviewed about the Government's decision not to oppose the Lords amendment, I naturally assumed that that could constitute a victory in the legislation, but the Ministry immediately issued a briefing to the effect that nothing had really changed. Due consideration could be given to decommissioning, but that would not matter because after it had been duly considered, everthing would be just as before.

One reason why the fishing industry has been so antagonised by the Minister's performance that even Conservative members of Grampian regional council are calling for his dismissal is the attitude that it does not matter what arguments are deployed or what principles are carried, everything can sail on regardless.

There is a view in the fishing industry at the moment that the Minister is making such a cod of fishing policy because he wants everything to collapse in ruins so that his pet scheme of individual transferable quotas can take sway and rescue the industry. The Minister must explain why the Lords amendment is not being treated seriously. Is it really the case, as the Ministry briefing stated, that due consideration will be given and then the whole idea will be dismissed?

The principle of subsidiarity is contained in the review of the common fisheries policy and the Government are anxious to endorse that principle at the Edinburgh summit later this week. We must consider how that principle applies to decommissioning. It is well known, and was officially admitted in Standing Committee a few weeks ago, that for several years there was a serious difference of opinion between the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland was in favour of a decommissioning scheme on its own merits to reduce capacity so as to meet the problem of over-capacity in the industry. That argument was blocked by the Minister of State and his superior at the Ministry. There was a collision and, after wasted years when the money for restructuring went to every other Community fleet in Europe, we have this inadequate scheme which is contingent on the passage of an unacceptable piece of legislation. Will the Government examine the principle of subsidiarity, relative to a decommissioning scheme, and allow the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland to introduce what I understand it has wanted to introduce for a number of years—a proper and adequately funded decommissioning scheme to be considered on its merits, not made contingent as part of an unacceptable Bill?

Mr. John McFall (Dumbarton): I wish to speak to amendments (b) and (c) tabled by my hon. Friends about the implementation of an effective decommissioning scheme. We consider those amendments to be extremely important.

When the matter was discussed in another place on 24 November, many points were made by noble Lords and by Earl Howe. Since then, it has been said that the Government's interpretation of the matter has been nothing but cynical. I have read the debate which took place on 24 November. Earl Howe said:

"The nub of the matter is that noble Lords want a larger decommissioning scheme, paid for by the taxpayer. We simply do not have the funds for a larger scheme and there is no prospect whatever of ever getting them . . . The £25 million that was set aside for a decommissioning scheme has been safeguarded".—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 24 November 1992; Vol. 539, c. 930.]

In this House on 23 November, the Secretary of State for National Heritage said that he was committed to providing £60 million for Windsor Castle. The Friday before, the Government had no idea what would happen, but three days later they came up with £60 million. Is it not the case that the many thousands of jobs in the fishing communities which are threatened could be treated with the same equality by the Government? By not proposing any action, the Government are simply reinforcing the cynical interpretation that people have put on the matter.

There is a strength of feeling on the matter of decommissioning, not only among noble Lords in another

[Mr. John McFall]

place. That feeling is shown by the marches and the rallies by fishermen which have taken place in Scotland, whether in Aberdeen or in Edinburgh this Friday. Undoubtedly, there will be a strong rally by the fishermen. As hon. Members have made clear today, there is a depth of feeling and antagonism in the fishing community against the Government.

Today, we still have the siege at Lochinver, where 20 Scottish fishing boats have maintained a blockade against a French trawler. The French agent in Lochinver said that he has sympathy with the Scottish fishermen because what is happening now to many of his friends could happen to him and his colleagues next year. The matter is a political comment and a strategy is required to do something about it.

Mention has been made of the Lords debate. On 24 November, Lady Saltoun of Abernethy made the point that in the context of the problem which the amendment seeks to address the £25 million was inadequate. The problem is that the £25 milliion is not enough. She said:

"A scheme so minuscule that it will reduce the capacity of the fishing fleet only by up to 5 per cent. will, as I see it, be nothing but a waste of money. Therefore, it really is imperative that, if £25 million-worth of taxpayers' money is not to be wasted, a rather more extensive scheme is introduced."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 24 November 1992; Vol. 540, c. 923.]

Lord Gallacher said:

"It is the inadequacy of that sum of money in the context of the problem which the amendment seeks to address."

He said that it was the nub of the problem.

We have said that the Government should consult with the various fishing bodies and representatives. We have received many letters from people in the fishing communities about the matter. Fishing representatives are seething at the Government's lack of action. The Government should liaise with the different fishing bodies so that some common sense can get through. The depth of feeling and the magnitude of the problem which the bodies face comes home to them. I received a letter even today just before the debate from a fishing family in Eyemouth. It said:

"The Government are taking away a fisherman's basic right to go to sea and earn an honest living. It is also a unilateral Bill which will unfairly discriminate against UK fishermen."

It said that the Bill was fundamentally flawed and had the potential to devastate the industry and fishing families.

12 midnight

A leader in *The Scotsman* today said:

"All that the Government are doing is paving the road to hell."

It said that the fishermen and the fish processors should get together with the Government, as our amendment suggests, to work out some plan. The fishermen and fish processors have a responsibility. In our discussions they have said that they will accept a scheme. They realise that there are problems ahead, but the Government should listen and talk to them. If the Government are not cynical in their approach, they should take the words of Earl Howe on 24 November seriously into consideration. They make interesting reading. He said in response to Lord Gallagher that he could not accept the amendment. He realised that it was an innocuous form of words. He continued:

"The form of words may be innocuous, but the import of the amendment, as we have debated it, is not. I would not wish it to be said that the Government had accepted an amendment other than in good faith."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 24 November 1992; Vol. 540, c. 931-32.]

If Earl Howe could say that he did not want to accept an amendment other than in good faith, is it not incumbent on the Government to show that they have good faith and therefore to accept the import of the amendment and do something about the problem in the fishing industry, namely, the need for a more imaginative and more expansive decommissioning scheme?

Mr. Curry: I am flattered to be accused of so many conspiracies simultaneously. That was the reason why I was smiling at the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland. Let us put the matter right. The amendment which Lord Radnor moved in the Lords, to which Earl Howe objected, would have obliged us to consider decommissioning every time an individual licence was issued or any change was made to a licence. [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] That is precisely what the amendment did. We therefore consulted Lord Radnor. We gave him some assistance and he tabled an amendment on Third Reading which effectively restored the amendment to what he had originally wanted. That is the amendment which the Government were subsequently able to accept. That explains the chain of events.

The amendments tabled by the Opposition seek to divorce decommissioning and effort control. As I have said to the House repeatedly, they are linked and they must remain linked. Also, the Opposition seek to make us spend a great deal more money on decommissioning. The £25 million was negotiated not without some difficulty. I see one of the Treasury team on the Front Bench and I have no doubt that he will nod in agreement when I say that I cannot promise to come back with more money for decommissioning schemes. I am not prepared to promise from the Dispatch Box what I cannot deliver.

We are consulting the industry on decommissioning. It was part of the consultation document. There are important decisions to be made, which we wish to take with industry. The MAGP targets are not invented out of thin air or for amusement. They are conservation targets. They are set to address the problems of effort and capacity in the European Community fleet. Therefore, I am unable to accept the amendments and I commend the Lords amendment.

Question put: That the amendment to the Lords amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 79, Noes 168.

Division No. 101] **[12.3 am**

AYES

Adams, Mrs Irene	Cunliffe, Lawrence
Ainger, Nick	Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Alton, David	Davidson, Ian
Barnes, Harry	Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Beggs, Roy	Dixon, Don
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.	Etherington, Bill
Benton, Joe	Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Bermingham, Gerald	Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*	Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*	Foulkes, George
Campbell-Savours, D. N.	Fyfe, Maria
Cann, Jamie	Godman, Dr Norman A.
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*	Godsiff, Roger
Clelland, David	Graham, Thomas
Connarty, Michael	Hall, Mike
Cryer, Bob	Hanson, David

Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Kilfoyle, Peter
Liwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAvoy, Thomas
McCrea, Rev William
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McGrady, Eddie
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Mahon, Alice
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Morley, Elliot
Paisley, Rev Ian
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Raynsford, Nick
Rooney, Terry
Salmond, Alex
Skinner, Dennis
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Trimble, David
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Wallace, James
Wise, Audrey

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Archy Kirkwood and
Mr. Nigel Jones.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alexander, Richard
Allison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bowden, Andrew
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliff)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cran, James
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Elletson, Harold
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fishburn, Dudley
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hargreaves, Andrew
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Hendry, Charles
Horam, John
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Key, Robert
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Martlin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Roger
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Waterson, Nigel
Wells, Bowen
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tim Boswell and
Mr. James Arbuthnot.

Question accordingly negatived.

Lords amendment agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 4, in page 1, line 20, leave out subsection (5).

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): With this it will be convenient to discuss Lords amendments Nos. 9 to 11.

12.15 am

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): It would be unfortunate if Lords amendment No. 10, which forms part of this group, did not detain the House for a moment or two because it represents a substantial trenching on the law of evidence in Scotland.

I am gratified to see that the Minister responsible for legal affairs in Scotland, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton), has now joined others of the Government Front-Bench team. I hope that he can answer several questions that arise from the terms of the amendment. Hon. Members are not happy that the issue should be raised at this time but, as we are frequently told, this is a unitary Parliament and it is a necessary consequence of a unitary Parliament that, even at this late hour, matters with substantial consequences for the Scottish law of evidence should detain the House for a moment. I hope that the Minister's departure is not the consequence of a constitutional crisis, but we shall doubtless hear of that later in the debate.

In Lords amendment No. 10, subclause (2) refers to "proceedings in Scotland for an offence under section 4 or 4A" and provides for evidence to the effect that any document that fulfils the conditions set out in the provisions "shall be received in evidence without being produced or sworn to by any witness".

[Mr. Menzies Campbell]

That means that when a person acting with authority takes possession of anything that constitutes a document, that object may be introduced in evidence in criminal proceedings without the person who took it having to go to court and explain the circumstances in which it was taken. That may be a significant alteration in the ordinary provisions of the Scottish legal system, but the matter goes a little further. Having been taken possession of in that way, the fact that the document is put in evidence entitles it to be regarded as being

"sufficient evidence of the matters stated therein or appearing therefrom".

Thus the document as defined is taken into the possession of a person with authority to do so. It is handed to the procurator fiscal and, as soon as the proceedings are commenced—doubtless in the sheriff court—the document becomes sufficient evidence of the matters contained in it.

Those statutory provisions take no account of the possibility that the document may have passed through a series of hands before it reaches the sheriff court and the criminal proceedings, nor do they take account of the fact that it may be subject to alteration during that course of events. The statutory proceedings give no apparent opportunity to challenge either the accuracy of the document or whether the search during which it was taken was legal. Moreover, there is no opportunity to challenge the document's authenticity.

That means that, under the statutory provisions, a substantial innovation is being made in the law of evidence in Scottish law. It seems that something as radical and far-reaching as that—as far as I am aware it is not replicated in any other statute applying to the law in Scotland—should be explained to the House.

The law of Scotland may not be the most pressing political consideration for hon. Members, but for those who represent Scottish constituencies—and fishermen who may be subject to criminal proceedings under the Bill—it is only right and proper that the Government should explain to the House why they feel it necessary to take to themselves powers which are justifiably described as draconian and which march uneasily with the tradition of the Scottish criminal law, particularly that part of it that requires corroboration in criminal offences. On the face of them, the provisions constitute a substantial attack on the principle of corroboration. If that is the Government's intention, surely the House should be told what reasons justify them doing so.

Mr. Salmond: I shall follow the excellent speech of the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell). There is a suggestion that the Government are starting to play fast and loose with Scots law in relation to the implementation of fisheries policy. What notice have the Minister and his Ministry taken of the recent judgements in Banff sheriff court, which affect the implementation of fisheries policy? Perhaps he will reply to that specific question.

Mr. Curry: The answer to the latter part of the question raised is that the amendment dealt precisely with the Banff sheriff court case.

I hope that the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) will accept that I am not a lawyer, still less a Scottish advocate. I shall do my best and arrange for the reply to be supplemented.

The skippers are already under a legal obligation to complete the documents accurately. The provision does not prevent a challenge to the documents, but in the absence of any such challenge, the documents provides sufficient evidence of the information that they contain. Under the Bill, either the defence or the Crown can challenge any document. My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland will have heard the hon. and learned Gentleman and will be perfectly willing to supplement my answer with more detailed expert legal information.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: The Treasury team might have anticipated that such a fundamental issue was likely to be raised in the debate. I accept that the Minister is not a Scottish advocate, as he properly said—no doubt we could make arrangements to receive him into that august freemasonry of men and women—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] —or even fraternity. I have not been entirely satisfied with his reply. However, my purpose has been served by airing the matter in the House. I look forward with eager anticipation to the more detailed response to my questions which the Minister is to send me in the next few days.

Question put and agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

After Clause 5

Lords amendment: No. 13, insert the following new clause—

("Parliamentary disqualification

.—(1) In Part II of Schedule 1 to the House of Commons Disqualification Act 1975 (bodies of which all members are disqualified), the following entry shall be inserted at the appropriate place—

"The Sea Fish Licence Tribunal".

(2) The same entry shall be inserted at the appropriate place in Part II of Schedule 1 to the Northern Ireland Assembly Disqualification Act 1975.")

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. McFall: I have three questions for the Minister about the setting up of the fisheries tribunal. First, how will the appeal system work? We have received representations on that point.

Secondly, will there be financial compensation for loss of earnings for fishermen making successful appeals? Thirdly, will fishermen be allowed to bring legal representatives to the tribunal to speak on their behalf? *[Interruption.]* The Minister says that he is flagging. I am a short head behind him in that respect. The sooner he answers these question, the better——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. The hon. Gentleman is getting a little confused. The amendment is about parliamentary disqualification and the sea fish licence tribunal, not about its workings.

Mr. Curry: By putting the hon. Gentleman out of his misery, I may be able to put myself out of mine. There will be an independent chairman of the tribunal. I have already said that there will be several tribunals. They will be peripatetic, travelling to the major fishing ports.

The costs will not be paid. They are never paid for tribunals of this sort. Fishermen will certainly be able to bring legal counsel with them.

Question put and agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

Prisoners (Access by Journalists)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn—*[Mr. MacKay.]*

12.28 am

Mr. Michael J. Martin (Glasgow, Springburn): First, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I thank you for your presence. Through you, Sir, I thank Madam Speaker for granting me the Adjournment debate. I thank the Minister for being here to reply. I thank also my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) for being in his place to listen to the debate.

I shall speak about Mr. and Mrs. Watson, and especially their late daughter, Diane, who was one of my constituents. Before I turn to the main theme of the debate, I should tell the House that a further tragedy has befallen Mr. and Mrs. Watson. On Saturday of last week, their only remaining child, Alan, died in tragic circumstances. I was extremely pleased when Madam Speaker granted me this debate, and I had no idea that such a tragedy would take place. When I visited the distraught Mr. and Mrs. Watson on Sunday night, they insisted that I should go ahead with the debate. My initial thought was that it would be better to cancel it.

I have initiated the debate because of the work of irresponsible journalists, namely Mr. Jack McLean of *The Glasgow Herald* and Miss Meg Henderson of *Marie Claire*. The debate is about a pupil of Whitehill secondary school, Diane Watson. In April 1991, Diane was only 16 years of age when she was attacked by a fellow pupil by the name of Glover. The other girl thought that Diane had something to do with her boy friend. She was so jealous that she took a kitchen knife from her home and stabbed Diane in the school playground. As the family home was just round the corner, the other pupils carried Diane to her mother's tenement flat, where she died in her mother's arms.

Diane was a good girl. She studied hard, she was liked and she was extremely popular in school. There is now a memorial to Diane in the form of the Diane Watson prize. It is given to any child in the school each week who is best at doing work in the community. Diane was well known as a good worker in the community. She worked on Saturdays and used the money from her job to try to help with the family income. During her school career, she undertook training at a local hospital. There is a reference in her mother's possession that gives praise to Diane.

No one could ask for a better daughter, but it seems to me and the family that the press have an obsession every now and again to write about a love triangle and about how two teenagers were arguing over a boy, as a result of which a terrible tragedy ensued. That is not true. I have seen a letter from the boy concerned in which he states that Diane had nothing to do with him. He makes it clear that Diane had no relationship with him. Yet the media, with the honourable exception of the *Glasgow Evening Times*, have tried to discredit and slur Diane's memory.

Many hon. Members are parents. I am a father, and I would be hurt if anyone said anything about my daughter, who is alive and well. How must the Watsons feel whenever a newspaper journalist starts making remarks about the memory of a wonderful daughter? But Mr. Jack McLean of *The Glasgow Herald* goes further. I shall read

[Mr. Michael J. Martin]

out some of the things that he has been writing, which I can describe only as absolute rubbish. One of his articles reads:

"Barbara Glover was from Cranhill, not a salubrious district of the city of Glasgow. She was a bit rougher than lots of the other girls at the school which her parents had selected for her, under the rule which says you can send your child to whatever school you wish. Her victim came from a background which was rather upper working class. For years this class element determined that young Barbara was something of an object of the kind of snobbish disdain that occurs within working classes. Diane had the smart white socks of the daughter of the labour aristocracy. Barbara did not."

The Labour aristocracy, about which that fool of a journalist spoke, was Mr. Watson—a plumber who had been made redundant. At the time of his daughter's death he was able to obtain only casual work one or two days a week.

I wrote to Mr. McLean's editor. I received a reply from Mr. McLean, who claimed to have interviewed teachers and the family doctors of both families. I have a letter from Dr. Susan Joyce, the family's general practitioner. She says that at no stage did she ever give an interview to Mr. McLean. It would have been unethical to do so.

The headmaster went a step further. He asked all teachers voluntarily to sign a memo saying whether they did or did not speak to Mr. McLean. Every teacher at the school at the time of the tragic incident signed that memo saying that he or she had not spoken to Mr. McLean.

I am here tonight because the only thing that I can do for the Watson family is to ask the question—why would a so-called responsible journalist print those lies and hurt a family who wanted nothing to do with the press, but only to be allowed to get on with their lives?

The *Marie Claire* article by Meg Henderson is even worse. In an article a few months ago called "British children serving life sentences", she said that at the trial it was revealed that Diane had set out to bully and humiliate the girl Glover, that Diane had pulled off her tee-shirt and laughed at her, and that only a tiny nick of the knife had caused Diane's liver to bleed. That is not true. The pathologist had stated that there were punctures in the poor child's heart, lung and liver.

The question is, why would a journalist use the word "revealed" when in fact the girl Glover had alleged that Diane was a bully? It is understandable that Glover was trying to get herself off the hook. She was in deep trouble and on trial for murder, so she said that Diane was a bully. No other witness said that Diane was a bully. Why did not that journalist use the word "alleged" rather than "revealed"? The magazine article was clearly devised to mislead its readers. The girl Glover had a first-class Queen's counsel, but the jury rejected her case. A subsequent appeal did the same.

The worst point about the article is that it gave the clear impression that Miss Henderson, the journalist, carried out an interview in the enclosed facility at Kerelaw used for young criminals. Anyone reading it would certainly gain the impression that there was such an interview. I think that, when the Minister replies, he will say that no interview took place with that child. No permission was given for an interview. Miss Henderson was near that facility only as part of a Channel 4 team. She approached the girl Glover, who refused to take part in the Channel 4 interview.

I shall read the article to show the sort of things that appear in it. It states:

"What's the worst thing about being in here?"

The reply was:

"Where do you start? Being locked up, never being able to decide what you do or when you do it, never being able to get away from the same people all the time. Being separated from my family, missing everything, everybody. We're allowed visits any time—there are no restrictions. My parents have moved house to be nearer the unit and they visit almost every day and my older sister, aunts and uncles and cousins come regularly too. We talk, play games and watch TV together. I get lots of presents".

Anyone reading that two-page article would say that the journalist must have spoken to the girl in the unit. The girl did not speak to her, and the Scottish Office supports that. The director of social work of Strathclyde region, which runs the unit on behalf of the Scottish Office, said that the place is so closely supervised that no interview could have taken place without the knowledge of the staff.

I think that I have said enough. All I can add, as a parent, is that I would find it hurtful if a journalist wrote such an article about my daughter. Even the parents of Barbara Glover must be worried about a journalist claiming that an interview took place when it did not. It is insensitive to do these things, particularly when we are dealing with young people and a family who have lost two children within 18 months. I ask those journalists, through you, Mr. Deputy Speaker: please leave Margaret and Jim Watson alone. I hope and pray that they will recover from their terrible bereavements. I ask the irresponsible individuals in the media to leave the family alone with the memory of two lovely children.

12.42 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): I rise with a heavy heart to respond to the remarks of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Springburn (Mr. Martin) in this Adjournment debate. His remarks carried considerable weight, and he advanced a strong case.

The freedom of the press is one of the most cherished freedoms of this country. When Minister with responsibilities for home affairs, I advocated opening up Scottish prisons to public scrutiny. Public discussion on penal matters has been better informed as a result, but the freedom of the press must be exercised responsibly, especially on penal matters.

The issues are highly emotive. The rights of those convicted and sentenced by the courts must be respected and upheld, but journalists have a responsibility to the wider public, including victims and their families. Those families are caught up in events beyond their control and unwillingly become the target of considerable publicity. It is the role of the responsible journalist to ensure that such publicity is not unnecessarily distressing to innocent parties.

Nothing is more tragic than the death of a child. Mr. and Mrs. Watson lost their daughter as a result of a crime of violence and have now lost another child. I should like to express the deepest sympathy for them. I know that that sympathy is shared by every hon. Member in the House tonight.

A young girl was convicted of Diane Watson's murder. She is now detained without limit of time in the secure unit of a residential care establishment. The situation of young people detained without limit of time has attracted much media attention in the past year. Journalists of course have every right to campaign on the issue and to bring it to the public's attention. The hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell), the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman), who is here tonight, and the former hon. Member for Dunfermline, West raised the issue with me in the previous Parliament, and I responded positively.

In January, I announced changes in the conditions under which section 205 detainees are held. In particular, I stated that those detainees would be allowed to enjoy escorted recreational outings, and that their cases would be reviewed at an earlier stage than those of comparable adults in order to set a first formal review date as early as possible in sentence. One case has already received that accelerated treatment. The initiatives were welcomed.

Against the background of media interest in these children, we also decided to issue formal guidance on how requests for access to such children for interview or photography should be handled. We have written to social work departments and managers of residential schools clarifying our policy on this matter.

We have made it clear that all bids for media access to detainees must be referred to the Scottish Office information directorate, unless vetoed first by the school managers or the social work department. The decision whether access to a particular detainee should be allowed would be taken at ministerial level. In considering such a bid, we would have in mind the interests of the victim's family, the possible effect on the public and the interests of the detainee him or herself.

We have made it clear in our guidance that we do not think that it would ever be in the interests of a child under 16 to be identified in a media interview. As for those aged 16 or over, if there was no objection in principle to the media bid, we would expect the managers of the school to counsel the detainee carefully about the implications of agreeing to it, and we would expect written consent to be obtained both from the detainee and from his or her parent or guardian.

The hon. Member for Springburn has just drawn attention to a particular article which has, perhaps inadvertently, caused considerable distress to the victim's family. I refer of course to the article by Meg Henderson, highlighted by the hon. Member, which appeared in the magazine *Marie Claire* last August.

I now come to the difficult question of the degree of access, if any, which Miss Henderson had to the female detainee in question. I understand that Miss Henderson was engaged as a freelance researcher by Channel 4 in connection with a documentary about children detained without limit of time. In this connection she visited both Kerelaw and Kenmure St. Mary's Schools around November 1991. This was before the issue of our formal guidance on media access, but the principles of that guidance were in operation, on an informal basis. I am told by the management of Kerelaw that there was no verbal contact between Miss Henderson and the detainee other than an offer to be seen on camera. That was declined.

It is therefore my understanding that no interview with the girl took place. It can be of no benefit to this detainee to suggest, as the article implies, that she herself minimises the seriousness of the crime for which she has been convicted. The Scottish Office certainly attaches no responsibility in this matter to the girl herself. We are aware of the media overtures to her, which she has steadfastly refused, and we have no reason to believe that she acted differently on this occasion.

This article, using the names "Jean" and "Donna", gave the details of the crime for which the young girl I mentioned earlier was convicted. In the course of her trial, I understand that certain claims were made by the defence about the relationship between the accused and the victim, designed to minimise the guilt attaching to the accused. However, the jury was not persuaded that there was any special defence to the crime of murder or that the charge should be reduced.

It is difficult to understand why Meg Henderson decided to discuss the details of the crime in her article for *Marie Claire*. Her previous articles in *The Guardian* and *The Scotsman* did not give any details. The purpose of doing so in the *Marie Claire* article may have been to evoke sympathy for the female detainee to whom she refers as "Jean". I submit that it was quite unnecessary and irresponsible. It has already caused great distress to the Watson family. Their daughter is dead and cannot answer allegations which have been made against her.

The hon. Member for Springburn has also referred to articles by Mr. Jack McLean in *The Glasgow Herald*. Mr. McLean has referred to the case in more than one article, as an illustration of his own somewhat idiosyncratic ideas on law and order. Mr. McLean is entitled to the free expression of his opinions. However, he might reflect on the impact that his remarks have had on the victim's family. Sadly, his articles have caused distress, and I believe this has been brought to his attention by the hon. Member for Springburn.

Mr. McLean's articles are not of the same relevance to this debate as Miss Henderson's article, however. Mr. McLean did not claim to have interviewed the detainee, and this debate is about access by journalists to those in custody.

In addressing the general question of media access to those under sentence of the courts, we have in recent years adopted a policy of increased openness. Each request from a national journalist is treated on its merits, and a decision is taken at the highest level in the Scottish prison service. In addition, prison governors deal locally with requests from local newspapers. Broadly speaking, proposals for interviews which are in the public interest because they seek to inform would be viewed sympathetically. Media approaches which seem to us likely to be exploitative—of prisoners or situations—are refused. We could not, of course, agree to interviews with prisoners whose cases are the subject of any current investigation or public controversy.

The House will appreciate that we would not wish to control entirely the dialogue between prisoners and the news media. Consistent with the European convention on human rights, we do not censor prisoners' mail. All convicted prisoners also have access to payphones. Prisoners may themselves write to journalists. The use made of the material thereafter will depend on the professionalism of the journalist concerned.

The establishments in which children sentenced under sections 205 or 206 of the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1975 are placed are not part of the Scottish prison service estate, nor are they managed by the Secretary of

[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton]

State. They are managed directly by the local authority social work department, and by certain independent bodies with social work funding.

Where a person convicted is 16 or over, the normal policy is to detain the person from the outset in a young offenders institution. Where the person convicted is under 16, we take the view that the welfare of the person, as a child, must be kept firmly in view. Although, therefore, it is the responsibility of the Secretary of State to direct the place and conditions of detention, we locate such children if at all possible in the secure unit of a residential school, where they can live in similar conditions to those detained there for welfare reasons.

We do not seek to control access by the media to the residential schools. As I have said, they do not belong to the Secretary of State, nor does he manage them. We regard media access to the establishments as such as a matter to be controlled by the social work department and the managers of the schools. I am confident that they exercise their discretion responsibly.

Media access to the detainees themselves, however, is a different matter. The Secretary of State is responsible for the conditions of their detention, and that includes any question of their availability for interview by the press. I have already outlined our policy on such access, which is designed to safeguard the interests of such young people without obstructing legitimate public debate.

As we are all only too well aware, the media in today's society can wield enormous power and influence. That power and influence can be used responsibly for good ends or it can be used irresponsibly. The media coverage which has been generated on children detained without limit of time has undoubtedly promoted public debate. To that there can be no objection.

But the campaign will not be furthered by misleading and emotive coverage of particular cases. Questions about the conditions of detention for children sentenced by the courts are entirely separate from questions about the merits of particular convictions or sentences.

By opening up the latter issue and by repeating unsubstantiated allegations, Miss Henderson has obscured the main issue and added unnecessarily and irresponsibly to the unhappiness of the Watson family. If she takes any interest in the effect of her writings, I hope that she will reflect on that fact.

I would like to end by reiterating my sympathy for the family and my deep compassion for them in their bereavement.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at six minutes to One o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 10 December 1992

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

BRITISH RAILWAYS (No. 4) BILL *(By Order)*

BRITISH WATERWAYS BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

CROSSRAIL BILL *(By Order)*

EAST COAST MAIN LINE (SAFETY) BILL *(By Order)*

GREATER MANCHESTER (LIGHT RAPID TRANSIT SYSTEM) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

WOODGRANGE PARK CEMETERY BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

RIVER HUMBER (UPPER BURCOM COOLING WORKS) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

Orders for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time on Wednesday 16 December.

Oral Answers to Questions

NATIONAL FINANCE

Premium Bonds

1. **Ms. Quin:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received about the conditions governing the purchase of premium bonds by individuals.

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Anthony Nelson): I have received a number of representations concerning the purchase of premium bonds.

Ms. Quin: Do the Government accepted that the sale of premium bonds has plummeted since they changed the rules so that £100 became the minimum amount that one could purchase? Does that not penalise many people who would like to buy bonds in small amounts for themselves or as presents? Are the Government trying to kill off the premium bond scheme altogether?

Mr. Nelson: I acknowledge the need to encourage the savings ethic, but it is also important to ensure that the taxpayer's interests are protected. The cost of administration is considerable and that change, associated with the other changes to National Savings bank accounts, will save the taxpayer about £5 million a year.

Mr. John Greenway: Does my hon. Friend agree that if we want to encourage the savings ethic among young children, it is important that they learn what is a realistic return on the investments made on their behalf? A return based on a computer deciding whether they have won a cash prize seems totally artificial and unrealistic. Would it not make more sense if young children invested in National Savings certificates?

Mr. Nelson: I am bound to agree with my hon. Friend. Rather than rely on the luck of the draw, it is better for a young saver to build up savings that have an assured rate of return. After March, the odds of winning will be 15,000:1, but the rate of interest applying to savings certificates will be about 5 per cent.

Investment (Tax Relief)

2. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to introduce further tax relief incentives for United Kingdom-based manufacturing firms investing in the United Kingdom.

The Paymaster General (Sir John Cope): The existing tax relief for capital investment allows appropriate write-offs. The measures announced in the autumn statement will give additional encouragement to investment in the year to October 1993.

Mr. Wareing: Is the Minister aware that between 1987 and 30 June this year, no fewer than 24,725 manufacturing concerns went into liquidation? What could the Government have done? Does the right hon. Gentleman believe that they could have done anything to prevent those bankruptcies? Is he aware that, although reductions in interest rates are welcome, confidence is needed? Until unemployment is reduced, there will be no confidence, no demand and no inducement to invest.

Sir John Cope: Measures were introduced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor in the autumn statement to deal with those problems. The measures were widely welcomed and, on investment and other matters, responded to the calls made by industry.

Mr. Bill Walker: My right hon. Friend will be aware that one of the finest industries in Scotland is the Scotch whisky industry, which contributes massively to the Exchequer through excise duties and value added tax and produces more than £1,700 million worth of exports a year. Will my right hon. Friend give serious consideration to the proposal that, rather than the present system, excise duty should be levied on the alcoholic content of the product? That would help negotiations in Europe, increase revenue intake for the Treasury and give substantial help to the Scotch whisky industry.

Sir John Cope: I am, indeed, aware of the importance of the Scotch whisky industry, from what my hon. Friend and other hon. Members have told me about it, from what I have been told by the Scotch Whisky Association and from my own appreciation of it. I note my hon. Friend's comments and assure him that we consider everything carefully in the approach to the Budget, but I could not possibly anticipate my right hon. Friend's Budget statement. My hon. Friend will also be aware of the disadvantages, from our point of view, of the system he suggests.

Ms. Harman: Is the right hon. Gentleman not concerned by the fact that his Department's monthly monetary report, issued today, shows that manufacturing employment fell in September by 32,000 and that the rate

of job loss in manufacturing is accelerating? Is it not time that the Government recognised that unemployment is not just, as they call it, a lagging indicator but is now in itself a cause of the continuing recession, which is why the Government must take action on unemployment?

Sir John Cope: The proportion of output from manufacturing has been declining for a long time not just in this country but far more widely. Investment in plant and machinery, which is part of what is needed, is already increasing and productivity is at a record level. That is what we need and what the autumn statement encouraged.

Interest Rates

3. **Mr. Sykes:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer which EC countries have lower short-term interest rates than the United Kingdom.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Norman Lamont): None. The United Kingdom has the lowest short-term interest rates in the European Community.

Mr. Sykes: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for that reply. Is he aware that in Scarborough and Whitby, England's two finest resorts, we have many successful companies, such as McCain Foods makers of oven chips, and Pindar Graphics, and that interest rates and exchange rates are so competitive that great British companies such as those are winning orders hand over fist at home and abroad?

Mr. Lamont: I am sure that my hon. Friend's constituency is typical of many that are benefiting from the reduction in interest rates. That is being reflected in high streets throughout the country. Retail sales in the last three months are up 1 per cent. on the previous three months and are the highest since 1990. In the car industry—it is not so strongly represented in my hon. Friend's constituency, although car retailers are—we have also seen an increase in recent months. There is no doubt that the economy is benefiting from the reduction in interest rates, which I believe will work through increasingly into other parts of the economy.

The key consequence of the reduction in interest rates is through mortgage rates. There have already been substantial reductions in mortgage rates, but many people, particularly those with annual mortgages, have yet to see —they will do so early in the new year—further, very substantial, reductions in their mortgage rates. That will help consumer spending very considerably.

Mr. Beith: Does the Chancellor accept that lower short-term interest rates, although welcome, are not likely to have as rapid an impact on the economy as, for example, contracts held by companies that benefit from increased spending on public works? Does he recognise that many small businesses do not have confidence that interest rates will remain low and that they are at a disadvantage compared with businesses in many other European countries, because they are much more dependent on short-term interest rates than those businesses?

Mr. Lamont: I am very surprised by the right hon. Gentleman. We have had from him and his hon. Friends on the Liberal Bench and from Labour Members nothing but pressure to reduce interest rates. We now have the lowest interest rates in the European Community. That is good for our economy, and nobody can gainsay that.

Mr. John Townend: Leaving aside the remarks of the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith), does my right hon. Friend take encouragement from the fact that the very low rates of interest in America are now resulting in significant economic growth in that country? Does he agree that that gives enormous opportunities to British exporters, in view of the more competitive pound, and that countries that remain in the exchange rate mechanism will see no significant recovery until the Bundesbank reduces its rates?

Mr. Lamont: It is certainly true that recovery is strongly under way in the United States, based on the low interest rates that have obtained there for some time. Given that a higher proportion of our exports goes to the United States than do the exports of other European Community countries, we stand to benefit enormously. I have made clear for many months my belief that it would be for the benefit of the European economy if interest rates in Europe were generally lower.

Mr. Gordon Brown: On the question of a co-ordinated reduction in interest rates, does the Chancellor support the Christopherson European recovery plan? Why is the French Finance Minister and not the British Chancellor taking the lead with new proposals for a European recovery programme? Why has the issue of unemployment been relegated on the British agenda for Edinburgh from the formal session to a mere open-ended discussion over lunch? Will the right hon. Gentleman not realise, even at this late stage, that the test of the British presidency is whether the Government will show the political will to take a lead in reducing unemployment?

Mr. Lamont: As question 5 is on that subject, I do not know why the hon. Gentleman could not hang on and ask a supplementary question that is relevant to the question tabled. He may insist on asking an irrelevant question but I shall give a relevant answer. First, the Christopherson plan has nothing to do with interest rates, so the hon. Gentleman should be clear about that. Secondly, we shall discuss at Edinburgh with other member states a package of measures designed to get the European economy moving again. Contrary to what the hon. Gentleman says, this country has led the way with the package that I announced in my autumn statement: greater priority for capital programmes, with tight control over current spending; special help for the housing market and the construction industry; and additional incentives for private sector investment. Moreover, in the past couple of months, I have announced three percentage points off interest rates, which is providing significant extra help to British business and those with mortgages. At Edinburgh, we shall suggest that others in Europe follow Britain's lead.

Manufacturing Industry

4. **Mr. Nicholas Winterton:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what further proposals he intends to bring forward to stimulate manufacturing industry.

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Michael Portillo): Manufacturing industry enjoys the benefits of

the lowest interest rates in the European Community, inflation below the European Community average in each of the last 14 months, as well as a competitive exchange rate. In addition, the measures in the autumn statement are targeted on sectors where assistance will be most effective. Against that background, I hope to see increasing optimism and confidence about the future.

Mr. Winterton: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, if the manufacturing and construction industries are to be stimulated again and are to rise to fulfil their potential as vital parts of the United Kingdom economy, we need a new recognition and understanding by his Department, the Department of Trade and Industry and the banking and investment sector of the vital long-term potential of those industries as the only source of non-inflationary economic growth? Does he agree that they must not be sacrificed on the altar of a quick buck or a big dividend?

Mr. Portillo: My hon. Friend's support for manufacturing industry is one of the best-known facts about the House of Commons. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor has strongly echoed part of what he said, in particular in his speech at the Mansion House when he said that the Government should examine every policy to ensure that it supports industry. My hon. Friend will have been pleased —indeed, I remember his remarks at the time—at the measures in the autumn statement: increased capital allowances; a new 20 per cent. allowance for industrial buildings; the abolition of car tax; the additional export credit cover; and a further reduction in interest rates.

Mr. Skinner: If the Chancellor of the Exchequer has decided on an individual policy of spending his way out of the recession, why cannot it apply to the rest of the country?

Mr. Portillo: The autumn statement set out what we believe to be an appropriate level of public spending. It is extremely important to keep it under tight control. I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman appears to be proposing that we should have higher spending and higher borrowing.

Mr. Ward: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the best thing that the House could do for this country is to prevent the Labour party from talking down the country, particularly the manufacturing industry, at every opportunity both at home and abroad?

Mr. Portillo: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The greatest challenge that we face now is the restoration of confidence. It is not only the Government who must play a part in restoring confidence; it is business, the Labour party and the media. There are many reasons why we should feel confident about the future, and I have already given some of them. Recovery in our car industry is another example. Recently, production increased by 20 per cent. on the same period last year, and forecasts show that there will be a 12 per cent. increase in car production next year. One would hope that Opposition Members would promulgate such facts as evidence of the recovery and evidence that confidence should be picking up.

Mr. Llwyd: When will the Chancellor take effective action to ensure that the banks pass on interest rate cuts to their hard-pressed customers?

Mr. Portillo: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor has expressed his concern about the matter, as I have. He has already held a meeting with the banks, and will be meeting them again next week.

Mr. Anthony Coombs: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, with low interest rates, record productivity and a competitive exchange rate, the base for the manufacturing industry to take advantage of the upturn is the best that it has ever been? Does he agree that the last thing that manufacturing industry wants is to be burdened with additional costs of the sort that the social chapter would impose on it?

Mr. Portillo: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Productivity in the third quarter was up by 4·4 per cent. on the year before and stood at a record level. Manufacturing exports now stand at a record level. The United Kingdom is in a highly competitive position. We should like to see all of the European Community being more competitive in world markets.

It is certainly the United Kingdom's policy not to adopt the social chapter, because of the extra costs that it would impose. Our Community partners have already decided to adopt it. That decision may be to their disadvantage, but the United Kingdom will not follow them down that road.

European Economic Growth

5. **Mr. Cann:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what new projects he is advocating to stimulate co-ordinated European economic growth.

Mr. Lamont: Ministers at the last Economic and Finance Council agreed that there should be a full discussion of the Community's economy at the Edinburgh Council and that member states should consider what action can be taken, both individually and collectively, to hasten recovery.

Mr. Cann: Does the Chancellor accept that the half-yearly report of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development forecasts that 34 million people in the western countries and Japan will become unemployed and that unemployment in the United Kingdom will reach 3 million shortly after Christmas, even by the Government's method of accounting, and 4 million by the method of accounting that applied in 1979? Does the Chancellor agree that it would be totally wrong to go to the meeting of Finance Ministers tomorrow and say, "Look what we have done in the autumn statement. Why don't you do that?"? We need a proper, well-funded European-wide growth strategy.

Mr. Lamont: I do not agree with the hon. Gentleman. I believe that the measures that I announced in my autumn statement have been widely welcomed by industry and all the representative organisations of industry. They accorded very well with the proposals that they were asking for and thought were appropriate from the Government.

Although unemployment in the United Kingdom has risen, it has risen, as the hon. Gentleman well knows, in many other European countries as well. Other European countries have higher levels of unemployment than we do. But we now have the lowest interest rates in Europe, which will be of enormous benefit to this country. Not only the consequences of the lower interest rates, but the actions in

my autumn statement, put the United Kingdom in a strong position. At Edinburgh we will urge other countries to follow where we have led. We will persuade the Community to take measures that protect jobs, promote investment and lead the way to recovery.

Mr. Oppenheim: Is not one thing certain—that the surest way to prevent growth in Europe would be for the European Commission to increase burdens on the European economy by massively increasing its spending, as it proposes? That burden would come on top of the onerous load of regulations and the hefty burden of the social chapter, which the Opposition are always so keen to support.

Mr. Lamont: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Opposition Members and the shadow Chancellor seem to think that the only place where jobs come from is Government spending. The shadow Chancellor's only answer to the unemployment problem is more spending. As my hon. Friend says, more spending can destroy jobs rather than create them. It is essential, when not only Britain but every country in Europe is seeking to control spending, that spending should be controlled at European Community level just as much as at national Government level. The important point that will come up at Edinburgh is our rebate from the European Community. We in Britain are determined to stand firm on that. I notice that the shadow Chancellor has said that there should be a negotiation about that.

Mr. Darling: Is not the truth of the matter that the British Government reluctantly agreed to discuss unemployment over a lunchtime chat—as opposed to making it the main priority at Edinburgh—as a result of pressure from other European states? Will the Chancellor accept that there will be no investment, and no recovery unless confidence improves, and that confidence will not improve unless unemployment comes down? What specific new projects does he intend to propose at the European summit in the next few days? How many jobs will be created in Britain and Europe, without which there will be no return to the confidence that we so desperately need?

Mr. Lamont: The truth is very different from what the hon. Gentleman says. As I have already said, Britain has taken the lead in putting the economic issues on the agenda at Edinburgh. Labour Members ought to tell us why they make it appear to all those who follow these events from abroad that our rebate is up for negotiation. Why should the Opposition weaken our position at Edinburgh?

Value Added Tax

6. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to increase the rate of value added tax.

Sir John Cope: My right hon. Friend has no plans to do so.

Mrs. Gorman: I thank my right hon. Friend for his reply. Will he take this opportunity to reiterate that it is no part of the Government's policy to increase either indirect or direct taxes? We know that economic recovery means that we must leave spending power in the domestic economy and relieve the pressure for increased wages. Of course, higher taxes would reduce people's income and take money out of the pocket of the business man who wishes to invest his money in his firm. Does my right hon. Friend agree that the economic strides made by the Government in the last decade were built on the back of tax reductions, not of tax increases?

Sir John Cope: My hon. Friend has given us a shrewd analysis of some of the factors that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor will need to take into account in the Budget.

Mr. William Ross: The Minister has told us that the Government have no plans to increase the rate of taxation. Will he also assure us that they have no plans to increase the scope of taxation, and especially that they have no plans to include newspapers and other periodicals?

Sir John Cope: We have no plans of that sort.

Mr. Alan Howarth: If at some point my right hon. Friend the Chancellor has reason to suppose that the public sector borrowing requirement might become disproportionately large, and if the Cabinet concludes that that cannot be remedied by tightening control of public expenditure, will the Government be willing to increase taxation, and to do so sooner rather than later?

Sir John Cope: Those are decisions that my right hon. Friend will have to take as we get nearer the Budget. As always, we are grateful for my hon. Friend's advice.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Did the £4,000 contribution that was made by the Treasury to the Chancellor of the Exchequer to enable him to evict a stripper from his private home include a VAT component? Do the Government intend to increase VAT on legal matters?

Sir John Cope: We have no plans in that respect. The hon. Gentleman will always do his best to cheapen the debate.

Mr. Nigel Evans: Does my right hon. Friend agree that not so long ago we fought a general election and that one of our major platforms was taxation—both direct and indirect? The public knew our taxation policies and were also well aware—[HON. MEMBERS: "Ask a question."] Does my right hon. Friend agree that the public knew what our taxation policies were and what those of the Labour party were? That is one of the major reasons why we are sitting on this side of the House and Labour Members are sitting on that side.

Sir John Cope: I absolutely agree with my hon. Friend.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: The Paymaster General is being unnecessarily coy. On 12 March, his predecessor told us of the "categorical pledges" that had been given by the Chancellor and the Prime Minister that there would be

"no increase in the standard rate of VAT either before or after the election."

The Paymaster General's predecessor also assured us that there were

"no plans to extend the standard rate, or to put up other taxes."—[*Official Report*, 12 March 1992; Vol. 205, c. 959.]

Will the Paymaster General confirm that those categorical pledges still hold good?

Sir John Cope: Those categorical pledges stand as they did at that time.

Drug Trafficking (Seizure of Assets)

7. **Mr. Hargreaves:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the value of assets seized by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise in each year since the Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986 became operational; how much of the assets were put back into Customs and Excise work; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope: The total amount of confiscation orders made by the courts since the Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986 as a result of Customs and Excise cases is £21·96 million. I will arrange for the figures for individual years to appear in the *Official Report*. The amount distributed to Customs and Excise through Home Office administered seized assets funds is £614,000 for 1992-93, the first year of the fund's operation.

Mr. Hargreaves: I am sure that my hon. Friend will wish to congratulate the Customs and Excise drug investigation division on the success of its recent operations, which have resulted in huge seizures. Will he also reassure the House that, after 1 January, when border controls are removed, a far greater proportion of any assets—or, rather, funds realised from the seizure of assets from drug trafficking—will be redirected towards the investigation division?

Sir John Cope: I certainly join my hon. Friend in congratulating Customs and Excise, both on last year's seizures of dangerous drugs with a total street value of about £350 million and, in particular, on two recent seizures which have gained a good deal of publicity.

The fight against drugs will certainly remain the top priority of Customs and Excise after 1 January, and we are arranging to step up that fight. We must fight drugs at all costs. The majority of resources come from the usual public expenditure round, although the seized assets allow us to use some international funds to top up the public funds.

Mr. Foulkes: Does the Paymaster General recall a report produced during the previous Parliament by the Select Committee on Home Affairs, which suggested that the Channel islands were being used to launder drug money? What action are he and his colleagues taking to ensure that such reprehensible action does not continue?

Sir John Cope: Since that time the law has been improved, and it is being stepped up further in the Criminal Justice Bill, which will help us to obtain more money from seized assets.

Following are the figures:

Year	*£ million*
1986-87	nil
1987-88	0·80
1988-89	6·00
1989-90	7·59
1990-91	4·73
1991-92	2·84

Gross Domestic Product

8. **Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was *(a)* the growth in gross domestic product since 1979 for the United Kingdom and *(b)* the OECD average.

Mr. Nelson: Average annual growth between 1979 and 1991 was 1·8 per cent. in the United Kingdom and 2·8 per cent. on average in OECD countries respectively; but between 1981 and 1991, of the G7 countries only Japan had a substantially higher average annual rate of growth than the United Kingdom.

Mr. Milburn: Is the Economic Secretary aware that, if economic growth in this country had matched the performance of our leading industrial competitors, the United Kingdom's output since 1979 would have been some £245 billion higher than it was under his Government? Does he not recognise that his failure to ensure long-term investment in British industry means that, day by day, the gap between Britain and other industrialised nations is widening rather than narrowing? Is not that £245 billion growth shortfall a simple indication that the Government have failed this country?

Mr. Nelson: Like so many Opposition Members, the hon. Gentleman seems to enjoy talking down the United Kingdom's economic performance. Let me tell him that, during the 1980s, this country grew faster than France, Italy or Germany, and took the lion's share of inward investment from the United States and Japan. They have confidence in this country's economic future, even if the hon. Gentleman does not.

Mr. Butterfill: Does my hon. Friend agree that the surest way to ensure that we did not have good economic growth would be to adopt Labour's policies, have the Government choose where we invested and pile tax increase on tax increase, as was so enthusiastically espoused by the Labour party in the last election?

Mr. Nelson: That is self-evident, and the electors agreed.

Mr. Andrew Smith: Is not the truth that it is not us talking Britain down but the Government who have been doing Britain down? The failure of their policies for growth are evident in the wrecked businesses, wrecked industries and wrecked lives up and down the land. We need action for investment, action for training, action for research and development, and an emergency programme for jobs. If the Government will not give us that programme, are they not accepting that unemployment will carry on rising?

Mr. Nelson: I assert again that we never hear any good news from the Opposition. The facts of the matter—*[Interruption.]* I shall give some facts. Industrial production is up; retail sales have not been higher for more than two years; interest rates have come down; and inflation is falling. The hon. Gentleman should recognise that Britain is well set for growth.

Mr. Ian Taylor: Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the most important facts of the past five years has been the level of inward investment in Britain, compared with the lack of it in other countries? That was recently recognised by Germany, which tried to increase tax incentives. Some

250,000 jobs have been created by that inward investment. Does he agree there are two potential threats to its continuation? One, earlier this year, was the possible election of a Labour Government; the second is the possibility that we might be sidelined by not ratifying the Maastricht treaty.

Mr. Nelson: My hon. Friend is right: the level of inward investment, which is precious and important, has been a tremendous vote of confidence in Britain's future economy and industrial performance. The extent to which inward investment in the car industry has been translated into jobs in some of the most important regions of this country is remarkable. That must be succoured and encouraged.

Government Deficits (Convergence Criteria)

9. **Mr. Hall:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are his latest proposals to help the United Kingdom meet the convergence criteria on Government deficits as laid out in article 104c of the treaty of Rome proposed under the Maastricht treaty.

Mr. Portillo: The Government are determined to return their budget towards balance as the economy recovers. On the expenditure side, the autumn statement set out firm plans for public expenditure to grow over the medium term at a rate within the average rate of growth of the economy. This will help to ensure that fiscal policy remains consistent with the requirements of article 104c.

Mr. Hall: The Minister will be aware that in my constituency of Warrington, South there are 4,139 people out of work and claiming benefit. Does he agree that the convergence criteria of the Maastricht treaty represent the economic agenda of the 1980s, which was a deflationary agenda, and do not meet the needs for growth of the 1990s? Will he therefore give a commitment that he will place at the top of the Government's agenda the eradication of the fear of unemployment?

Mr. Portillo: I believe that the Government's policy on spending and borrowing is appropriate to the 1990s. The Government have allowed for the extra spending required during the recession to meet additional Government obligations in respect, for example, of the unemployed. None the less, the Government cannot borrow on the never never and it is extremely important that our borrowing should be reduced as the economy recovers. That is why it is our determination that the budget will return to balance as the economy recovers.

Mr. Brazier: I welcome my right hon. Friend's commitment to meet the convergence criteria on the fiscal side by moving our budget into balance, but we should reconsider the full-funding rule. We have substantially lowered the price of money, but we need to increase its availability by easing the liquidity in our over-tight banking system.

Mr. Portillo: I know that that is my hon. Friend's view. He will know that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer is following a full-funding policy. That is the clear policy of the Government.

Mr. Denzil Davies: Is it not a fact that the convergence criteria in the Maastricht treaty are a recipe for deflation, depression and higher unemployment in Europe? Is there not a contradiction between support for the Maastricht treaty on the one hand and calls for a co-ordinated European policy of economic growth on the other? After all, one cannot worship God and mammon at the same time.

Mr. Portillo: I am extremely surprised that the right hon. Gentleman believes that the ambitions to bring down rates of inflation and interest rates and to keep tight control of national debts and borrowing are to be regarded as in some way harmful policies. If we were to allow our borrowing to get out of control, it would mean that year by year more and more public spending would be pre-empted by debt interest payments, and less and less would be available for priority public spending programmes. I cannot believe that that is what the right hon. Gentleman seriously wants.

Car Registrations

11. **Mr. Hendry:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the number of new car registrations in the latest period for which figures are available; and what was the comparable figure for the same period last year.

Mr. Lamont: The Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders estimates that there were 106,902 new car registrations in November—6·25 per cent. more than in November 1991.

Mr. Hendry: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for that most encouraging reply. Is he aware that the SMMT expects car production to be up 12 per cent. next year, which is clear evidence of the recovery in the car industry? Does he agree with me that one major component of that recovery will be Toyota in Derbyshire, whose model the Toyota Carina—it might perhaps have been better named the Toyota Edwina, in view of the support received from that quarter—comes off the production line next Wednesday?

Mr. Lamont: My hon. Friend is absolutely right that foreign investment in the motor industry in this country is making an enormous contribution both to manufacturing output and to our exports. As my hon. Friend said, the SMMT is expecting a substantial rise in production, not just next year, when Nissan, Toyota and Honda come on stream—*[Interruption.]* Hon. Gentlemen are quite wrong. Those companies are British companies just as much as any others. They have invested here and deserve to be regarded as British companies, just as those who came from the United States are regarded as British companies. Furthermore, I notice that DRI Europe, which does the forecasting for the SMMT, is forecasting that in the United Kingdom car output will rise from 1·4 million to 2·7 million in 1997. That is a tremendous contribution from foreign investment and ought to be widely welcomed by everyone in the House.

Autumn Statement

13. **Mrs. Browning:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what response he has received from business organisations to his autumn statement.

Mr. Portillo: The Chancellor's autumn statement has been widely welcomed by business organisations throughout the country.

Mrs. Browning: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the warm welcome from the Confederation of British Industry to the autumn statement is welcomed by many businesses, particularly small businesses? In particular, will he encourage his right hon Friend the Chancellor, in considering measures for the Budget, to look at the tax treatment of capital allowances so that small businesses can, under a favourable taxation policy, carry forward profits for capital purchases from one tax year to the next?

Mr. Portillo: My hon. Friend was certainly right to draw attention to the breadth of support that there was for the autumn statement: it came from the CBI, the Institute of Directors and a very large number of different business leaders. I believe that one of the reasons why it was so welcomed was that the Government were responsive to ideas that had been put to them by British business. My hon. Friend seeks to take the debate on further by putting forward new proposals that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor might wish to consider in his Budget. I cannot at this stage pre-empt what may be in that Budget, but I am very grateful to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Hain: Why did the Chief Secretary not report the statement of the Engineering Employers Federation, which said that the Government's policies were not only economically incompetent but industrially illiterate as well?

Mr. Portillo: Why, in turn, did the hon. Gentleman not refer to the CBI, the chairman of Grand Met, the British Retail Consortium, the Institute of Directors, Williams Holdings, GKN, Wimpey, the National Association of Estate Agents, the Halifax, the Council of Mortgage Lenders, the chief executive of the SMMT, the Rover group, Vauxhall, the chief executive of the Retail Motor Industry Federation, or any of the others?

Autumn Statement

15. **Mr. Brandreth:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received from businesses in the north-west about his autumn statement.

Mr. Portillo: The Chancellor's autumn statement has been widely welcomed by business organisations in the north-west and throughout the country.

Mr. Brandreth: Is my right hon. Friend aware that in Chester the chamber of commerce has warmly welcomed the broad range of measures introduced in the autumn statement, warmly welcomes the fact that we now have the lowest interest rates in the European Community and believes that the only missing ingredient is confidence, which in Chester is now beginning to return?

Mr. Portillo: I have been very pleased by some of the news from the north-west. General Motors and Vauxhall have invested £190 million in a new V6 engine plant at Ellesmere Port, and AMCOR in my hon. Friend's constituency of Chester has invested £25 million to build a new corrugated box manufacturing plant. I am sure that that is good news for my hon. Friend and for all his constituents.

Mr. Mandelson: Would not growth in the north-west and the rest of the country be greatly assisted by greater financing of capital projects? Has not the president of the European Investment Bank said that if the bank were asked, it would increase and speed up the financing of capital projects throughout this country and Europe? Why have the British during their presidency not asked the bank to do so?

Mr. Portillo: First, I believe that one of the reasons why such a broad welcome was given to the measures contained in the autumn statement was that it offered so much protection for capital projects. Individual projects that we have announced, such as proceeding with the Jubilee line, are of tremendous symbolic significance and very helpful. As for the European Investment Bank, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer may have some proposals regarding the bank which he will wish to put to the European Community at the Council meeting in Edinburgh.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 10 December.

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): I have been asked to reply.

This morning my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister presided at a meeting of the Cabinet before departing to Edinburgh for the European Council meeting.

Mr. Hinchliffe: Does the Leader of the House agree that the extent of marriage breakdown in Britain, and especially its implications for the children involved, is a matter of great concern to the nation as a whole? Will he press on the Prime Minister the need properly to fund the conciliation and counselling services undertaken by organisations such as Relate and the National Children's Home? Does he recognise the direct connection between the Government's policies and the current incidence of marriage breakdown?

Mr. Newton: As it happens, I know well from my own previous and, indeed, present association with Relate that a great deal is going on between the Government and that organisation and others to help in this very important matter. I shall take the hon. Gentleman's question as an expression of his support for our encouragement of those organisations.

Mr. Thomason: Will my right hon. Friend invite the Prime Minister to come to my constituency of Bromsgrove, where he will find a well managed and well run local authority which is Conservative-controlled? Will he also suggest to the Prime Minister that he might choose to visit Monklands, the constituency of a member of the Opposition, where he will find a local authority riddled with nepotism?

Mr. Newton: I think perhaps the proper response to that question is that it is to be hoped that the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith), who is also holding a meeting in Edinburgh, might pay a visit to Monklands and look into it himself.

Mrs. Beckett: Has the Lord President seen the growing number of references to the likelihood that we shall soon see the emergence of an explicitly two-tier Europe? Which tier will Britain be in?

Mr. Newton: I have seen the references and I know that Britain will be in the fast lane. I also know that if the Labour party had its way, we should have been forced into the slow lane.

Mrs. Beckett: The position that the Lord President describes is certainly that which should exist, but I do not think that anyone else will think that it is the position which does exist. Does he recognise that a two-tier Europe with Britain in the second tier is just what British business has long feared, and that if that happens, it is not only likely to be extremely damaging but will be in no small part due to the incompetence of the Government's economic policy and their chaotic mismanagement of the British presidency?

Mr. Newton: I do not quite know on what basis the hon. Lady puts her point that nobody agrees with us. The whole of British industry knows that Labour policies in relation to the social chapter, tax policies and payroll tax would mean that Britain would be in the slow lane throughout the world.

Mr. Gallie: Is my right hon. Friend aware that yesterday 9,000 Rangers fans travelled to Germany at a cost of £300 per head to witness Rangers' magnificent win over Moscow? Does he agree that on that basis there is light at the end of the recessionary tunnel?

Mr. Newton: I did not know about the 9,000 figure, but I am delighted at the result and my hon. Friend makes a good point.

Mr. Ashdown: Will the Leader of the House respond to the question of which I gave him notice yesterday so that he might have a chance to discuss the answer with the Prime Minister? In view of the deteriorating situation in the area, will he give us a categorical assurance that the Government, working with others, are not prepared to allow the city of Sarajevo to fall to the aggression of the Bosnian Serbs?

Mr. Newton: I am grateful to the right hon. Member for Yeovil for his courtesy. I can tell him that the British Government see no justification whatever for continued Serb aggression in Sarajevo or anywhere else in Bosnia. Clearly, the western powers to which he referred could give the sort of undertaking that he seeks only by introducing a massive injection of foreign military power. The Government have made it clear on a number of occasions that they do not believe that such an intervention would contribute to a solution of the crisis. The right hon. Gentleman will know, however, that after the steering committee meeting of the conference on Yugoslavia here in London there will be a meeting in Geneva next week when the main item on the agenda will be the war in Bosnia.

Miss Emma Nicholson: Will the Lord President lead the House in condemning the religious violence which has now spread worldwide? Will he also agree that the International Moslem Foundation, a moderate organisation, and the Al Khoei and Ul-Bayt based in the United Kingdom, are just as horrified as we are by the violence and are solid and sincere members of the United Kingdom?

Mr. Newton: I very much endorse the concern and support that my hon. Friend has expressed and also the calm support by numbers of people, including the Indian Prime Minister, throughout the world.

Q2. Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 10 December.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave a moment ago.

Mr. Banks: I say this with no disrespect to the Leader of the House, but this is like getting 24 points on the football pools and finding that the first dividend is only 50 pence. Does the right hon. Gentleman have any regrets about the fact that the Conservative party sent two experts from its dirty tricks department to help President Bush, that the Foreign Secretary sent a telegram to James Baker saying "happy shooting" just before the election, and that some idiot authorised a search of Bill Clinton's files? Is it any wonder that in Arkansas the Prime Minister is regarded not so much as an FOB as an SOB?

Mr. Newton: If the hon. Member for Newham, North-West were to win as much as 50 pence on the pools, he would be doing better than I did in the days when I did them. On his question, he may like to know that there have been some very friendly exchanges between President-elect Clinton and the British ambassador only yesterday evening, and that President-elect Clinton has made it clear that he looks forward very much to meeting my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister after the inauguration.

Mr. Luff: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that, among the many issues facing the Edinburgh summit, the Government attach the highest possible priority to the future financing of the Community, and especially to securing Britain's abatement?

Mr. Newton: I assure my hon. Friend that that is precisely the case. Future financing, enlargement and finding a solution to the Danish problem are important key items on that difficult agenda. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister will certainly make it clear that Britain has no intention of compromising on the abatement.

Q3. Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 10 December.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Kilfoyle: As we approach Christmas, may I draw the Lord President's attention to the publication today of "Sick to Death of Homelessness" by the housing charity, Crisis, and to the "This Week" television programme this evening entitled "Dying for a Home"? One of the conclusions drawn is that of the 617 deaths of homeless people up to 31 August this year, 65 per cent. were preventable, given proper housing and good medical care. Is that not a terrible indictment of the callous disregard with which the Government treat those least able to help themselves?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman might have been more persuasive if he had mentioned that, as a result of measures introduced by the Government during the past

year, the number of households accepted as homeless has fallen, the use of bed-and-breakfast accommodation has fallen by nearly a quarter, and the number of people known to be sleeping rough on the streets of London has dropped by about 60 per cent. according to an assessment made by the voluntary organisations themselves.

Mr. Hargreaves: Notwithstanding the reply that my right hon. Friend gave to the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) about our intervention in Sarajevo, will he consult the Prime Minister to ensure that an undertaking is given to come to the House and provide a debate before any British troops are used for anything other than strictly humanitarian aid purposes?

Mr. Newton: I note my hon. Friend's point, and I shall of course draw it to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister.

Q5. **Ms. Glenda Jackson:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 10 December.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave some moments ago.

Ms. Jackson: Is the Lord President aware that more than 7,000 homeless families will spend Christmas in bed-and-breakfast accommodation without the means or resources to prepare the simplest of meals? In the light of the growing body of evidence of the ill health and malnutrition suffered especially by the children of families in bed-and-breakfast accommodation, does not the right hon. Gentleman think it time for a boarder premium to be paid to such families so that while they wait for the right to a home at least their children have the right to a decent diet? Or is he prepared to allow the increasing poverty and homelessness on our streets to be accompanied by scurvy and rickets?

Mr. Newton: I have already commented on the general question of homelessness. The hon. Lady will know that, in addition to what I have already said, it has recently been announced that the Government are to put a further sum of nearly £90 million over three years into the rough sleepers initiative to tackle some of the problems which worry her. She will also be aware that, as a result of the announcement made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security a few weeks ago, there will be a real increase in the value of income-related social security benefits next April.

Q6. **Mr. Clappison:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 10 December.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Clappison: Does my right hon. Friend agree that in view of the great interest that parents have recently expressed in information about their children's examination performance—information which they have every right to have and which the Government have allowed them to have, but which the Opposition would deny them—parents would feel huge disappointment if some teacher unions boycotted their children's tests?

Mr. Newton: I very much agree with my hon. Friend. A boycott of the tests would betray the pupils who have been working hard at the national curriculum and who deserve to have their achievements recognised. Her Majesty's inspectors' reports on the trial tests have said that they were a great success. It is absolutely right to say that it is time that the Opposition stopped opposing everything that helps to improve the quality of education and choice for parents.

Mr. Boyce: Given the state of the economy, the homelessness and the poverty in this country today, does the Leader of the House agree that the worst possible scenario is that the Government know what they are doing?

Mr. Newton: When the hon. Gentleman makes such a point, he might remember that in the past two years the rate of inflation has been more than halved and interest rates have been more than halved. We see exports at record levels and we see increases in retail sales. In the past three months, we have seen a 20 per cent. increase in car production.

Q7. **Mr. Duncan:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 10 December.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Duncan: Does my right hon. Friend agree that those who try to criticise the basis on which houses have been valued for the purposes of the council tax risk severely misleading the public? Does he agree that it is relative house prices and not absolute house prices that matter? Does he agree that we have devised a fair basis for the fair implementation of a very fair tax?

Mr. Newton: I of course agree with my hon. Friend that the purpose of the valuations is a comparison between relative property values. I agree even more with him that a system that takes relative values into account—alongside other factors, including rebates—will be far fairer than the discredited rating system to which the Labour party wishes to return.

Business of the House

3.30 pm

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): Will the Leader of the House state the business for next week?

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): Yes, Madam. The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 14 DECEMBER—Motion for Christmas Adjournment.

Proceedings on the Consolidated Fund Bill.

TUESDAY 15 DECEMBER—Timetable motion on the Education Bill, followed by remaining stages of the Civil Service (Management Functions) Bill *[Lords]*.

WEDNESDAY 16 DECEMBER—Remaining stages of the Prisoners and Criminal Proceedings (Scotland) Bill *[Lords]*.

Motion on the Environmental Information Regulations.

THURSDAY 17 DECEMBER—Debates on the Adjournment.

Mrs. Beckett: I thank the Leader of the House for that statement. Will he ensure that there is a statement before Christmas on the scale of the sharp increases in food prices which we can expect to see in the new year as a result of the effects of devaluation of the green pound? Should not the public be warned of that and other inflationary consequences of the Government's failures?

Does the right hon. Gentleman recognise the real and growing concern that the Government's reluctance to listen to debate and to other points of view will be heightened by his announcement just now of a guillotine on the largest ever education Bill? It went into Committee only three weeks ago, and the meat of the Bill is in the early clauses. There will be considerable concern about that.

The Leader of the House may recall that we asked last week for a statement on guidelines on electoral registration because of the position in the Conservative-controlled London borough of Brent. The electoral register there has fallen by 26,000 in the past year. Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that Mr. Justice Potts has said in court today that there is a case to answer because of the discrepancy between the electoral register in Brent, at under 150,000, and the poll tax register, which shows 190,000? Will the right hon. Gentleman reconsider? May I press him again on that statement?

Does the right hon. Gentleman recognise that there will be concern among hon. Members of all parties about the Audit Commission report that, despite the work being speeded up of late, works on fire precautions in this building, which were commissioned in 1979, are not completed? A fire certificate cannot be issued for three or four years yet. That will be of great concern to hon. Members and to staff everywhere in the House.

Mr. Newton: The hon. Lady asked first about food prices. She will know that some of her right hon. and hon. Friends have been seeking an undertaking that there will be a statement following the Agriculture Council next week. Although I cannot give an absolute guarantee of that at the moment, we are certainly considering the matter and may be able to provide an opportunity of the sort that the hon. Lady seeks.

The hon. Lady asked about the timetable motion on the Education Bill, which will be debated on Tuesday. I remind her that—I think almost unprecedentedly—we gave two full days for the Second Reading of the Bill. Let me state the position simply: the Bill has now been debated in the Standing Committee for 61 hours, and the Committee has only reached clause 13. There is nothing unusual about a Government seeking to make more progress than that on such a Bill.

The hon. Lady's third question related to electoral registration. I have not had an opportunity to study the remarks that she attributed to Mr. Justice Potts but, on the assumption that she has reported them accurately—which I have no reason to doubt—I am sure that my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary will want to consider what the hon. Lady and the judge in question have said.

The hon. Lady asked about the Audit Commission's report on safety precautions. She will be aware that the Chairman of the Accommodation and Works Committee answered a question on that matter very recently, and that there are significant signs that better progress is being made. Nevertheless, I am sure that the Chairman of that Committee will wish to consider what she has said this afternoon.

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): Will my right hon. Friend pay some attention to the fact that the Procedure Committee has now been appointed and has met, but that we await a reply from the Government in respect of a number of reports that have already been made? It would be helpful to the progress of the work of that Committee if those replies could be made as soon as possible.

Mr. Newton: Let me take this opportunity to congratulate my hon. Friend on his re-election as Chairman of that important Committee. He knows that I am anxious to make progress on these matters, which concern, among other things, some useful possible changes in the arrangements for petitions. I hope to respond to my hon. Friend quite quickly.

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth): Does the Leader of the House recall that the President of the Board of Trade assured the House from that very Dispatch Box that, during the review of the 10 pits, no miner would suffer in terms of benefits and payments? Is he further aware that British Coal announced yesterday that it will not be paying what is known as the Christmas bonus, on the ground that the miners are not working underground? I have confirmation of that in a letter from the Minister. Will he drag the President of the Board of Trade away from his lunch and to the Dispatch Box so that we can debate the disgraceful nature of this Scrooge-like decision?

Mr. Newton: This is the latest in what must by now be a long line of occasions on which I have been invited to drag the President of the Board of Trade to the House. I do not think that I can undertake to do that, but I can certainly undertake to bring to my right hon. Friend's attention what the hon. Gentleman has just said.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): Has the Leader of the House seen early-day motions 991, 992 and 1040?

[That this House is concerned that for the last 10 years Councillor J. Brooks has been Labour Leader of Monklands District Council, where with the help of the local Labour Party he has achieved a position of near absolute power

which has resulted in (1) a £1 million land deal for a company owned by Councillor Brooks and his brother, whereby the company acquired council land for £50,000 and forced through planning permission to make the land worth more than £1 million the payment of generous fees to Councillor Brooks and his brother and other expenses followed by the company being placed in liquidation with unpaid bills to third party creditors of over £200,000, (2) the employment by the Council of Councillor Brooks' son in Direct Works, another son in the Planning Department and a daughter in a temporary post, (3) the sacking from council employment of Labour Party member Tom McFarlane at 51 years of age, believed to be the only Monklands District Council worker ever made redundant without being offered alternative employment, because he and his wife had dared to question the internal procedures of the local Labour Party and its corrupt rule of the Council and (4) the attempt by Councillor Brooks to cover up the mafia-like behaviour of himself and other Labour councillors by seeking to obtain council funding for legal fees for a private libel action against the local newspaper and by starting a council-owned free newspaper; believes that other allegations about relationships between the expenditure of council money and benefits to Councillor Brooks and his family need to be independently investigated; and is further concerned that the manner in which the Labour party is governing local councils in Scotland is against the public interest and requires to be independently investigated.]

May we have an early opportunity to debate the behaviour of Monklands district council—and, in particular, the Labour leader of that council—so that the Leader of the Opposition and the shadow Secretary of State for Scotland can give us their views on the conduct of the council?

Mr. Newton: I made some observations on that matter a few moments ago, albeit wearing a slightly different hat. I shall not add to them, except to say that my hon. Friend will recall that the first items of business that I announced for next week were the motion for the Christmas Adjournment and the proceedings on the Consolidated Fund Bill. I leave it to him to decide whether on the former he might argue that the House should not adjourn until the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) has had an opportunity to say something about the matter.

Mr. John Spellar (Warley, West): Has the Leader of the House taken note of the considerable and growing concern expressed by hon. Members on both sides of the House about private wheel clamping? Will he make time next week for the Home Secretary to make a statement about the instigation of the public consultation that has been promised for so long?

Mr. Newton: I am aware that a number of comments —some of them criticisms—have been made on that subject, and also that it is one that the hon. Gentleman has been pursuing. I shall bring to the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary the point that he has just made.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): As it cannot really matter whether we debate the Prisoners and Criminal Proceedings (Scotland) Bill next week or when we come back after Christmas, may I urge my right hon. Friend to think again about the business for next week and give us a debate on foreign affairs? It really would be appalling if Sarajevo fell during the Christmas recess and the House had not debated the matter.

Mr. Newton: I cannot promise my hon. Friend the debate that he seeks but, to echo something that I just said, it is clear that there are a number of opportunities between now and the recess on which my hon. Friend and other hon. Members could make known their anxieties on that matter.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): Can we have an urgent statement by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland concerning the scandalous suggestion that water privatisation should be within the trade? Would that not repeat the folly of electricity privatisation, since we have discovered that contributions deducted from workers' wages to pay for their electricity bills were used by a purchaser of one of the businesses to pay for that business?

Mr. Newton: I shall draw the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State to the matter that the hon. Gentleman raises.

Mrs. Elizabeth Peacock (Batley and Spen): Will my right hon. Friend consider whether he could ask our right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade to make a brief statement in the House next week about progress on the coal closure issue? Following on from the question of the hon. Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Enright), I think that there is much concern and not a little confusion about exactly what is happening, and whether British Coal is taking the correct action.

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend's concern for those matters is well known and well documented. She will be aware that my right hon. Friend gave evidence to a Select Committee earlier this week, in which a number of further points were raised, which I hope made it clear that the review is genuine and real, and not simply a rubber-stamping exercise.

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that a petition containing half a million signatures was handed to Downing street this morning to save St. Bart's hospital from closure? Now that Londoners have delivered their democratic verdict, will he ensure that the Secretary of State for Health comes to the Dispatch Box next week to announce that Professor Tomlinson's mad, bad and sad proposal to close that hospital will be assigned to the dustbin of medical history?

Mr. Newton: I hope that, in giving a more measured response than the hon. Gentleman's question, I shall not be misunderstood if I say that it is well recognised—I am not commenting on a particular proposal—that it is right to deal with the balance between primary care and other forms of health spending in London against the background of a long period in which health care in London has received far more per head of population than that in other parts of the country. I do not think that it is wrong to examine issues arising from that.

As far as the specific case is concerned, I have no doubt that my right hon. Friend will be aware of the petition and will take it into account, but she is considering a wide variety of issues and representations and intends to respond in a proper, measured way in the new year.

Mr. James Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): Does my right hon. Friend accept that his announcement on the timetable for the Education Bill will be widely welcomed? As he said, about 61 hours have been spent on the Bill and only 5 per cent. of it has been achieved. We are anxious to make progress, despite the filibustering efforts of Opposition Members. In his statement, my right hon. Friend referred to the fact that, unprecedentedly, two days were spent discussing the Bill on Second Reading. Will he agree to a further two days being spent on the Bill on Report?

Mr. Newton: I note my hon. Friend's request and endorse some of his earlier comments. We shall consider what should be in the motion that we shall invite the House to endorse—I deliberately reply in general terms—and that will be against the background that what we did at Second Reading clearly demonstrates that there is no question that we are seeking arbitrarily to curtail discussion of the Bill, but rather that we are seeking to provide a proper opportunity for it to be discussed sensibly.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): Will the Leader of the House arrange for the President of the Board of Trade and the Attorney-General to make early statements about the protection given to would-be holidaymakers? Is he aware of a letter that I received today from the Prime Minister, which confirmed that the Government knew that Land Travel had liabilities over assets totalling £2·1 million a year before the collapse of that firm? The letter states:

"the Department of Trade and Industry did in fact receive a complaint about Land Travel in August last year . . . the Department had overlooked this letter when they were consulted over"

my earlier correspondence to the Prime Minister. In the light of that, and given that that company must have been trading illegally, does the right hon. Gentleman agree that compensation should be provided to those who lost their savings, and that early criminal action for fraud should be taken?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman will appreciate, in view of some of the points he made, and particularly his suggestion of possible criminal charges, that I must respond cautiously. I shall make sure that the President of the Board of Trade is aware of what he said. I should perhaps make it clear that the Department of Trade and Industry has no general monitoring role in relation to companies; nor is it responsible for scrutinising company accounts.

Mrs. Angela Knight (Erewash): I thank my right hon. Friend for announcing the timetable motion on the Education Bill. Is he aware of the concern that is felt by Conservative members of the Standing Committee at the fact that the Bill has been taking, on average, six hours per clause—which, at the current rate of progress, would have meant 1,300 hours in Committee? Is he also aware of the great concern of many parents in my constituency that so much time should have been spent on a handful of clauses rather than the Committee getting on with the proper job of scrutinising the Bill?

Mr. Newton: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for a singularly striking statistic, which shows that we are being reasonable in proposing that there should be a different way of making progress with the Bill.

Miss Joan Lester (Eccles): Bearing in mind the almost universal and informed criticism of the Government's lukewarm response to the Warner report, dealing with the plight of many children in residential care, may I ask the right hon. Gentleman for an assurance that that report will be debated at the earliest possible moment? Is he aware that, unless its recommendations are carried out quickly, more children will suffer at the hands of people who are not trained to deal with them but are there simply to abuse them, since the vetting processes for people looking after children in care are very poor indeed?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Lady, who has taken a long and careful interest in those matters over many years, will be aware that, far from dragging her feet—to summarise the suggestion in the hon. Lady's question—the Secretary of State for Health has already instructed local authorities to take immediate action on that aspect and to report back to her by Easter. I do not regard that as foot-dragging.

Mr. Richard Alexander (Newark): Can my right hon. Friend advise the House of likely timings for discussions on the reform of Sunday trading? He will be aware that a Bill, of which I am a sponsor, is currently being published by my hon. Friend the Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman), and that there is another Bill in the name of the hon. Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell). Is my right hon. Friend aware that it would be sensible for the Government to introduce their own proposals in debate before wasting time on private Members' legislation which would probably prove to be unnecessary?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend will know that, in addition to the measures to which he referred, there is another with a somewhat different purpose due for debate early in the new year. I shall bring his remarks to the attention of the Home Secretary, who has made it clear that it is not possible at present to take a decision quite in the way that my hon. Friend suggests, not least because we have not yet had the judgment of the European Court of Justice.

Mr. Richard Burden (Birmingham, Northfield): I draw the attention of the Leader of the House to early-day motion 615 dealing with the Caring Costs campaign.

[That this House welcomes the launch of Caring Costs, the campaign for an independent income for carers, which has the backing of 45 voluntary organisations and charities; recognises the substantial contribution made to community care by Britain's six million carers; and urges the Government both to review the level of financial support given to older carers and hold a debate on the financial aspects of providing care and support at home.]

Is he aware that that motion today received its 150th signature, confirming the support it has in all parts of the House? Carers save the country £24 billion a year, yet are racked with poverty, although they provide care for 24 hours a day, seven days a week? Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is time we had an early debate on the subject, as is clearly requested by many hon. Members?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman will know that we have invested much effort over a long period into improving matters for carers, and we expect further improvements as a result of the move to community care from April onwards. This is a subject about which I know something, having played a part, in a former incarnation,

in making a number of significant improvements in social security benefits for carers, which now involve expenditure in their support of £260 million a year.

Mr. Harry Greenway: (Ealing, North): Will my right hon. Friend arrange a debate next week on pedestrian safety? Could the motion take account of the people of Northolt, who have great problems arising from the opening of the Hayes bypass, which is pouring large amounts of traffic into Northolt? Could it be coupled with concern for Hanwell, where the children of Hartmain school have been to see me to seek a pedestrian crossing in Greenford avenue, where the traffic is very dangerous for them?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend's question is, as ever, a tribute to his vigour in pursuit of his constituents' interests. He seems to have raised points that would classically be the focus of the Christmas Adjournment debate on the Consolidated Fund Bill.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): May I draw attention to early-day motion 1041 on delegated legislation?

[That this House notes with alarm that over three thousand statutory instruments have been issued so far in 1992 and that this quantity of delegated legislation is unprecedented in the history of Parliament; regrets that the Government is reluctant to grant time for debate on Prayers against such instruments, and that affirmative instruments can be debated even before the Joint or Select Committees exercise their scrutiny; further regrets that any change in this arbitrary and unhelpful procedure has been rejected by the Leader of the House; and concludes that the increased burden of statutory rules, regulations and orders comes from a Government dedicated to arbitrary, centralised and undemocratic control.]

Will the Government make a statement devoted to removing regulations from the backs of small businesses and other organisations, because the Government have issued 3,000 statutory instruments in the past calendar year, which is an unprecedented number in the history of Parliament? Moreover, they are still being issued. Will the Leader of the House recognise that such a statement would be handy in providing an opportunity for hon. Members to debate prayers against statutory instruments to make up for the significant democratic deficit that exists in the scrutiny of the huge flood of statutory instruments which the Government are producing?

Mr. Newton: May I reply in a slightly different tone by paying tribute to the work of the hon. Gentleman and his Committee for their detailed work in that area for the House? I shall do what I can, within practical limitations, to ensure that his Committee's work continues to be effective.

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): Is my right hon. Friend aware of the deep sense of outrage among parents of children with special educational needs at the statement by the deputy leader of the Labour party that the section of the Education Bill on special educational needs was not part of the "meat" of the Bill? Is that not why we need a timetable motion for the Bill? Will he ensure that that section of the Bill receives adequate time for proper scrutiny and debate, because Conservative members of the Committee wish to see that the interests and needs of those children are taken fully into account?

Mr. Newton: I very much endorse what my hon. Friend says. From my constituency experience, I am well aware that many parents with some of the most difficult problems see the special needs provisions of the Bill as a key element of it and a good reason for getting on with it.

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): Is the Leader of the House aware of the announcement that has been made this afternoon by means of a planted question that tells the House that 182 jobs are to be removed from the royal naval ordnance depot at Eaglescliffe in Stockton, Cleveland? Is he aware that this is the second time that the Ministry of Defence has betrayed the Cleveland community in less than 18 months? Is he further aware that that announcement has been made in a surreptitious way after meetings at which the Minister of State for the Armed Forces undertook to give the basis of the costings on which Admiral Pulvertaft founded his so-called recommendations?

Will the Leader of the House seek to bring the Minister of State to the Dispatch Box where he can be questioned openly, in public, about the falseness of the advice that he has received from the treacherous mandarins in his Department?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman no doubt has, as I have, a copy of the answer that my hon. Friend the Minister of State has given. It makes it absolutely clear that my hon. Friend has thoroughly conducted the required consultation and carefully considered the points that were raised, but has nevertheless come to that decision.

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): My right hon. Friend will be aware that the European single market commences on 1 January, and that a number of freight forwarders and customs clearance agents in my constituency will lose their jobs as a result of their work no longer being required. My right hon. Friend will also be aware that I have received assurances from the Department of Employment that moneys will be made available for retraining purposes and that money will be made available through the European social fund. I understand that the Government will ensure that that money is available.

There is no evidence that the money will trickle down to the companies and people who will be made redundant. Can my right hon. Friend give an assurance that, if necessary, the House will be recalled, so that we can call the Ministers and civil servants to the Bar of the House if the money is not made available to the companies for the benefit of those who will be made redundant?

Mr. Newton: I hope that my hon. Friend will understand if I do not immediately give him the undertaking that he requests. I am sure that he will accept that I will ensure that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment is made aware of the point that he has made.

Mrs. Barbara Roche (Hornsey and Wood Green): Will the Leader of the House make time for his right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary to come to the House and make a statement about security in London, given that two bomb explosions occurred in Wood Green in my constituency this morning? I have just returned to the House from visiting the scenes of the explosions. A number of members of the public and police officers have

[Mrs. Barbara Roche]

been injured. I am glad to be able to report to the House that all of those members of the public and police officers have now been released from hospital.

I should like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the police and the emergency services who responded so promptly and efficiently to this absolutely contemptible and cowardly attack.

Mr. Newton: The House will appreciate both the reasons for the hon. Lady raising that matter and the way in which she has done so. I will ensure that my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary is made aware of both matters.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): Is there any possibility of having a debate on either the Edinburgh summit or the GATT round to enable hon. Members to point out gently to our French partners that Europe has consumers of food as well as producers? French farmers, who expect to export a high proportion of what they produce, have no right to block the exports of others, be it grain from the United States or lamb from Britain.

Can we have an opportunity to make the point that European consumers already heavily subsidise French farmers and have no right whatever to insist that European consumers buy French food? European consumers should be free to buy the food of their choice.

Mr. Newton: I am not sure that I have the standing to undertake to draw remarks to the attention of a Minister in another country, but I hope that my hon. Friend's remarks are read in France as well as in the United Kingdom. As to opportunities to raise such matters, I anticipate that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister will wish to report to the House following the Edinburgh Council, which is about to get under way.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Given recent events, is it not time that the royal prerogative powers on the dissolution of Parliament, the appointment of Ministers and the signing of treaties and Bills were discussed in the House with a view to them being taken over by the House and perhaps exercised by Madam Speaker rather than by the Crown?

Mr. Newton: I have no plans to bring about such a discussion or a proposal.

Mr. Eric Pickles (Brentwood and Ongar): Will my right hon. Friend persuade the Secretary of State for Education to come to the House to make a statement on teacher numbers, which is necessary following a press release issued by the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) which suggested that teacher numbers have gone down? It is a fact that teacher numbers have gone up. I am sure that the hon. Member for Blackburn would want to use the occasion to congratulate the Government on achieving such record numbers.

Mr. Newton: On the latter part of the question, I can only say that hope springs eternal. I share my hon. Friend's hopes. I can promise him a splendid opportunity to raise such matters next week, because my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is due to answer questions on Tuesday.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Is it possible for a debate to take place, if not next week, then shortly after we return, about the way in which Government Departments are increasingly seen, with justification, as virtually an extension of Conservative central office? That was witnessed by the way in which the passport records of President-elect Clinton were examined to see whether he had applied for United Kingdom citizenship. Apparently, he had not. Should we not be worried about not so much one particular town—which Tory Members have been on about this week—but the way in which the Government of the day are corrupting public life by using Government Departments in the way I have just described?

Mr. Newton: When one contemplates what has happened in some Labour local authorities over the years, the hon. Gentleman's point seems pretty strange. I can only say, and I do so with feeling, that, from my own fairly considerable experience as a Minister, the hon. Gentleman's suggestion that civil servants allow themselves to be treated as an extension of central office is totally at variance with the facts.

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): May I draw my right hon. Friend's attention to the amendment that I have tabled to the Housing and Urban Development Bill, in which I seek to extend the right to buy to tenants of former Greater London council homes? They gave up their homes on the understanding that they were being transferred to the seaside to take up accommodation which was wholly the same as that of tenants of all other local authorities, to whom the right to buy has been extended. They have since been deprived of the right to buy and are unhappy about it.

As my right hon. Friend is something of a wise owl in such matters and was helpful to me last week, will he give me his advice on how I might persuade the Government to take up that necessary reform, which would affect the constituents of many hon. Members?

Mr. Newton: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's kind words. There must be some limit to the extent to which I can offer him advice, helpful or otherwise, on the Floor of the House. However, I should be surprised if my hon. Friend could not find some opportunity to raise the matter during the passage of the Housing and Urban Development Bill. In any case, I am sure that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment will read the words that my hon. Friend has uttered.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): In view of all the statements that were made and the questions that were asked at Prime Minister's Question Time, and as the Government refuse to allow local authorities to build homes for people on the streets, would it not be a good idea at Christmas when we pack up for three and a half weeks to shift the rough sleepers in the House of Lords and put in the rough sleepers off the streets? At least one palace —or at least a few rooms—is going empty, and that accommodation could be used.

If any more homeless want accommodation, they can have three and a half weeks here. There are all these empty Benches. The place is warm and well lit. The people would have accommodation, a canteen and all the facilities they need. If the Government are really concerned about the homeless, they should get it going.

Mr. Newton: I am not sure that those in another place will regard that as an entirely helpful and friendly suggestion. However, I shall certainly make sure that my colleague the Lord Privy Seal is made aware of the elegant way in which the hon. Gentleman put it.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Will the Leader of the House read the proceedings of European Standing Committee A yesterday? A Member of the House who is not a member of the Committee was able to walk in under the umbrella of a commercial consultancy. On matters relating to that consultancy, he asked detailed questions of a Minister which the Minister was required to answer because of the questioning procedure of that Standing Committee.

What happened was——

Madam Speaker: Order. May I remind the hon. Gentleman that, if an hon. Member was in a Committee, he was surely there in his own right as an elected Member of Parliament. That should be placed on the record.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: That is absolutely correct, but he was also acting under the umbrella of his consultancy. Although what happened was in order, and the hon. Gentleman did not break any rules of the House, is it not clear that that procedure, as it was exercised yesterday, is incorrect?

While it is of great benefit to Parliament that Members can ask questions in detail, surely some discipline must be exercised personally by Members not to abuse procedures in that way or the Procedure Committee should re-examine the procedure with a view to some reform.

Mr. Newton: I think that you would agree, Madam Speaker, that, as I have not read the report to which the hon. Gentleman referred, it would be wrong for me to make any immediate response. I will read it, however.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): Will the Leader of the House arrange a debate next week so that we can congratulate all concerned on the continuation of semiconductor manufacturing in my constituency, and also to examine the worrying claims in today's *Electronic Times*? It is said that INMOS—International Metal Oxide Semiconductors—which was valued at £120 million 10 years ago, was sold to a Hong Kong company for less than £6 million; that the Government are prepared to assist the company with a maximum of £3 million, whereas the French and Italian Governments have invested tens of millions of pounds; and that the manufacture of the British-controlled, British-invested transputer will not be conducted in Newport in future, but will take place abroad.

Will the Leader of the House give a guarantee that the new company, Newport Wafer Fab, can look forward to at least the same amount of confidence, support, encouragement and investment from the British Government as the French and Italian companies are given by their Governments?

Mr. Newton: For slightly different reasons, I shall respond nearly as cautiously to the hon. Gentleman as I responded a few moments ago to his hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours). I can, however, reply in general terms, as well as ensuring that my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade is aware of what the hon. Gentleman has said. As has been clearly shown, the Government will continue to take a range of actions designed to encourage British manufacturing industry in that and other sectors.

Mr. Alan Milburn (Darlington): Will the Leader of the House find time next week for us to debate the Government's regional policy, in the light of the announcement made by his right hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces about the closure of the Eaglescliffe depot? As the Leader of the House will realise, that announcement will have been received with considerable alarm and disbelief in the north-east—not just because this is the second time in 12 months that the region has been let down, but because the skills and expertise of many of my constituents who work at Eaglescliffe have been insulted by the Government's latest decision.

Is the Leader of the House aware that the decision to close the Eaglescliffe facility runs completely against the grain of the Government's declared intent to switch jobs from south to north, and to narrow regional inequalities rather than widening them?

Madam Speaker: Order. Let me issue a long overdue reminder. Hon. Members should be questioning the Leader of the House's statement and asking him to change next week's business; this is not simply a continuation of Question Time. Would the Leader of the House like to make some response?

Mr. Newton: I shall reply briefly, in the light of your strictures, Madam Speaker. Although I well understand why the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Milburn) has raised the subject of Eaglescliffe, I cannot add to what I said earlier to his hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, North (Mr. Cook)—except to say that the Government have put considerable effort into bringing new employment to the north-east, as the hon. Gentleman will know from contacts that he and I had in previous incarnations.

Mr. Andrew Miller (Ellesmere Port and Neston): The Leader of the House has told us that the Environmental Information Regulations will be discussed next week. May I draw his attention to column 836 of yesterday's *Hansard*? The Minister for the Environment and Countryside, who has just left the Chamber, said in answer to a question that the environmental toxic waste regulations should be examined. I have been told, in answer to a question that I posed to the Minister, that the regulations are not yet available. In view of next week's debate, will the Leader of the House impress on his colleague the fact that they should be placed in the Library at the earliest opportunity? I understand that they are in public circulation.

Mr. Newton: I shall certainly look into that, and I shall draw the hon. Gentleman's remarks to the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Mr. Andrew Mackinlay (Thurrock): Will the Leader of the House arrange for a statement to be made before the recess about the haemorrhaging of rail freight from British Rail? Hon. Members on both sides of the House are concerned about that, and also about the state of the manufacturing industries that build our carriages and rolling stock. It has become abundantly clear to the Select Committee that both the rolling stock industry and rail freight are haemorrhaging. Unless ministerial action

[Mr. Andrew Mackinlay]

arrests the process, we are about to lose an important British industry, and the loss of rail freight could lead to Beeching-style cuts in our rail structure with no consideration of the matter by the House of Commons.

The matter will not keep until the new year. May we have a statement next week about the danger to our railway structure and industries?

Mr. Newton: I cannot undertake to provide time for a debate of the kind that the hon. Gentleman seeks, but I know from my contacts with other hon. Members that his concern has been expressed elsewhere. I have specifically drawn it to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport.

Mr. Mike O'Brien (Warwickshire, North): Will the Leader of the House arrange for an investigation and a statement by the appropriate Minister into the winding up of the pension scheme of the Burlington International Group, leaving a deficiency of £6·5 million and affecting more than 1,000 people, many of them my constituents? They will not be able to get the pensions that they had every right to expect and to hope for. We have seen the same with Maxwell and too many other companies. Is it not time that the Government introduced regulations to prevent the plundering of so-called surpluses from those pension schemes?

Mr. Newton: I am not in a position to comment on the specific case, but I imagine that the hon. Gentleman may have taken it up with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security, or that he intends to do so. On the more general point, he will know that the Government have taken substantial steps to improve the protection of pension funds over the years but in the wake of the Maxwell case have appointed a substantial inquiry to review that. It is operating on as speedy a time scale as can properly be expected.

Adjournment of the House

4.10 pm

Madam Speaker: I have a short statement to make to remind hon. Members that on the motion for the Adjournment of the House on Thursday 17 December up to nine hon. Members may raise with Ministers subjects of their own choice.

Applications should reach my Office by 10 pm on Monday next. A ballot will be held on Tuesday morning and the result made known as soon as possible thereafter.

Points of Order

4.11 pm

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I know that you are most concerned to ensure that major Government decisions are announced to the House so that hon. Members have the opportunity to question Ministers. Today, the Secretary of State for Employment has announced that she is abandoning Government funding of trade union ballots and of training for trade union officials. The Government fund the training of the other side of management but are not, apparently, willing to fund the training of the people who will be on the other side of the negotiating table. The funding of trade union ballots, which Lady Thatcher introduced, is apparently to be abolished by the present allegedly more concerned Government.

A statement should have been made on these important matters, either today, when there is no statement other than the business statement, or on Tuesday, when the Secretary of State replied to our Opposition day motion on unemployment, and when again there was no statement. The decision was clearly made then, and it seems to us to be wholly unreasonable that the Secretary of State is not willing to explain why the Government have reached these appalling decisions.

Madam Speaker: As the hon. Gentleman will understand, there has been no breach of our Standing Orders or of our procedures. The matter therefore is not one for the Speaker.

Mr. Dobson: Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. Your predecessors and you yourself have been keen to ensure that hon. Members have the opportunity to question Ministers on such matters. There will not be any opportunity to question the Secretary of State for Employment until well after Christmas. That is at variance with normal practice, even if it is not out of order.

Madam Speaker: I have made it clear on a number of occasions in this House that I deplore statements being made outside the House rather than to hon. Members. I stand by that. When major changes are made, they should be announced first in the House so that a statement can be questioned. But, as the hon. Gentleman and the House know, I have no authority on these matters, which is why I simply said, so as not to waste the time of the House, that there had been no breach of our Standing Orders or of our procedures. I have previously made my views known very clearly on these matters. Perhaps, if the hon. Gentleman had been present for business questions, he might have put that question to the Leader of the House.

Mr. Dobson: Further to my point of order, Madam Speaker. Business questions were within two questioners of coming to an end before I received the information that I have now. I am, however, grateful to you for once more saying that it is best for Ministers to come and face the music.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): Do you not agree, Madam Speaker, that one of your prime roles is to ensure that there is good order in the House? Do you also accept that, if the Government continue not to take any notice of your warnings to them that when they are making important statements they should make them in

the House and not to the Press outside, the only recourse for Opposition Members is to raise points of order and to make a fuss? That does not, on the whole, reflect well on the House. It seems to me that it is very important that, rather than forcing the Opposition into such tactics, the Government should take note of your warning and make sure that on every possible occasion they make statements to the House.

Madam Speaker: Only today, 12 answers have been given to written questions by the Government. It is outside my control whether the Government give written answers to questions or make oral statements in the House. I have noted what the hon. Gentleman has said.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Do not the complications that are caused for the Chair arise from the fact that, when major statements are made in this way outside the House, hon. Members go to the Table Office, for which you have responsibility, and put questions down—about trade union ballots, say—not knowing that a major change has taken place? Complications can ensue for any hon. Member who tries to table a question on something that has changed on the day without his knowing about it.

That is where the Chair becomes involved, because a Member can take that question that is turned down by the Table Office to the Speaker. I think that the Government ought to bear in mind the fact that, when major changes take place, those complications are created. The trade unions now have only one recourse—to refuse to hold these ballots which the Government decided upon years ago.

Madam Speaker: Order. This was a parliamentary answer. It is not for the Speaker to work out the criteria for what is major and what is not major in these matters.

BILL PRESENTED

NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE (FREEDOM OF SPEECH)

Mr. Derek Fatchett, supported by Robert Ainsworth, Mr. John Battle, Mrs. Anne Campbell, Mr. Jim Cousins, Mr. Jim Cunningham, Mr. Ian Davidson, Mr. Terry Davis, Mr. Alan Milburn, Ms. Dawn Primarolo, Mr. Terry Rooney, and Mr. Mike Watson, presented a Bill to guarantee National Health Service and related staff freedom of speech on issues of patient and client care; to require the Secretary of State to specify procedures for the expression and investigation of concerns and to provide for the implementation of such procedures; to provide for the drawing up of a Charter setting out the rights and duties of staff; to set up a system of independent appeals; and for connected purposes: And the same was read a First time, and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 29 January 1993; and to be printed. [Bill 102.]

Orders of the Day

ESTIMATES DAY

[1ST ALLOTTED DAY, 1ST PART]

CLASS VII

Coastal Zone Protection

[Relevant documents: The Second Report from the Environment Committee of Session 1991-92 on Coastal Zone Protection and Planning (HC 17) and the Government's reply thereto (Cm. 2011).]

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That a sum not exceeding £17,763,619,000 be granted to Her Majesty out of the Consolidated Fund, on account, for or towards defraying the charges for civil services, in Class VII, for the year ending on 31st March 1994, as set out in the House of Commons Paper No. 232 of Session 1992-93.—[Mr. Maclean.]

4.19 pm

Mr. Robert B. Jones (Hertfordshire, West): It is a great privilege to be able to introduce this debate, particularly since it is the first opportunity that I have had to pay a tribute to my predecessor, Sir Hugh Rossi, under whose chairmanship this report was produced in April. Sir Hugh was a very distinguished public servant, both as a Minister and, latterly, as the Chairman of the Select Committee on the Environment. I believe that history will say that he had a unique influence on environmental legislation in this country. His is a very hard act to follow, and I am delighted that I had a piece of my apprenticeship under his chairmanship.

I begin by summarising what the Committee said in its report, as I think that that will be of assistance to the House. The report was published in April this year. The Committee chose to take a broad and integrated view of coastal issues and the multitude of bodies, including Government Departments, local authorities and public agencies, which have policies, responsibilities or interests in the coastal zone.

Throughout the inquiry Government officials stressed repeatedly that existing arrangements for coast protection and sea defence were working extremely well. Of course, that was not the view of the vast majority of witnesses in the evidence that they submitted to us. Perhaps the discrepancy is because of the traditional arguments between Departments over such matters—I am thinking especially of the relationship between the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Department of the Environment.

After the Committee had heard the evidence, the main conclusions of its report were that coastal protection, planning and management in the United Kingdom had suffered centuries of unco-ordinated decisions and actions—perhaps better described as "inactions"—at national and local levels; that there are inadequacies in the legislation, anomalies in the planning system, a lack of central guidance, and overlapping policies and responsibilities among a host of bodies with poor co-ordination between them.

We concluded that the reasons for such failings were partly a result of the pattern of ownership of the coastal zone and partly because the boundaries separating the

[Mr. Robert B. Jones]

administrative authorities are not meaningful in terms of natural coastal processes and the consequences on one part of the coast of interference in another.

The Committee is certain that there is no single panacea to resolve all the problems currently experienced in the coastal zone, but we are equally convinced that the complexity of the current situation demands a more comprehensive and integrated approach than is presently being taken. We therefore supported the overall perspective commonly known as "coastal zone management", or CZM for short.

Coastal zone management aims to balance demands for coastal zone resources, to promote their sustainable use and, as far as possible, to resolve conflicts of use by integrated planning and management within coastal cells that are defined by natural coastal dynamics rather than administrative tidiness.

Britain is fortunate in having the building blocks for an integrated coastal zone management approach: a whole range of bodies is committed to the concept, and existing coastal groups and forums could be adapted to take on new coastal zone management roles. The Committee therefore concluded its report by recommending that coastal zone management, delivered through a "cascade" of national, regional and local coastal zone management plans, is the key to sustaining the future use, enjoyment and ecology of the coastal zone.

The Government's response dealt with a number, although not all, of the issues. Perhaps it would be helpful if I also summarised what the Government said. It was significant that, at the start of our inquiry, our request for evidence from the Department of the Environment resulted in a memorandum that set out for the first time a full statement of the Government's policies and activities for coastal zone protection and planning. It is one of the features of the Select Committee system that, almost as soon as a Committee embarks on an inquiry, there is a flurry of activity in the Departments involved and a rationalisation of existing policies. If the Committee achieved nothing else, that is a powerful achievement to its credit.

Equally welcome was the Government's response to the Committee's report that was published last July. That document is a considered and well-written response, and we were heartened to read that the Government considered our report to be

"a valuable contribution to the debate on coastal zone protection and planning."

The Government accepted several, although not all, of our recommendations. In particular, we were pleased that they accepted the need for local coastal management plans as a vehicle for implementing national policies and for such plans to be incorporated into the statutory plan system. The intention to promote multi-agency estuary and coastal management plans is most welcome.

It is encouraging that the Government accept that strategic consideration of environmental issues must cross the land-sea divide. While not wholly in accord with our recommendation to extend local authority planning powers to the 12-mile limit, the Government agree to "take the debate further" by issuing a discussion paper. We are told that the paper will also consider the form and scope of coastal management plans, and we look forward to receiving the Government's proposals for consultation in due course.

We were also encouraged that the Government agreed to consider the Committee's views in their review of the marine aggregates licensing procedures and their review of the mineral planning guidance note 6 on the provision of aggregates. We were pleased to learn that such a review would also discuss the continuing role of the Crown Estate in that matter.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): Will the hon. Gentleman recognise that one thing that ought to be considered in that review is the situation at Druridge Bay in Northumberland, which was drawn to the Committee's attention, where sand continues to be dug from the beach on the basis of a planning decision granted on appeal decades ago and the Government still consider that the local authority should find what might be unlimited sums for compensation arising from a decision that it never took?

Mr. Jones: The right hon. Gentleman would not expect me to go into detail on a constituency point, but there are deficiencies and I believe that my hon. Friend the Member for the Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) wants to go into that if he catches Madam Speaker's eye. That is the purpose of the review and I hope that these issues will be addressed.

The Government are also reviewing permitted development rights accorded to the port and harbour authorities under the General Development Order and will consider subjecting certain activities to environmental assessment, which I welcome. The Government agree with the Committee that the application of environmental assessments in the coastal zone could be improved.

Other areas where the Government and the Committee are of the same mind include, first, the value of "controlled retreat" as an attractive option in certain cases, and the need to support research and development in this area; secondly, the extension of grant-aid provision to beach management schemes as well as capital coastal works—we found that the existing grant system favoured "hard" engineering works above the more environmentally-friendly "soft" works; thirdly, better protection for conservation areas that straddle the interface between land and sea, especially in the context of the new European Community habitats directive; fourthly, the advantages of protective ownership for coastal land in achieving conservation objectives; and fifthly, the need to clarify the role of the many agencies involved in monitoring, regulating and cleaning up marine pollution.

Finally, in response to our recommendation for greater co-ordination of information and research on the coastal zone, the Government produced a most useful summary of the various information networks and databases operated by different bodies, and as such represents a source of reference in its own right.

There were, of course, several of the Committee's recommendations that the Government rejected, and these remain outstanding issues for debate. For example, we were disappointed that the Government saw no need for a national coastal strategy. We urge the Government to reconsider this matter, since a national strategy is essential for setting long-term objectives and targets for coastal policy and for providing an overall framework for coastal management plans. The recent planning policy guidance

on coastal planning, although a welcome development, is no substitute for a national coastal strategy that sets out policies and priorities and guides the allocation of national coastal resources and local coastal plans.

The Government also refused to accept the Committee's argument that there is widespread duplication of responsibilities or poor co-ordination between the many bodies involved with the coast. While it acknowledges the need for a national overview of coastal policy, it rejects our recommendation for the creation of a national coastal zone unit, arguing that co-ordination can be achieved via the existing interdepartmental group at official level. I find it difficult to accept that as we shall find it difficult to monitor the work of this group because we understand from the Minister that it will meet in private.

It came as no shock to the Committee that its recommendation that coastal defence policy be taken away from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food was rejected outright. Nevertheless, we still believe that coastal defence is no longer an appropriate MAFF responsibility, and that the Department of the Environment would provide a more suitable lead on coastal defence issues, operating through the National Rivers Authority.

May I, Madam Deputy Speaker, welcome you to the Chair at this point, as I know of your particular interest in the coast. It is rather ironic that I should open this debate since I believe that my constituency of West Hertfordshire is about as far from the coast as it is possible to be. But of course the maritime tradition of our nation is such that nearly all of us have a particular interest in concern about the marine environment. We stated in the opening sentence of our report:

"Coastal zone protection and planning cannot be reviewed in isolation; they are inextricably linked to the administration and management of the many activities and uses of the coastal zone".

We were therefore most concerned that, although the Government will accept boundary and membership changes to the existing coastal groups, they rejected our recommendation for these groups to extend their chiefly engineering role to include coastal zone management. In our view, that represents a failure to integrate coastal defence with the other elements of coastal planning and protection.

The Government rejected the Committee's recommendation that coastal zone plans be based on natural coastal "cells"—on the ground that it was not a practical approach. I am not sure what a practical approach is, if we are to be permitted to pursue diametrically opposed policies on, for example, the north and the south sides of the River Dee because the local authorities concerned happen to have different ideas of what the major tasks for their areas are.

Several developments have taken place since the report was written and the Government responded to it, and I shall now deal with those. The first key development since the Government's response was the publication in September of the planning policy guidance on coastal planning. That is to be welcomed, because it is exactly 20 years since the last planning guidance on coasts was issued. In general, it will be most useful for local planning authorities, but if the Government had chosen to adopt coastal zone management in full that would have promoted a more integrated approach by giving coastal zone management plans a higher profile.

Secondly, the Government have included a section on the coast in the second-year report on "This Common Inheritance". Thirdly, "Agenda 21", from the Earth summit, supports coastal zone management. Fourthly, the Public Accounts Committee published its report on coastal defences in England on 26 November.

We are also aware that earlier this month the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food endorsed support for a more environmental approach to coastal defence, such as facilitating "soft" defence measures—for example, beach replenishment—as part of the strategy for flood and coastal defence currently being developed in consultation with other organisations, which MAFF intends to publish next spring.

I was encouraged by the launch of English Nature's Campaign for a Living Coast on 14 October. That is a long-term conservation programme for the maritime environment, which sets up three task groups to tackle the main problem areas—coasts, estuaries, and marine conservation. Finally, any day now we should receive MAFF's environmental guidelines for coastal works and the guide for local authorities to good practice on coastal planning from the National Coasts and Estuaries Group.

I said that there were a number of outstanding issues, and I shall tackle those now. Judging from the number of developments that I have listed, it is significant that so much has happened since coastal policy came under the scrutiny of the Select Committee on the Environment. Many of those developments were already under way when we began our inquiry, but I should like to think that the Committee has helped to raise the profile of the coastal zone, and contributed to the rate at which coastal initiatives have progressed.

Having painted a fairly full picture of the current coastal scene, I shall now pursue a few issues which I hope that the Minister will consider in his reply. From the United Kingdom angle, although our report made it clear that our findings and recommendations were focused on England and its shared estuaries, we trusted that they also had a nationwide relevance and would be considered for application throughout the United Kingdom. I therefore ask my hon. Friend the Minister to clarify the position in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and to explain the Government's intentions on coastal policy in those countries.

The Government have clearly rejected our proposals for regional coastal zone management plans. It is interesting that, nevertheless, MAFF is encouraging coastal defence authorities to form coastal groups to share experience and develop a strategic approach to coastal defence in their areas, and has also given grants towards regional coastal defence studies, to allow a strategic view to be taken of the options available. It appears that although coastal defence may develop along regional lines, coastal zone management may not.

English Nature supports the Committee in advocating a regional approach to shoreline management, which should include activities other than simple coastal defence. It also supports the restructuring of regional coastal groups to reflect natural rather than local government boundaries. I ask my hon. Friend to clarify that apparent anomaly in the Government's thinking. If he is not prepared to move on the issue of regional coastal zone management plans, will he tell us whether he is prepared to

[Mr. Jones]

compromise by producing regional policy statements or guidance that reflects the different priorities and problems around the United Kingdom?

As the Government have until today set their face against any national overview of coastal zone management and against regionally based plans, but have proposed to encourage the preparation of local management plans for particular stretches of the coast, will my hon. Friend the Minister explain what form that encouragement will take? If the Government are not going to do anything at national level, surely they must be prepared to assist local authorities and other agencies at local level.

We know about the resources that have gone to English Nature for estuary plan support. The Department of the Environment also supports the Mersey estuary plan study through the Mersey Basin campaign at £15,000 over three years to be matched by local authorities, by English Nature and by the National Rivers Authority. The Committee visited the area during our study tour of coastal sites in Sefton. There is much criticism that the level of resourcing will not achieve progress at a sufficient rate despite the considerable enthusiasm among the groups now formed for all the major estuaries in the north-west.

At the European level, the EC has been relatively quiet on the subject of coastal policy, although we are aware that the Commission is preparing a

"comprehensive strategy on integrated management and planning of the Community coastal zones."

Will my hon. Friend bring us up to date on what progress has been made under the United Kingdom presidency of the European Council to develop policy in that area? Is he encouraging EC development proposals on coastal zone management, for example?

On marine conservation legislation, it appears that the Government envisage a non-statutory system, based on marine conservation areas, for some form of management plans and something statutory for sites that need protection under the habitats directive. How will the Government address sites that are important but not of habitats directive standard? Are they to be left to voluntary arrangements, for example, or will they be covered by legislation designed to fulfil the habitats directive?

Planning offshore is also an important issue. The Government said that they would look at the planning system offshore, but in their response to the Committee, they also said that the role of the Crown Estates Commissioners needed to be reviewed only in the case of licensing marine aggregates. As the role of the Crown Estate Commissioners and planning offshore are intimately linked, I do not see how the Government can review one without reviewing the other. Perhaps my hon. Friend the Minister will explain the Government's position on that point.

As I have mentioned, the Government gave a commitment to review the permitted development rights of ports and harbours. Will my hon. Friend tell us the Government's time scale for that? Will he also tell us whether the review will cover only projects requiring environmental assessment or whether it will be wider ranging than that?

The Government agreed with the Committee that there is a need to identify areas at risk from flooding, but they took cover behind their flood risk circular and the work of the National Rivers Authority's Anglian region. It is the NRA which needs to define risk areas, but that is not only a coastal issue, as recent events have shown. I speak rather bitterly, as my own house was flooded in the September floods. Many NRA regions are not able to define up-to-date flood risk areas for incorporation in development plans. One study in East Anglia is all very well, but will my hon. Friend the Minister tell us what is happening in the rest of the country? Is the NRA sufficiently resourced to provide local planning authorities with reliable data that can stand the test of planning appeal inquiries?

The Government have taken some welcome first steps towards a more considered and co-ordinated approach to protecting and planning the many different activities and issues in the coastal zone. However, we are left with the impression that the main thrust of the Committee's report has been somewhat sidestepped. The Government can be accused of failing to take the plunge into a truly holistic approach to coastal zone management and its delivery through a hierarchy of plans that deal with all relevant issues in the coastal zone within meaningful coastal cells. A system such as the one that we recommended would form the linchpin of integrated protection and planning of the coastal zone. Anything else may be determined to be paddling around the edge.

The coast and its protection are important issues for the whole country and not simply for people who live on the coast. Our natural environment there, the facilities for those who spend their leisure time there and the interests of those who have homes and land in the region of the coast are matters for us all. I hope that this debate will provide an ample opportunity to discuss the Committee's thoughts and hon. Members' thoughts in the right context.

4.39 pm

Mr. Gareth Wardell (Gower): I welcome the report of the Select Committee on the Environment, and I am delighted to follow the hon. Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones) who, in his inimitable way, summarised excellently the main points in his Committee's report and in the Government's response to it. I welcome the hon. Gentleman to the Chair of the Select Committee. I am sure that he will follow in the footsteps of his great predecessor in that position and do a tremendous job.

I hope that the Government will do more than pay lip service to the Committee's recommendations. I welcome some of their positive responses but I hope that, following the report on the need for greater protection and planning, their commitment to implementing their promised responses will be much greater than it has been in the past.

My interest in coastal protection relates to the undermining of the marine and coastal environment by the dredging of sand and gravel. In 1990, the Llanelli Sand and Dredging Company applied for a licence to extract 100,000 tonnes of sand a year from Helwick bank, a sand bank just off the south-west point of the Gower coast. It was the first time that the Welsh Office had dealt with an extraction licence application under the Government view procedure. We had great hopes that Wales would take a lead in meeting environmental demands, especially as evidence given at the Environment Committee's sittings was already highlighting inadequacies in the procedures for issuing licences. However, the Secretary of State for Wales gave a

favourable view on the application at the end of October —three months after the Government's response to the Select Committee was published.

I wish to use the example of the licence application at Helwick bank to make three points. First, the way in which the Welsh Office responded to the application says much more about the Government's real attitude to the marine aggregate licensing system than do the promises that they set out in annex A of their response to the Committee's recommendation for a review of the approval process for marine-dredged minerals.

Objections to the issuing of licences at Helwick bank reflected a wide range of informed opinion, including the county council, district and community councils, the south Wales sea fisheries group, the Swansea bay coastal group, the National Rivers Authority, the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations, the National Trust, the Committee for the Protection of Rural Wales and other local conservation groups.

What we all wanted was an environmental assessment before any extraction took place. Sand and gravel take so long to form that they cannot be regarded as a renewable resource. We wanted to know the estimated amounts of exploitable sand and gravel that were in place. We wanted to know what, exactly, was the resource of Helwick bank. We wanted to know about Helwick as an ecological resource.

Two detailed research studies undertaken at Swansea university showed that the sand bank was ecologically important in terms of marine habitat and the food chain. The bank is one of those many spots that the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food may not designate as a significant fishery. Nevertheless, it provides an additional source of income for a few local fishermen who trawl for regular, if not frequent, catches.

We wanted to know about the environmental resource that Helwick comprised. What was the relationship of the bank to the headland, to the shifting sands of the sea bed and to the local beaches, which had definitely been losing sand over a long period? Such information was crucial to the coastal protection of the first area of Britain to be designated as one of outstanding natural beauty.

In annex A of the response to the Select Committee's report, the Government promise to ask for appropriate information to support licence applications, including an environmental statement. That document was published in July this year. The Welsh Office gave a favourable view to the Helwick bank application at the end of October—all of three months later. So much for promises. I hope that the Government's other promised reforms in respect of dredging will be more meaningful.

By not insisting on an environmental assessment before extraction began, the Welsh Office has ensured that it has no baseline against which the information provided under the monitoring conditions can be judged. The strict monitoring conditions will be meaningless because we shall not know what we have before it is subjected to enormous upheaval or destruction. It is impossible to measure how high one has jumped if one does not know where the floor is at the outset.

Sand levels on beaches will be elaborately monitored, and I am glad of that. But let us not fool ourselves: if aerial photographs show that a foot of sand has disappeared from Oxwich bay in six months, no one will be able to prove that dredging has caused it. No one will be able to stop the operations once they have been approved. If the number of bass caught falls in a year or two, no one will be able to prove that stocks are lower because of the destruction of one of the bass nursery areas and feeding grounds at Helwick bank.

Although the Secretary of State for Wales has imposed on the Llanelli Sand and Dredging Company a limit of 100,000 tonnes a year for four years, we must remember that that company is only the first to arrive on the bank. We know that others are waiting to apply for licences. What conditions will be put on those?

That brings me to my second point, which concerns the role of the Crown Estate in the Government view procedure. The Crown Estate has repeatedly said that it wants to move away from its quasi-planning authority role and concentrate on its role as landlord. That was the position that it took in its evidence to the Select Committee.

The Crown Estate is placed in an invidious position in the Government view procedure. As it pointed out in evidence to the Select Committee, the Crown Estate has never gone against a Government view and has always imposed the conditions that the Government had suggested. In practice, therefore, it is the Government who decide whether an extraction licence will be issued. That means that the Government take the credit for an unfavourable view but, as the Secretary of State for Wales told me in a letter dated 8 January last year:

"it is for the Crown Estate Office to grant or refuse production licences"

when the Government's view is favourable. That means that the Crown Estate never gets the credit but always gets the blame for decisions.

I must say that we in Gower regard the Crown Estate as a rather complacent landlord. I do not know many landlords who are so casual with their assets as not to want to know exactly what they are and to maximise their value, but that is how the Crown Estate manages its marine aggregates. If it wants to emphasise its role as a landlord and forgo its purely theoretical role as planning authority for licensing, the Crown Estate should take on the responsibility for managing its own resources. It should assess resources such as Helwick bank, and provide studies, research, information and projections for each project. It should undertake an environmental impact assessment and state, at the time of applying for permission for marine extraction, how much aggregate a year is to be taken, for how many years and by how many sub-contractors.

In short, the Crown Estate should commission a national comprehensive picture of marine aggregate resources and should develop a strategy for extraction which has due regard for ecological, environmental and coastal protection. Such a management system would work much better in the interests of administrative and economic efficiency, in maintaining uniform and high standards and in maximising the value of the resource.

As I have said, other companies are expected to apply for licences to dredge on Helwick bank. How will their applications be evaluated? How can the expensive monitoring programme forced on the Llanelli Sand and Dredging Company possibly have any meaning if another company comes along and dredges another 100,000 tonnes a year—and another, and another? Will all the companies carry out monitoring? If not, why should the Llanelli Sand and Dredging Company pay out just because it was the

[Mr. Gareth Wardell]

first applicant? Or has it been given a monopoly for dredging on Helwick? One can see the confusion which arises when one really looks at this can of worms.

Finally, I want to comment on that part of the Select Committee report which refers to the confusion in coastal protection and coastal planning between the roles of the Department of Environment, or in Wales the Welsh Office, and local authorities. Again Helwick bank provides the illustration. As one of the funding authorities for the Swansea bay coastal study, which shows that not nearly enough is known about the marine environment to permit dredging, Swansea city council was an objector to the licence application. The city wants to prevent dredging at Helwick bank until more is known about coastal erosion in the area. On its own evidence, the city council has a duty to prevent dredging because it is a coastal protection authority.

The council therefore looked to section 18 of the Coast Protection Act 1949 to make an order

"prohibiting the removal of any material on, under, or forming part of the sea shore within their area, or of the sea shore lying to the seaward side of the area but within three nautical miles thereof."

Before any such order can be made, however, the council must prepare and publish a draft order. In the event of any objections—one would expect the dredging company at least to object—the Secretary of State may convene a public inquiry. In other words, in practice it is the Secretary of State who decides the application. As he has already given a favourable view in this case, the Secretary of State will not agree with the city council.

In the response to the Select Committee report, again at annex A, the Government say that they will look at the roles and interaction between the owners of the sea bed, central Government and local authorities. The case of Helwick bank shows the need for such an examination and for remedies to deal with contradictory and inadequate procedures. You, Madam Deputy Speaker, will understand why my constituents in Gower were so disappointed about the Helwick bank decision. We shall be watching with as much interest as the Select Committee to see how quickly the Government will honour the promises that they have made in response to the Select Committee report.

I hope that improved procedures will be in place before the next company applies for a licence to dredge at Helwick bank off my constituency of Gower.

4.53 pm

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones) on his election as Chairman of the Select Committee on the Environment. Following, as he does, in the footsteps of such an illustrious predecessor, I am sure that he too will earn an enviable reputation as a guardian of the nation's environment.

I welcome to our debate this evening my hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment and Countryside. I believe that I am correct in saying that his is the first response in this Parliament to a Select Committee report, which shows, as always, that he is pre-eminent in spotting a trend.

Only the other day I followed him during a water meter debate in which he put forward the novel suggestion that we should re-use our bath water in domestic dwellings to preserve that necessary natural resource. I have to tell him that such is the infrequency of that activity in my household by my children that were he to see what they leave behind in the bath his Department would be more likely to license bath water as a dangerous substance rather than wishing it to be recycled.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West made two points which I want to develop. One concerned marine aggregates and the review of the mineral planning guidance note number six, as well as the review of the continuing role of the Crown Estate in that area. The second concerned the Government's consideration of the planning system offshore. My hon. Friend rightly highlighted the role of the Crown Estate and its involvement in planning offshore and asked the Minister to clarify the fact that the Crown Estate's role in planning was not to be reviewed.

I want to pick up those points and develop them further as well as drawing attention to the absence of any reference in planning police guidance note number 20, so recently issued, to the dumping of dredged material, as highlighted in paragraph 97 of the Select Committee's report. The highlighted comment says:

"We recommend that there should be better co-ordination between those authorities responsible for dredging, disposing of and utilising marine aggregates in order to avoid the unnecessary dumping of dredged material, and to encourage its use elsewhere as appropriate. In addition, we recommend that environmental impact assessments be made of the possible effects of dumping".

I deliberately drew attention to that omission earlier in the debate so that the Minister's officials would have sufficient time to address the point. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will consider that as a helpful move on my part.

Planning policy guidance number 20, paragraph 2.21, mentions the dredging of marine aggregates but says:

"Projects which require consent outside the planning system, such as dredging of marine aggregates, are subject to environmental assessment where appropriate under the relevant consent procedures."

But it does not include any environmental assessment for the dumping of dredged material. Paragraph 3.1 mentions waste water and sewage disposal, but there is no mention of dredged material. I hope that the Government will be able to set out the reasons why the taking out of aggregate rightly requires an environmental assessment, but the dumping of dredged material does not.

As was regularly mentioned in evidence to the Select Committee in preparing its report, the Isle of Wight has set an outstanding example in the setting up of the Standing Conference on Problems Associated with the Coastline —SCOPAC for short. I am very much obliged to David Court, chairman of the officers working group, which includes most, if not all, of the surrounding coastal authorities from West Sussex in the east along the coast to Portland in the west.

I am pleased to be able to tell the House that officials from the Department of the Environment, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the National Rivers Authority attended the SCOPAC conference in October in Littlehampton. However, the feeling remains that the opportunity to clear up the duality of those Departments as regards the coastal zone has not been grasped. Indeed, the omissions on the dumping of dredged material are perhaps one manifestation of the problem caused by that duality. There are others. For example, coast protection is

the duty of the local authority, whereas sea defence is the duty of the National Rivers Authority. It is true to say that good will helps and I am certain that my hon. Friend the Minister will say that in his reply to the debate. However, the duality must militate against efficient and effective working. Indeed, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds believes that the decision-making process needs to be restructured, and land drainage and sea defence legislation reformed, to reflect urban development and nature conservation priorities.

Will my hon. Friend the Minister review the role of the internal drainage boards with regard to their conservation duties, as recommended by the Select Committee? Lest anyone forget why that is so important, I remind the House that our sea bird breeding colonies are of global importance, as a significant proportion of the world populations of some species are present here. Of the 261 internationally important bird areas in the United Kingdom, 28 qualify because they hold more than 1 per cent. of the European population of certain sea birds. The United Kingdom's estuaries are among the most biologically productive systems in the world. Estuaries also provide spawning and nursery grounds for fish, including many of commercial value, and are key areas for water-borne and waterside recreation. In spite of that importance, coast management is piecemeal and unco-ordinated.

The British marine aggregate producers want prospecting licences to be left with the Crown Estate and production licences placed with the Department of the Environment. They believe that that would avoid the lengthy duplication inherent in the present system. That was the view that the industry expressed to the Department of the Environment review which was recommended by the Select Committee report. If that view prevails, it will become even more important for the Department of the Environment to practise open government in that area, and for data from the assessing hydraulic authorities to be doubly scrutinised and made public. Why? Because, otherwise, the Department will be both policeman and provider: it sets out the aggregate material forecasts for the building industry and is the lead Department for the needs of the construction industry. It cannot wear two hats without misgivings and mistrust. During the 1980s and into the 1990s, the great success of Government policies in protecting the environment has been to separate the policeman and the provider, which has led to far higher standards.

The fact that so many coastal communities are seriously concerned about inshore or near-shore aggregate dredging sets my hon. Friend the Minister a special challenge—to make decisions more transparent and capable of proper scrutiny. That is what the Select Committee was endeavouring to do. There is an example in the western Solent at the moment, with the prospect of 300,000 cu m of gravel being taken from the Shingles bank by the New Forest district council, which has submitted the scheme on behalf of English Heritage, which wants to replenish Hurst Spit to protect Hurst castle.

Local fishermen tell me that the Shingles bank has a sheer wall, and that if one takes 300,000 cu m of gravel out of that structure it will cause serious harm. So far as I am aware, the bank has never been dredged effectively. That is a good example of the sort of misgivings that local communities may have.

On consolidation and planning, if I understand correctly the Department's response to the Select Committee's comments, the Minister is saying that consolidation is not on the agenda because of the recent consolidation of planning law. I may be wrong, but I thought that the Committee wanted consolidation in several areas. I draw my hon. Friend's attention to that matter, because I do not think that the Committee was restricting its remarks on consolidation to planning.

The Royal Yachting Association has rightly pointed out that the planning system does not cater for the needs of increasing numbers of people to take part in water sports. The French have added more than 7,000 marina berths between Le Tréport and Cherbourg during the past few years. Why do we British not want to exploit the same opportunities in a structured and sensitive way which will meet the needs of all the competing interests?

I have no doubt that the Minister will again point me towards planning policy guidance note 20, paragraph 4.17, which allows planning authorities and other agencies to co-operate. I must inform my hon. Friend that the planning inspector's ruling, at the Isle of Wight replacement structure plan inquiry, was that they are not required to do so. While adjoining land-based authorities must interlock, there is no such presumption when water intervenes.

My hon. Friend the Minister will find copious correspondence on the subject between myself and Mr. Christopher Chope, who served so illustriously in the House. It is ludicrous that the Isle of Wight has no mechanism for influencing the means of departure from, or arrival at, the mainland—England. That is why we are so poorly served. If one arrives from Brussels or France it is different, but not if one comes from within one's own country.

The consolidation sought by the Select Committee was surely not merely on planning. The Merchant Shipping Act 1984 requires that all objects recovered from below the mean low water mark should be reported to the Receiver of Wrecks. That system does nothing to preserve sites of historic interest, because, if the item is unclaimed, the Crown encourages auction as a means of rewarding the finder. Just imagine the hullabaloo if people were allowed to dig around designated land-based sites in the same way. Sadly, it would appear that the Department is unable to get its mind around that fact.

Mineral extraction on land would never take place without, where appropriate, an archaeological evaluation. That requirement is contained in policy planning guidance note 16, which was issued last year. There is no such safeguard below the mean low water mark: why not?

Development often requires the dumping of material or building on the sea bed. Such activity can do untold damage to our nation's heritage. Again planning policy guidance number 16 can only be invoked once the construction has risen above the mean low water mark.

The Protection of Wrecks Act 1973 offers some protection to a limited number of wrecks which are deemed to be of national importance. The Act is not, and cannot be, used to protect archaeological sites which lie below the mean low water mark. The Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 has never been applied to underwater sites in England.

Planning policy guidance note 16 is serviced by sites and monuments records so as to intercept threats to sites of significance, yet the constraints of local government

[Mr. Barry Field]

boundaries at mean low watermark impede that process. As the hon. Member for Gower (Mr. Wardell) pointed out, under section 18 of the Coastal Protection Act 1949, local authorities can, by arrangement with the Crown Estates Commissioners, take control and licensing powers over the sea bed.

The evidence given to the Committee and the replies to some of my questions eventually elucidated the fact that, in the whole of England and Wales, only South Wight borough council on the Isle of Wight is using those powers. The departmental evidence revealed the real confusion that exists over the matter.

Hon. Members may wonder why I have spent so much time dealing with these points. As the Minister will confirm, his Department was the lead body at the summit on the environment at Rio and takes a keen interest in the rise in sea level that has been forecast. The flooding of the Solent concerns an area so rich in archaeology that experts believe that it might yet mean land sites being delisted because of their relative insignificance compared with the Solent.

In view of the Minister's well-known interest in global warming, he will be interested to note that it has been shown from the excavation of Roman artefacts dating back 6,000 years that there has been a rise in sea level in the area over that time of 3 m. Artefacts found there include hand-made cooking pots ranging from the eighth to the 11th centuries. An important cultural item from the period is a copper alloy cloak pin of the loose-ringed type. The decoration of the pin draws its inspiration from Viking dress fasteners, while its type can be equated with pins in use in Ireland between the 10th and 13th centuries. The pin signifies long-distance maritime trade and should be seen in conjunction with two contemporary Norwegian mica-schist honestones that have been removed from the Solent.

As the Minister will be aware, the Department of National Heritage has recently succeeded in gaining control over the export of fossils, remembering that the Isle of Wight is considered to be the best archaeological centre for the discovery of fossils and dinosaur bones in the whole of the northern hemisphere, if not of the world. It is a little-known fact that only one of all the dinosaurs at the natural history museum is the genuine article, and I am proud to say that it comes from the Isle of Wight. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] I note that I strike a chord across the Floor of the House when I talk of dinosaurs.

This is a serious matter because the Minister may not be aware that along the coast of the Isle of Wight, where the wave action exposes the remains, pirates come to the island and dig up the bones at night, since a single bone of the right variety can fetch over £100,000 on the black market. Not only is it a serious problem, but it is another reason why the Committee sought to extend the protection of land-based legislation to our wonderful aquatic environment. Perhaps such facts speak more forcefully than the Select Committee report, the RSPB, SCOPAC or any other body.

I hope that the Minister will re-examine the whole issue and will put his rudder hard over, go about and ask his crew to look again at the legislation and the whole area to which I have referred. Does Britannia rule the waves? I regret to say that for a maritime nation, if we in Whitehall do not waive the rules, we are certainly refusing to enforce them.

5.14 pm

Mr. Paul Tyler (North Cornwall): I hope that the hon. Member for the Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) will forgive me for not going back to the era of the dinosaurs. I want to look forward. I am grateful for catching your eye at this time, Madam Deputy Speaker, because last night and the night before I managed to do so just before midnight. It is a privilege for me to be addressing the House in prime time.

I am also grateful to have been called because—as you know, Madam Deputy Speaker, being a close neighbour—I am lucky enough to represent the most beautiful and one of the longest coastlines in the United Kingdom. For that and ancestral reasons, I regard this as an extremely important debate and, like other hon. Members, I pay tribute to the pioneering work of the Select Committee and its Chairman, the hon. Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones).

Cornwall and Devon have some of the finest coastline and most beautiful coastal waters in the United Kingdom. We have the Fal, the Fowey, the Camel, the Tamar, the Teign, the Torridge, the Taw and the Exe as world-famous estuaries. In addition, we have a coastal zone inland from that coastline which is recognised as being of international importance.

The coastline also has an economic importance because it is an area for fishing and tourism and supports two of our most important local indigenous industries. A well kept coast is not just a thing of beauty: it is an extremely important economic asset. The many thousands of tourists who come to Cornwall, Plymouth and Devon are drawn by beautiful images of lovely places of natural and human manufacture. Tintagel, Padstow and the Newquay area of my constituency are examples, but they are replicated throughout the south-west. It is vital, for every reason, that they receive the care and attention that an orderly, clean and well managed environment should provide.

But we must also demonstrate the vulnerability of the coastline. As hon. Members from places as far apart as Gower and the Isle of Wight have demonstrated, the vulnerability of the coastline is its other special characteristic. We have in Cornwall the continuing saga of governmental incompetence over Weal Jane, as often described by the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor).

The United Kingdom coastline is the habitat of an extraordinary range of animals and birds. The sea bird breeding colonies are of global importance, with significant proportions of the world's population of some species. Our estuaries, as the hon. Member for the Isle of Wight said, provide the most biologically productive systems in the world. They also provide spawning and nursery grounds for fish stocks, including many of considerable commercial value. They are key areas of income generation in respect of waterborne and waterside recreation.

Despite that importance, and despite all the evidence to, and recommendations of, the Select Committee, we still have a totally piecemeal and unco-ordinated policy for our coastline. At present, the responsibility for coastal zone management is split between a ridiculously large number of bodies. Earlier in the year, I tried to discover exactly

how many Ministers had responsibilities relating to coastal policy. Finally I discovered that the full list—I will not bore the House with the details; there are 12 or more—ranges from the Department of National Heritage to the Ministry of Defence, via the Duchy of Lancaster and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

That does not even display the whole iceberg: it is only the tip. Underneath the surface is an absolute plethora of statutory bodies with responsibilities, such as the National Rivers Authority, the Countryside Commission and the whole range of local authorities and harbour commissions. There are significant differences in hierarchy on the other side of the borders in Scotland and Wales.

At central Government level, differences of approach that seem to result from that dichotomy between the Department of the Environment and the Ministry of Agriculture are ably demonstrated by the current approach to the implementation of the EC's habitats directive, which should cover both the terrestrial and marine environments, yet seems to be delayed. We hope that the Minister will say that both Departments will make comprehensive statements on that directive.

Local anomalies also exist. It was recently drawn to my attention that the siren system around the Norfolk coast, originally introduced to warn of impending invasion but used more recently to warn of possible tidal flooding, is about to be discarded by the Home Office, yet no other Department is prepared to take up that responsibility. To load it on to local authorities will cause difficulties if they do not have the necessary resources.

Many coastal communities throughout the country are threatened by coastal erosion, possibly brought about by the climatic changes as a result of global warming. If that is so, it will be an increasing problem for local authorities to tackle, especially as it tends to happen in areas of comparatively low income.

Even the National Rivers Authority's income will be unable to deal effectively with that. The problem can exist anywhere in the country, from Lower Hawkesbury in the constituency of my right hon. Friend the Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) to Downderry in south Cornwall. Those problems suffer from a lack of effective co-ordination and resourcing.

In that context, this debate is timely. The Select Committee's report was excellent, and the Government should say what they are thinking, following their response to that report. I hope that we shall give the Minister much food for thought for his Christmas break. Incidentally, if his plans are still fluid, I recommend an excellent fish restaurant with rooms at Padstow in which he could digest the points made this afternoon.

Two points result directly from what the Government said in their paper, "This Common Inheritance—the Second Year Report":

> "Decisions about development should take account of the natural resources which Britain's coast provides."

In that context, I want to concentrate on coastal zone management plans and the special place that we should afford to heritage coasts.

First, both sides of the House echo the words of the Select Committee Chairman, the hon. Member for Hertfordshire, West, about the clear need for a national strategy. It is not in place and does not look as though it is coming, and we need it urgently. All the organisations concerned should be singing from the same hymn sheet. There are so many of them that that is the only way in which we can secure some cohesion and comprehension. There is a cacophony of conflicting policies, which must be set in a sensible context.

It was illuminating that, when the Marine Conservation Society conducted its survey on coastal management plans in 1990, it found that the most widely expressed concern was about the lack of a national policy or strategy. It is now clear that the demand for one is intense, and I hope that the Minister will respond to that this evening.

Similarly, we need a discrete unit within the Department of the Environment and the Scottish, Welsh and Northern Ireland Offices to develop and co-ordinate that national strategy, because a strategy without such a back-up would be meaningless. In view of the Government's support for the concept of coastal zone management, will the Minister consider setting up such a unit linked to the other Departments, as the Select Committee recommended?

There seems to be a contradiction in the Government's thinking. Virtually all the evidence to the Select Committee spoke of the need for planning to be carried out on the basis of natural coastal cells—the ones that exist and are recognised. In the Government's response, they argued that coastal cells

> "provide a useful basis for the formation of groupings of local authorities and other interested parties for the consideration of physical processes at the coast and co-ordination of coastal defence issues".

The adjoining paragraph went on to say that the coastal cells are not an appropriate basis for decision-making and management. So what is the Government's view?

Coastal zone management should be designed to provide a management framework for the whole coastline, not simply areas under pressure. Those plans need a statutory basis if they are to provide the necessary powers to resolve conflicts of interest within the coastal area.

If, as the Government suggest, those plans are not to be universal or mandatory and an ad hoc system of coastal planning results, we forecast chaos in future. The conflict of interests and the problems will not be resolved even within a managed framework if that framework is piecemeal. They will simply migrate along the coast from more progressive local authority areas with management plans to those that are not covered by plans.

As a result, new areas of what the Select Committee described as "demonstrable conflict and pressures" will undoubtedly result. The problems described by the hon. Members for Gower (Mr. Wardell) and for Isle of Wight in relation to marine aggregate could arise if the approach were piecemeal instead of comprehensive.

The finest stretches of coast clearly deserve national recognition as heritage coasts. Although some have already been designated and are recognised on an international or European basis, they must be given effective protection and management. It is now necessary to ensure that stronger measures are available and apply there.

The quality of the heritage coast and the principles and techniques of management and protection that underpin them already provide a model that attracts that wider international interest. Other European countries wish to learn from our experience and, in turn, heritage coasts are recognised as having a quality that stands international comparison.

However, we cannot be complacent, because the mechanism of designation and management techniques

[Mr. Paul Tyler]

leave much to be desired. We need rigorous control, which must be exercised to preclude all forms of development that are incongruous in an area of fine natural beauty by reasons of scale, siting, design, noise, disturbance or traffic, or that could adversely affect heritage features such as flora, fauna and archaeology. We must ensure that remote stretches of coast and access to them are also carefully managed.

Clearly, it is necessary to integrate the policy for heritage coast planning with management of the wider undeveloped coastline. Heritage coasts cannot be protected by action simply within their immediate boundaries, because their future will be bound up with coastal policy as a whole, and a holistic approach will be necessary. The Government need to move quickly to review the role of local authorities in planning and development control below the high water mark. I call on them to set that in motion urgently.

Whatever happens, it must be right that all that should not come about simply by creating more bureaucracy, quangos and by-passing directly elected and accountable local government. The necessary structures already exist within the tiers of local government. The Chichester harbour conservancy group is but one example of the way in which local government can take a wider lead, as the hon. Gentleman said. The initiative taken by the Isle of Wight county council to create a network shows that the central role should be for local authorities.

I do not understand—I think that this may be the crucial issue in today's debate—why the Government reject the concept of coastal zone management. Why do the Government reject the concept of natural coastal cells as the linchpin of an integrated protection and planning policy for coastal zones? All the evidence to the Environment Committee—and, indeed, all the evidence of our eyes and experience since that excellent report—shows that coastal zone management will be the most effective and efficient way forward. I urge the Government to reconsider their decision.

As with so many other issues in the House, in the end we must be sure that the Government will be able and willing to resource the necessary changes. We want answers from the Minister and prompt action to set in train mechanisms to bring about the widely desired changes. The coastline of Britain is a jewel in our crown, and it must be preserved.

5.31 pm

Mr. Nick Hawkins (Blackpool, South): I suggest that few hon. Members would disagree that sea defences principally involve the protection of, first, people and, secondly, property. I welcome the fact that my hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment and Countryside and his colleagues have increasingly concentrated within the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on the protection that needs to be provided in urban areas such as my constituency of Blackpool, South.

Because of the problems in my constituency with elderly sea defences which are clearly crumbling away, I am especially glad to have the opportunity to participate in the debate. My concern is enhanced by the bureaucratic complexity which has been highlighted by the report of the Select Committee on the Environment and already referred to in some detail by other hon. Members, especially my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones).

Despite the many years of diligent work by my predecessor, Sir Peter Blaker, to ensure that sea defences were improved along the south shore at Blackpool, about which he was extremely concerned, as I am, one must concede that nothing has been done. I must evince a note of considerable concern that, if nothing is done soon, there will be substantial flooding.

My hon. Friend the Minister is concerned about such matters. I must tell him that there is a great deal of high-value property just beyond the land side of the sea wall, which is all along the shore at Blackpool. That property includes many successful and prosperous hotels and a number of high-value residential areas. It also includes the biggest tourist attraction in the whole of Europe, the Blackpool pleasure beach. More than 6 million people visited that beach last year. I mention that because the significance to such a business, to hotels and to residential areas of the sort that I have described of the kind of flooding that we have had on a number of occasions recently is substantial. My constituents and I are worried that whenever there is a flood warning, which happens frequently throughout the autumn and the winter, the only action taken is that hotels and residential areas are asked to collect sandbags from the local authority.

I recognise the importance of local authorities being able to give a local response to particular areas of need, but I echo the views of the Select Committee, as confirmed by my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West, that it is crucial to have a national strategy for sea defences and coastal zone protection. It is also crucial to have a much simpler and more straightforward system. It is apparent not only from the report of the Select Committee, but from the National Audit Office, that about 160 bodies have some responsibility for coastal zone matters. From the discussions that I have had with local authorities, the National Rivers Authority, the people at North-West Water and departmental officials, I can only describe the situation as a bureaucratic jungle and nightmare.

Tonight I feel something like Cassandra crying in the wilderness for some action to be taken. I am sorry that I have to predict that, unless something is done urgently to improve the sea defences along the south shore of Blackpool, there will be a disaster akin to the one that took place in Towyn in north Wales in 1990. I am sure that most hon. Members remember the horrifying news pictures. I remind hon. Members that the failure of the Towyn sea wall on 26 February 1990 occurred during a violent storm from the north-west. A storm from the same direction would affect my constituency if it happened again. The storm produced a surge of 1·3 m to the tide level, coupled with 4 m waves. Frequently, there are storms of the same or similar intensity which affect the Fylde coast. My constituents and I are worried about precisely such storms.

In the Towyn disaster there was substantial damage to property as a result of salt water flooding of housing behind the breached sea wall. Although we were delighted to note that extremely efficient and prompt evacuation procedures were immediately put into effect by the emergency services—to whose work I pay tribute—which prevented any loss of life, the dislocation and rehabilitation problems were severe. The problems had not been fully resolved at the time when the National Rivers

Authority produced its report on sea defences and the advisory committee to my hon. Friend's Ministry produced its report on research and development into flood and coastal defence.

In the 1989-90 winter storms, some 30 km of sea wall revetment and about 10 km of embankment were damaged. The cost of repair and reinstatement of those damaged coastal defences has been estimated at more than £40 million, and Towyn alone accounted for perhaps 25 per cent. of that total. The amount does not include the social costs of shattered homes and lifestyles or the ecological cost of damage to beaches, dunes and cliffs. More than 150 km of coastline were severely affected by one winter night's events.

I urge my hon. Friend to re-examine with great care the report of the Select Committee and to bear in mind that a stitch in time saves nine, especially when it comes to coastal defence. I am aware that firm plans have existed for a number of years in my constituency, based on the most sophisticated technology of sea defence. My hon. Friend may be aware of the colonnade scheme. Those plans can be put into effect in a relatively short period, but, with the administrative structure that exists, and with so many bodies involved, there is endless opportunity for what I can only describe as buck passing between the local authority, the Ministry, the National Rivers Authority and water authorities.

I echo the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West that it seems entirely logical that the matter of sea defence should be placed under the direct control of one Ministry. I know that my hon. Friend the Minister is concerned about the matter. I pay tribute to his work and that of his ministerial colleagues in the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. However, I suggest that it would be much more logical for the matter to be brought under the direct control of the Department of the Environment, because of the Department's other responsibilities, including many other matters which relate to coastal zones.

As the policy has rightly concentrated substantially on urban sea defences, it seems peculiar that the issue remains within the purview of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. I submit that coastal defences are an environmental issue and that the Department of the Environment should deal with it.

The Coast Protection Act 1949 is now fairly old and perhaps a new statute is overdue. Under the Act maritime district councils carry out coastal protection works that have been approved by the appropriate Minister. The Environment Select Committee report points out that before they even submit proposals, maritime councils must consult the National Rivers Authority, neighbouring maritime district councils, the county council, harbour, conservancy and navigation authorities, fisheries committees and MAFF for licensing under the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985.

With so much consultation required, one can see why it takes years before a formal proposal is even considered. That applies to all works except maintenance, repair and emergency works. I suggest that fewer emergency works would be needed if the main works were done more quickly. There is frequently agreement across party divisions in areas where priority work needs to be done, including my own. A single Ministry could make a quicker decision. Of course, there must be some consultation, but I suggest that the procedure could be made much more streamlined.

The complex bureaucracy causes problems that could have contributed to the Towyn disaster. The Royal Institution of Civil Engineers recently hosted a presentation about vital issues that affect the north-west and north Wales. It was attended by many Conservative and Opposition Members from those areas, including myself. It was interesting that the subjects that the institution chose to highlight as of particular importance to north-west and north Wales Members of Parliament were, first, transport and, secondly, sea defence and coastal protection.

Many hon. Members heard an extremely effective presentation by one of the senior scientific advisers who worked on rebuilding the sea defences at Towyn. I am sure that several of the points that he made about the urgency with which sea defences in the north-west and north Wales should be improved struck a chord with many of the hon. Members who were present. I urge my hon. Friend to look again at the work that was done in the aftermath of Towyn and recognise that a great deal more could be done.

I apologise to my hon. Friend the Minister that, because I was committed to chairing a meeting elsewhere in the House before I knew the business for this week, I shall not be present to hear his reply. However, I look forward to reading it in the *Official Report*.

5.42 pm

Mr. Jack Thompson (Wansbeck): I add my congratulations to the hon. Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones) on taking over the role of Chairman of the Select Committee on the Environment. My experience of that Committee is such that I have full confidence in its reports and especially in the one that it has just completed.

I make no apology for examining the report and the Government's response to it in the context of my constituency. Coastal defence is a matter of great concern to me. In case anyone wonders where my constituency is, it is 15 miles north of Newcastle on the coast. The eastern boundary of the constituency is the North sea coastline.

My constituency suffers not only from the loss of some of its skilled young people as a result of the dire employment situation in the north of England but from the loss of some of its land mass through coastal erosion. The problem of coastal erosion is not a new one in my constituency. For example, the village of Newbiggin-by-the-Sea is reputed to be the third one with that name. The two previous villages are said to have disappeared into the sea many years ago, and there are fears that the present village could suffer the same fate. Cynics describe it as Newbiggin-in-the-Sea.

The village was provided with a limited form of sea defence in 1931—mainly to provide employment during the slump. That sea defence proved fairly satisfactory until the mid-1970s. Since then, there have been changes in the sea bed levels as a result of collapsing mineworkings in the bay on that part of the coast. That seriously affected and undermined the sea defences. Various projects have been undertaken to improve the sea defences, but in a piecemeal fashion. Some of the sea defences are an eyesore due to the lack of proper funding and because people have tried to do schemes on the cheap. If the Select Committee's proposals had been implemented 20 years ago, the problems would

[Mr. Jack Thompson]

have been alleviated properly by means of a comprehensive development rather than the patchwork schemes which now despoil an attractive village.

To the north of Newbiggin-by-the-Sea is an area described as East Sea Sands. It is a stretch of common land which has little if any defence. While some protection is provided for the village, the limitations on coastal protection allow the coastal strip on East Sea Sands to deteriorate, so coastal erosion threatens the village from a different point. That is a further example where a comprehensive plan could have resolved the problem.

When I was a youngster—I may be giving my age away—in the last years of the second world war, many old army vehicles were placed on the rock formations in the area. They were far enough out in the sea to allow the RAF to use them as target practice. Not only the vehicles but the rocks on which they stood disappeared into the sea many years ago. The erosion has taken huge areas of that part of my constituency away. If I stand on the cliff edge I can see 200 yd or more of the area which has disappeared into the sea in the past 10 years.

The overriding need for a national coastal zone unit is a major theme in the Select Committee report. I endorse that view. I would couple with it more localised co-operation. That has already begun in the county of Northumberland. Some people in my county think that the world begins at the north part of the county—the border with Scotland—and ends at the south, the border with Tyne and Wear. We have the North sea to the east and Cumbria to the west. However, I recognise that the world goes beyond that.

The authorities in my county have formed a consortium of local authorities with coastal boundaries. They are Wansbeck and Alnwick district, and Blyth, Castle Morpeth and Berwick borough councils. The consortium has been in existence for about one year. I understand that it is currently working on sea defence issues. The programme is to examine the problems all along the coast. I repeat that the problem exists beyond the Northumbrian coast and affects areas which have boundaries on each side of our county. Wansbeck district council has obtained the services of the consultants Babty Shaw to produce a comprehensive report on its coastline. Such efforts could make a useful contribution to the work of a national coastal zone unit.

I also draw the attention of the House to a further cause of coastal erosion in my constituency and in that of the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith), who intervened earlier in the debate on this topic. I am sure that he will appreciate my support for the comments that he made, which were relevant and appropriate. However, I may also add to them. The problem is sand extraction in Druridge Bay in the right hon. Gentleman's constituency. That is close to my constituency. Sand has been extracted for about 25 years and it is estimated that 1·5 million tonnes of sand have been removed. That has seriously affected the whole coastline in both the right hon. Gentleman's constituency and mine.

Northern Aggregates, a subsidiary of Ready Mixed Concrete, was given permission to extract the sand by the then Ministry of Housing and Local Government, despite the refusal of Northumberland county council and the then Morpeth district council to grant planning permission. As a result of the Government's decision, sand extraction on a huge scale has caused damage which may be irreparable. More notice should have been taken of local opinion. Any proposals to strengthen the power of local decision making will therefore gain my support.

I note that the Government are reviewing mineral planning guidance note 6, which deals with the provision of aggregates in England and Wales. That is welcome, on condition that the review concludes that more control should be placed in the hands of local people. I am advancing the same argument in regard to planning guidance note 3, which deals with opencast mining. I suspect, however, that my efforts will be to no avail; and by the time the review has been completed, whatever the outcome, it will probably have little effect on the specific problem of sand extraction.

The Select Committee recommendations show a reasoned and sensible attitude to coastal erosion problems. They include some extremely good proposals, including the proposal in paragraph 78 to transfer responsibility from MAFF to the Department of the Environment, a proposal which I am sorry to say has received no response from the Government: it seems that they are happy for the responsibility to remain with MAFF. I agree with hon. Members who have suggested that such matters belong under the aegis of the Department of the Environment. Perhaps the Government will have second thoughts about some of the Committee's proposals—I hope so.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: We all have our theories: mine is that MAFF is still obsessed with the idea that coastal defence is all about protecting farmland. That is not so, but that idea pervades the whole system. It emerged during the inquiry that every chairman of a regional front defence committee was a farmer, and the same applies to the land drainage committees. Of course, that may change over a period, and more environmentalists are becoming involved; nevertheless, I feel that the philosophy of MAFF is at fault.

Mr. Thompson: I hope that the hon. Gentleman and his Committee will continue to pursue that aspect of the problem.

The basic theme of the Select Committee recommendations is the need for a co-ordinated response to the difficulties involved in coastal protection. The hon. Member for Blackpool, South (Mr. Hawkins) represents a seat in the north, while mine is in the north-east; unlike Blackpool, my constituency is a village containing about 8,000 people; nevertheless, our problems are similar. The problems of coastal protection require a comprehensive view and full co-operation, which should extend beyond the boundaries of England and Wales. Any consideration of my county of Northumberland will relate to Scotland. Although a different attitude may be taken there, the two areas affect each other.

I compliment the Select Committee on its report, and I hope that the Government will take note of its contents.

5.53 pm

Mr. Iain Sproat (Harwich): I wish to direct my remarks to only one aspect of the Committee's excellent report. I shall take my text from the Government's response in the introduction to paragraph 1:

"The Government is firmly committed to the effective protection and planning of our coast".

I have no doubt that the Government are doing effective work in many areas, but in one part of my constituency they are certainly not acting effectively. This is not a criticism of the present Government in particular: for many years, Governments have not acted effectively in helping to protect this particular piece of coast.

The piece of coast to which I refer goes round a piece of land known as the Naze—a word related etymologically to the word "nose", because the Naze sticks out into the North sea. It is a beautiful open space, comprising some 150 acres, and its centrality to local life is proven by the fact that the beautiful and picturesque little town next door to it is called Walton on the Naze; yet the Naze is being steadily destroyed.

In his excellent speech, the hon. Member for Wansbeck (Mr. Thompson) described how, at the end of the second world war, he had seen army lorries standing at a point that is now far out to sea. I can tell the hon. Gentleman that, at the time when he was watching those lorries, there were block houses in the Naze, about 50 yards from the edge of the cliff. Now, those block houses are so far out to sea—because the cliff has collapsed—that it is impossible to see them: the waves wash over them.

A beautiful open space is being eroded at a rate of some 6 ft a year—or so it is said, and I am sure that as an average that is correct. Cliffs do not crumble in a regular line, however, and huge chunks of the Naze will fall into the sea. In a single night, a patch of land about as big as the space between the civil servants' Box and the Gangway will go down. A wonderful recreational area for local people, measuring some 150 acres, is being steadily destroyed.

In another excellent speech, my hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, South (Mr. Hawkins) rightly said that the first duty of Departments involved in such matters is to protect lives and property. At present, not much property on the Naze is threatened, but we should not only consider property; we should also think of the concept of heritage coasts and amenity value. That does not apply only to local people, for the Naze provides a tremendous tourist attraction. My constituency has a high unemployment rate: it is over 12 per cent. in Harwich and over 14 per cent. in Clacton, and Walton on the Naze is between the two. The constituency has the highest unemployment percentage in the south of England. Tourism is one way in which we can help to mop up that serious unemployment rate: about 100,000 people visit the Naze every year.

Unfortunately, year after year, the Naze has been allowed to crumble away, because the local authority has not enough money to deal with the problem. My right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food kindly received a delegation the other day, but ultimately no money was forthcoming. Meanwhile, a beautiful piece of old England is being eroded, and in 50 or 100 years nothing will be left.

The House may say, "Why? Here is a lovely bit of old England, central to local life and providing a wonderful amenity for locals and tourists". Indeed, a listed building stands on it—the Naze tower, built in 1720. In not many years' time, that tower will have crumbled into the sea unless something is done.

In the past, Departments have given as their main reason for doing nothing the fact that houses are not immediately threatened; but if the Naze—hon. Members should picture it as a chunk, or nose, sticking out into the North sea—disappears, the sea will sweep in and not only curl around and start attacking Walton on the Naze from the back, but wash away places such as Kirby le Soken, just a few miles up the coast. As my hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, South said, a stitch in time saves nine: that may be a cliché, but it is a truism because it is true.

It is extremely irritating—indeed, infuriating—for people who live in the area to learn that one of the reasons why the Government have not provided money to save this chunk of my constituency is the fact that some fossils have been found under it. They are very interesting, as they are about 50 million years old, but the problem is that, the more the sea washes away the Naze, the more fossils will become available for people who are interested in them. It is ludicrous for the care of fossils to be put above the care of local residents. I see a sympathetic frown of amazement across the face of the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith), but I asure him that that is so. That is what is so infuriating.

Hon. Members have already mentioned the nightmare of the bureaucratic jungle—the Department of the Environment, MAFF, the National Rivers Authority and English Heritage. Hardly a body exists which does not seem to have some interest in this matter, and all to the detriment of my constituents.

Mr. Barry Field: My hon. Friend might like to know that he has a comrade in arms, because in Whitecliffe bay, English Nature prevented a caravan park owner from erecting sea defences, at his own cost, because the sea was exposing a variety of fossils that were exceptional in northern Europe. I wondered whether the Isle of Wight will have to wash away in the cause of fossils.

Mr. Sproat: My hon. Friend makes a good point; it is absurd. However, when one tries to pin down that absurdity and to say that such an argument cannot stand in the way of our constituents, one cannot find the right people to talk to. No one group will take up and weigh all the arguments and say, "The interests of the people who live there must come first." I say to my hon. Friend the Minister that the interests of my constituents and their children are not being considered as they should be. The Government should provide funds to save this beautiful bit of England and the local amenities and to help the tourism industry rather than interesting but hardly prime objects of importance like fossils.

6.1 pm

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): It is interesting to follow the hon. Member for Harwich (Mr. Sproat), who began by firmly praising the report. I wonder how far he read the section on managed retreat. There is a lot of evidence to show that, even where people can persuade the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food or other bodies to fund the construction of sea defences, such defences are not always successful. I suspect that a considerable sum has been spent on unsuccessful sea defences. Some schemes that have been proposed to defend the coastline have resulted not only in it being attacked further along but have proved to do more damage that good. Although I fully understand the hon. Gentleman's concern for his constituents, a massive sea defence scheme will not necessarily solve the problem.

I was not a member of the Environment Select Committee in the last Parliament. I am pleased to be a

[Mr. Andrew F. Bennett]

member now, and its members, certainly Sir Hugh Rossi, can be praised for producing a series of environmental reports on the green side of the Department of the Environment that did much to inform the House and attracted praise from people outside. It seems a paradox that, between 1983 and the dissolution of the last Parliament, the Select Committee never investigated council funding, the poll tax, housing and homeless people.

All those who believe that the establishment of Select Committees was one of the best things that the House did must strike a balance between the need for Select Committees to mirror Departments and to investigate the topics of the day. When the Select Committees were set up, there were Committees for trade, for industry and for energy, but they have now been combined into one. It is perhaps ironic that the Select Committee on the Environment is now engaged in a major inquiry into energy. I wonder whether the House is best served by having one Select Committee for the Department of the Environment, which covers a large area and inevitably means that the Committee must be selective about what parts of the Department to scrutinise. Perhaps Select Committees should more accurately reflect the scope of Departments and the need for scrutiny of them.

I welcome the Select Committee's report and the debate. There has been a tendency to use Supply days to debate Select Committee reports, in which members of the Select Committee, the Minister and the Opposition spokesman tell each other what a great report they have produced. That does not inform our proceedings or other hon. Members. Interestingly, perhaps because it is a new Parliament, we have heard tonight from more hon. Members who did not serve on the Committee but who have read the report. If Committee reports inform the House rather than allowing Committee members to congratulate themselves, I shall welcome it.

I am disappointed that the Government did not accept the recommendation of the Committee to set up administrative bodies that respond to the natural cells of coastal activity. The Committee persuasively suggested that bits of the coast should be considered not in isolation but rather as part of a network. I was slightly disappointed on asking a geomorphogenist whom I know well, "Can I find a map of the British isles that sets out cell patterns?" to discover that, although some of the patterns are fairly well documented, others are nothing like as well documented and understood, and there is a fair amount of argument about how far the systems are closed or open.

I accept that there may be a little difficulty in working out where the cell boundaries would be, but I have always argued that it is important that administrative boundaries reflect the physical realities, because artificial boundaries cannot be imposed. It is important that natural cells are recognised and reflected in boundaries.

It is important that more work is done on the cost-benefit analysis of environmental works along the coast. Too often, the environmental benefit analysis is conducted by the engineers who are proposing schemes. Like statistics, cost-benefit analysis can be made to prove what is wanted. It is important, therefore, that such schemes are scrutinised by people from different backgrounds who can test them.

As the hon. Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones) said, MAFF, which is responsible for coastal works, still seems to be driven by farmers who were brought up to try to expand the amount of productive land. It would be much more logical if responsibility were handed from MAFF to the Department of the Environment, which might take more of an overview of the situation. Before any work is done, there is at least supposed to be consultation between MAFF and English Nature to consider the scientific evidence on the impact of the environment. If English Nature puts up a case that a particular scheme is not in the best interests of the natural environment, the scheme does not go ahead.

As I understand it, if any county engineer or other person responsible for putting up a scheme says that it has to be carried out as emergency work, this consultation does not have to take place. I accept that, if there is a problem such as that which occurred in north Wales, at Towyn, where emergency means that something has to be done in the next five minutes or the next hour or two, consultation just cannot take place. But local groups often take the view that the emergency is not something that has to be dealt with within the next five minutes, the next day, or the next couple of days, that it can be dealt with on a much longer time scale.

I would like the Minister to address a particular problem that has been drawn to my attention—what happened in the destruction of the SSSI at the Milford marine band at Milford-on-Sea in Hampshire. I understand that the work was done there on the basis that it was an emergency and there was no need for the engineers to consult English Nature. I do not expect the Minister to get the details now; it would be remarkable if his civil servants could come up with the details of that site at this stage.

Of course, if I hear his answer when he winds up, I shall be delighted, but I am very happy to wait, and receive a letter from the Minister telling me exactly why the work had to be carried out on an emergency basis on that site; why there was such a short time scale that it was not possible for any discussion to be held between the county and English Nature on what work was to be carried out; and why it was that the SSSI was destroyed as a result of carrying out the work. The destruction was not, I gather, the result of the work carried out on the beach but occurred in putting in an access road for the contractor to get down to the beach.

That is an amazing state of affairs, and I would like the Minister to look into the question whether the consultation procedure between MAFF, the local authority and English Nature could be improved, so that, unless the emergency is a matter of hours away, consultation can take place.

I also understand that there is often argument as to whether a grant should be paid, and that normally, when it can be shown that it is an emergency, the grant is paid. Of course, one of the best things about dealing with an emergency is that it is very difficult for anyone to come along afterwards and look at what was there before. If it is not treated as an emergency, that is not the case.

My next point concerns the question of how far there is good co-operation between the Department of Energy, MAFF and the Department of the Environment, or, in some specific cases, the Welsh Office. Greenpeace has been expressing to me considerable concern about the last

round of oil and gas exploration licensing. It is particularly concerned about blocks 107/1 and 107/6, close to Bardsey Island and the Lleyn peninsula in north Wales.

There are questions about how far we should be searching in Britain for every spot where there may be oil and gas, how much we want to exploit and how much of the locked-up carbon in the earth should be released into the atmosphere. I certainly think that, unless the Government are committed to trying to release every last bit of oil or gas from the earth into the atmosphere, they ought to question whether sites so close to ones which are particularly important for sea birds and sea creatures ought to be exploited.

I wonder whether the Minister can tell us what consultation there was over the granting of licences by the Department of Energy for oil and gas exploration close to Bardsey Island and the Lleyn peninsula, and how far they looked at the implications for kittiwakes, guillemots, razorbills and other sea birds, and such things as the grey seal off that coast.

The Department of Energy, or the energy section within the Department of Trade, is encouraging the oil companies to decide which blocks they want to bid for again, and quite a lot of seismic studies are going on around the coastal waters with regard to possible bids for future blocks. I wonder how carefully the Government have been looking at the implications of oil and natural gas exploration in terms of a strategy for protecting the marine environment around our coasts.

Finally, I must stress my disappointment that there has not been more of a response by the Government to the need for a national strategy for our coastal waters. I have frequently put down questions to Ministers asking if they will list all the estuaries around the coast of England and Wales which have received any Government money to consider the feasibility of, for example, barrages to improve transport, barrages to be concerned with either power generation or power storage, or barrages for other purposes. There seems to be great difficulty in getting from the Government lists of estuaries where Government money is being spent on considering schemes.

I can understand the argument that we might want a water power scheme on one of the estuaries around the British Isles, but there ought to be a deliberate Government strategy. There ought to be some attempt to draw up priorities. It would be very unfortunate if there were not some balance between the loss of natural habitat within our estuaries and schemes which might have commercial advantage.

Will the Minister, either in this debate or in some other way, inform the House how much Government money is going into schemes. There are discussions about the Severn, the Mersey and the Dee, and I believe that schemes are being considered for the Humber, but I would like to see from the Government a comprehensive list of schemes being undertaken, how much money is being spent on that sort of inquiry and what the results are.

This is certainly a very useful report. I listened with considerable interest to the Minister's explanation of why he could not implement all the recommendations. I look forward to the opportunity of seeing the Minister before the Committee in the not too distant future so that the Committee can itself pursue some of the questions which have been left unanswered.

6.17 pm

Mr. Michael Stephen (Shoreham): I welcome the opportunity to contribute to this important debate as I too have the honour to represent a coastal constituency. Although the name of the constituency is Shoreham, it includes not only the town and port of Shoreham, but also a long stretch of the channel coast from Hove to Littlehampton, with the exclusion of Worthing borough.

I welcome the Government's co-ordinated approach to the problem of coastal defence, but I believe that we need a much more co-ordinated approach to the management and planning of the coastal zone, not only the natural environment, but also the environment where people live, work and enjoy their leisure hours. Leisure is particularly important. On the Sussex coast at the present time we have a high level of unemployment, and tourism is vital to the economic recovery of our area.

Here I pay tribute to an organisation which has already been mentioned in the debate—SCOPAC, the Standing Conference on Problems Associated with the Coastline, which is a consortium of local authorities covering the area from Worthing to Weymouth. I believe that it is the first such organisation to be created at member level; there are other organisations at officer level, but this is still the only one at member level. Its current chairman, Councillor David Birt, is chairman of the Arun district council and is one of my constituents.

The organisation has many achievements to its credit. I shall mention just two. First, it has done some very important research into the transport of sediment. The tides in the English channel are ferocious and large quantities of sand and gravel are transported long distances. In Shoreham the port which used to exist in Elizabethan times is now nearly a mile from the sea. Secondly, SCOPAC has done a great deal of valuable work in producing a model format for coastal management plans for use by local authorities. Regrettably, however, SCOPAC is supported only by local authority funds. It has no formal recognition from Government and is not eligible for Government grants.

Paragraph 20 of the Government's response to the Select Committee report states that the Government believe that the appropriate level for management planning is at the estuary level or along relatively short stretches of open coast. I doubt whether that approach is right and, in view of the excellent work done by SCOPAC, will the Minister reconsider the Government's position on this issue? Also, like many other hon. Members, I ask the Minister to examine carefully the co-ordination of Government Departments' work on coastal zones and perhaps to reduce the number of Departments with a finger in the pie.

As for sea defences, I agree with the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, South (Mr. Hawkins). We have the same problem on the channel coast, especially in my constituency at Shoreham and Lancing. We must always be on our guard because the power of the sea is truly awesome and large sums of money must be spent to defend the land against it.

I pay tribute to the work that the Government are already doing in my area. In the early 1980s, the Southern water authority spent about £500,000 on new groynes along 6 km of the foreshore of Shoreham beach, and since the formation of the National Rivers Authority in 1989, a further £741,000 has been invested in capital works, with

[Mr. Michael Stephen]

£124,000 being spent on works at Lancing in this financial year. A further £160,700 has been allowed in this year's maintenance commitment for that particular frontage.

I wish to draw the attention of the House to a small point but one which is important to the people involved. Under the Coast Protection Act 1949, local authorities may carry out coastal protection work, but I agree with other hon. Members who believe that there is far too much statutory consultation involved. I sometimes think that, after all the time and money spent on consultation, it is surprising that there is time or money left to do any work. Perhaps the Minister will bear that point in mind.

In some areas where coastal protection work must be carried out, it will be found that fishermen are working there with fixed gear such as lobster pots. Although the council has statutory power of entry into such sea areas to carry out works and also to pay compensation, it can pay compensation only if it is satisfied by evidence—usually audited accounts—that financial loss has been suffered by the fishermen.

It may or may not surprise the House to learn that some fishermen are unable or unwilling to produce audited accounts for that purpose. Some feel that unless a firm commitment is made to pay them compensation they are entitled to obstruct the execution of the work. Indeed, some even think that the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food will assist them to do so. A licence must be issued by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food under part II of the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985, but such licences contain no reference to compensation. Could the parties involved have clearer guidance on the circumstances in which compensation will be paid and the eligibility for central Government funding of that compensation?

In conclusion, I am very grateful for the work of the Select Committee on the Environment and to my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones), its Chairman, for his clear and concise introduction to this debate.

6.24 pm

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): The starting point for the debate must of course be a recognition of the fundamental importance of our coastline and marine environment which provides a unique landscape and habitat, an area of recreational value and a place in which people live and work. It is worth remembering that the potential threats to that marine and coastal environment are considerable.

A survey conducted in April this year by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds covering 126 estuaries around the United Kingdom coast found that there had been substantial changes since its equivalent survey in 1988. A total of 57 estuaries now face the threat of permanent damage compared with only 43 four years ago. The survey highlights the potential dangers to our marine environment.

The Select Committee on the Environment did an excellent job in examining the important and threatened areas of our coastline. I am glad to take the opportunity to join other hon. Members in paying tribute to that Committee and to its former Chairman, under whose chairmanship I and the hon. Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones) served for several happy years, and to welcome the hon. Gentleman to his important task in chairing it now.

The Select Committee report contains a series of well considered, well worked out and important recommendations. In particular, the report identified the problem of incoherence in the way in which we look after and plan for our coastal zones. One and a half pages of the report consist of a list of various structures, agencies, organisations and levels of governmental, non-governmental and local authority interest in the business of protecting our coastal zones. So long as there is such a densely complex system of protection, the protection itself will be inadequate. That is the central message of the Committee's report, which it was absolutely right to identify.

Although encouraging in some respects, the Government's response has been inadequate. The Government are right to identify, for example, the need for environmental impact assessment in some aspects of coastal protection work. I shall deal with that issue in a moment because the Government do not go far enough. They are also right to note that some aspects of port activities will need to be brought into line with the European Community habitats directive and to recognise in some areas of coastline defence the importance of a strategy of managed or controlled retreat. Although some areas will require physical protection—a number have been identified today—there are other areas of our coastline where retreat is perhaps a better option.

Many aspects of the Government's response to the Select Committee report are disappointing. I shall draw the House's attention to some of them. First, the Government fail to recognise the great importance of examining the whole coastal resource and the need to protect all of it, not first designated or especially important areas within it. For example, paragraph 15 of the Government's response reveals a danger of the Government establishing the principle of only partial coverage of the coastline in the preparation of management plans. If we have a strategy which looks only at portions of the coastline and not at the coastline as a whole—a point which was touched on by the hon. Member for Cornwall, North (Mr. Tyler)—if that is the Government's strategy, there is a danger that pressure will move from designated areas of the coastline to other areas which have not been designated.

Secondly, there is undoubtedly a need for greater coherence in the Government's approach to coastal planning and protection. Witness after witness in the Select Committee emphasised the need for a common strategic approach to planning in the coastal zones, and if there are to be joint arrangements between different agencies and local authorities those arrangements must have a clear and coherent strategic aim.

The Royal Town Planning Institute, in its comments on the Government's response to the Select Committee, puts the ball very firmly in the Government's court. It says:

"The response to rationalising the activities of Government Departments and agencies"—

from the Government—

"is almost wholly negative."

Referring to the Government, the institute say:

"It points at more than one part of its response to the number of bodies dealing with similar activities, particularly pollution, research, coastal flooding and protection. As it expects local government to do, so should central government

look critically at the cost-effectiveness of a number of bodies with similar duties and also consider the effects of a sectoral approach on those for whom the services are intended."

The RTPI seems to me to have hit the nail on the head and there is a need for the Government to be more active in looking at the plethora of Government Departments, bodies and organisations with some degree of interest at present in protection of the coastline and to bring about a greater rationalisation. The very concept of coastal zone management as an integrated approach, a concept that sits at the heart of the Select Committee report, is one which I do not believe that the Government have taken on board —and they should.

Thirdly, the Government need to improve their approach to environmental impact assessment for coastal development. Their response goes some way towards addressing that in relation to coastal protection works, but they do not insist on environmental impact assessments for a whole range of other coastal development matters—and they should.

The Council for the Protection of Rural England, for example, proposed that environmental impact assessments should be required for, among other things, offshore oil and gas investigation work, marine dredging, coastal protection works, port and harbour activities currently falling within the scope of permitted development, renewable energy developments, large-scale tourist developments, camping and caravan sites, and fishing operations. Those are valid proposals and the Government should be looking much more attentively at them than they are.

Fourthly, the Government do not do very much to overcome the division which exists in the planning system at present: the division of responsibility between the area onshore and the area offshore. The Select Committee recognised the importance, in habitat terms, of regarding the shore and the sea which adjoins the shore as being a whole in planning terms. The Select Committee's proposal that local planning authorities should be given planning powers which run out into the marine environment and do not just stop at the low water mark is a sensible proposal to which the Government should be giving a more positive response. The ecosystem does not end at the low water mark and the Government should accept that.

Fifthly, the Government have not given a constructive response to the proposal that national policy formulation needs to be much clearer.

Many speakers from both sides of the House have said to the Government that there is a need for a coastal unit to be established within the Department of the Environment and perhaps in due course brought into the environmental protection agency to ensure that we look at the needs of our coastal zone as a whole around the country and in a coherent way. It is vitally important that the Government take on board this proposal from the Select Committee and establish a national policy unit which can provide the sort of strategic overview on a national basis that we desperately need.

Sixthly, the Government are being far too slow in the establishment and designation of marine nature reserves. I appreciate that they are embarking on the marine conservation area approach as an interim exercise, but it is important that they speed up the process of designating marine nature reserves. Had they done so, some of the difficulties in Cardigan Bay that my hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) addressed might have been avoided.

Seventhly, the Government have made some progress on the issue of aggregate and mineral working, but not enough. My hon. Friend the Member for Gower (Mr. Wardell) spoke trenchantly of the difficulties facing parts of his constituency as a result of mineral dredging. The Government need to take this problem more seriously than they have up to now. Moreover, alongside the problem of dredging, they also need to start addressing in a coherent way the problem of super-quarries which is beginning to emerge especially in parts of Scotland. We look forward to better and more stringent guidelines being proposed by the Government and I hope that they will get on with the process quickly.

Eighthly, the Government have rejected the Select Committee proposal in paragraph 109 that pollution control should be brought under the aegis of a single agency, and that if and when the environmental protection agency becomes established that appears to be the obvious place in which to locate pollution control for areas of coastline. Unbelievably, however, the Government say in their response that

"there is no justification for a single agency".

The whole emphasis of the Select Committee report is that there is indeed justification for a single agency, and it is about time that the Government recognised that.

Ninthly, this debate has been characterised by a remarkable degree of gentle and constructive criticism of the Government from both sides of the House. A number of hon. Members from both sides have put the argument that responsibility for coastal defences should be taken away from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. That is long overdue. If the Department of the Environment had the courage to stand up for its own corner and say that it should be responsible, it would have the full support of the Opposition in so doing. We should be happy to join in transferring those responsibilities to a far more logical place than that at which they now rest.

The report also addresses the issue of the Crown Estate Commissioners and the absurdity, which even the Commissioners accept, of their status as both landlord and planning authority. The Commissioners are placed in an invidious position by their dual status, and it is time that their planning and licence-giving functions were transferred, as the Select Committee proposes. The Government, however, want to adopt an evolutionary approach. The trouble with evolutionary approaches is that they tend not to lead anywhere. It is incumbent on the Government to take a lead and to relieve the Crown Estate Commissioners of their planning functions.

The Government's response to the Select Committee reveals little sense of the long-term issues involving the possibilities of climate change, global warming and rising sea levels. They talk about some temporary changes, but they do not seem to take on board the possibility that we may face longer-term phenomena. That speaks volumes about the Government's lack of proper strategic vision. It is clear from the report what the Select Committee believes, which is also what hon. Members on both sides of the House have said in the debate—that the key necessity is a proper strategic method of dealing with the needs of the coastal zone. The Government have got some bits and pieces of the approach right, but I fear that they still have

[Mr. Chris Smith]

a long way to go. There is too little strategy and coherence in their approach. They need to think again, and I seriously urge them to do so.

6.40 pm

The Minister for the Environment and Countryside (Mr. David Maclean): Like the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith), I am grateful to the Select Committee on the Environment and its new Chairman, my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones), whom I warmly congratulate on his election to his post, for ensuring that the House has this opportunity to debate coastal zone protection and planning. I pay tribute, too, to my hon. Friend's illustrious predecessor, Sir Hugh Rossi, for his excellent chairmanship of the Select Committee.

The Select Committee worked in the last Session to a tight timetable to cover what is a very complext subject, and the report which they produced was a valuable contribution to coastal policy. It was especially effective for its exhortation to all of us across Government to look at the whole picture on the coast, and not just particular sectoral concerns.

The Committee's report was wide-ranging, covering the overall framework for coastal zone planning and management, development control, coastal defence, nature conservation, pollution and fishing and the links between all of these. The debate today has been similarly wide-ranging. I confess that I did not come fully briefed for the discussion on old fossils—who are not present in the Chamber.

The Select Committee called for a national coastal strategy. The Government's response made it clear that, although we do not believe in a single all-embracing strategy for the coast—or, as my hon. Friend described it, a "cascade" of national, regional and local plans—we believe in clear statements of national policy which together add up to a coherent whole.

Recent examples of such statements include policy on heritage coasts, and planning policy guidance providing a clear policy steer for development on the landward side of the coastal zone. That PPG—PPG20—makes it clear that development on the coast should be limited to that which genuinely needs to be located there, and guided towards areas that are already largely developed. The undeveloped coast should remain so, largely protected by conservation designations because of its high landscape and nature conservation value. The PPG discourages new development in coastal areas at risk from flooding, erosion and landslip, and it encourages close co-operation between local authorities and interested groups in developing plans for stretches of coast, especially estuaries.

Guidance has already been issued on the response to sea level rise. In December 1991 my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food announced his intention to develop a national flood and coastal defence strategy to provide a comprehensive policy framework which fully reflects environmental concerns. I welcome that, and work on it is now well under way.

Other initiatives include major investment to improve coastal water quality; preparation for implementation of the EC habitats directives; a review of regulation below low water mark; and support for multi-agency estuary and coastal management plans. I assure the House that the review will be extensive and will cover the entire United Kingdom—Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, as well as England. We believe that those initiatives provide a sensible and coherent programme of action to address coastal issues.

Our strategy has three basic strands. First, we need effective statutory protection for our most valuable coastal landscapes and marine and coastal habitats—often of international importance. Much of the coast is already designated and so protected from development through the planning system. We are building on that through designating special protection areas for birds and implementing the habitats directive. I reject any allegation that we are doing that slowly, or have a poor record. We are not slow, and we have a good record.

Secondly, we need effective planning and management structures for coastal land, estuaries and inshore waters, not just for designated areas, but also for undesignated areas which nevertheless form part of our national coastal heritage. Active management is particularly important where there are many potentially conflicting uses, or where an area is of substantial recreational or natural value.

Thirdly, we need a broader strategy for the health of the marine environment, which cannot be confined to any rigid site-based approach but which looks instead at broader issues such as pollution control, fisheries management and species protection.

For the second strand—planning and management of the coast and of estuaries—our framework differs from that proposed by the Committee. The Committee, like many hon. Members who have spoken tonight, wants regional strategies. We want to make sure that management is at the appropriate level for the problem being addressed. That is not to say that we do not believe in a regional perspective here, but that can usefully be provided in the context of regional planning guidance and by regional studies of key issues such as sport and recreation. The coastal recreation strategy by the Southern Council for Sport and Recreation is a good example. But it is at the local level that conflicts between coastal users must be resolved.

Regional coastal cells provide a useful basis for looking strategically at coastal defence against erosion and flooding. That is why my colleagues in MAFF welcomed the development of regional groups of coastal protection authorities and the National Rivers Authority, and are encouraging them to develop coastal defence strategies for their areas.

However, we believe other issues—such as recreational management, nature conservation and interaction, for instance, with fishing and ports operations—are best managed more locally, for instance, around an estuary or along a heritage coast. That means that planning and management is local enough to allow effective consultation with interested groups, and discussion of practical issues. Local authorities can co-operate around an estuary to ensure consistent development plans, and a management approach that considers the estuary as a single ecological system and takes both land and water into account.

That is our approach, and I commend it to the House. When we issued our response, English Nature said:

"We are pleased by the commitment to support the existing informal coastal groups . . . and we believe that it is vital that the Government strongly encourages them to prepare coastal defence strategies for each cell . . . Other types

of activity, for example recreational use and many types of development, are better co-ordinated at a more local scale. We are committed to developing such plans and are currently involved in preparing pilot plans for 13 English estuaries." Our commitment to sustainable management of our coasts is well established, and I believe that the framework that we have adopted provides a firm foundation for further progress.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West, my hon. Friend the Member for Shoreham (Mr. Stephen) and, indeed, the Select Committee argue that, to show their commitment to the coast, the Government should reorganise their bureaucracy and have a single coastal zone unit. We accept the need for a national overview of coastal issues. We have already gone a considerable way down the road to achieving this, with a standing interdepartmental group on coastal policy, which has now been established for well over a year. It has proved a valuable mechanism for discussion. It co-ordinated the Government's response to the Select Committee, and it is now taking forward work reviewing regulation and management below low water mark. The secretariat for this group is in my Department.

It would be a mistake to go beyond this and to argue for a group or unit to take on substantial executive functions. It would not make sense in a complex, heavily populated country such as ours to have a Department for the coast. In many sectors—land use planning, pollution, flood defence and nature conservation—coastal issues are only one aspect of much larger issues. Management of the coast needs to be integrated with management of the rest of the land and of the sea. The coast is not a separate thing that can be hived off to one corner.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West, in his excellent introduction of the report, and other hon. Members, including the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith), suggested that responsibility for coastal defence, and the management of coastal flooding and erosion, should be transferred from the Ministry of Agriculture to the Department of the Environment. We rejected that recommendation.

The reason was simple. The Government do not accept that the present allocation of ministerial responsibilities results in any lessening of our commitment to take full account of environmental concerns in coastal defence policy. Environmental considerations are an integral part of decision-making on flood and coastal defence, as they are in other areas.

My hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, South (Mr. Hawkins) was worried about Blackpool's sea defences. I know that overall expenditure by the Ministry of Agriculture on flood defences has increased dramatically in recent years. However, the demand is practically unlimited. I will draw my hon. Friend's concerns in Blackpool to the attention of my right hon. Friend.

I reject any charges of unnecessarily complicated bureaucracy. All the key players involved in flood defence, whether the Department of the Environment, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food or local councils, know how the system works. I do not believe that there is unnecessary bureaucracy. I do not want flood defence to be transferred to my command. I see no point in that, and I do not especially want it to happen.

It would not make any particular difference. Shuffling name plates on ministerial doors or putting policy into another Department does not remove the need for essential consultation with all the relevant key players.

Mr. Tyler: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Maclean: No. I want to crack on. I have many points to answer, but I will give way at the end if there is time.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West said that the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food's policy on coastal defence was too farmer-orientated. I am sorry to disagree with my hon. Friend, but I must point out that 85 per cent. of Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food funding goes to defences in urban areas, and rightly so. The announcement on coastal policy by my right hon. Friend on 2 December is conclusive proof that the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food is working with natural coastal processes and is ready to consider managed retreat in rural coastal areas.

I point out to the hon. Member for Wansbeck (Mr. Thompson) that we need to work with nature rather than against it when designing coastal defences—a point also made by the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett). The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food is encouraging authorities to adopt soft engineering solutions which are more in sympathy with natural processes. There is a clear presumption against disturbing natural coastal processes unless life or important natural or man-made assets are at risk.

In addition, coastal defence authorities are now expected to consider the potential for managed retreat when assessing options for coastal defences in rural areas. The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food intends to continue to work with English Nature and other interested organisations to explore the many practical questions of how this technique can be deployed to maintain and restore coastal habitat.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West asked about action at European level. The European Commission has not yet published any proposals for a Community strategy for integrated coastal zone management. However, we are devoting considerable effort across Government to implementation of the European Community habitats directive. The Government were in the lead in supporting the adoption of the directive, under which we are committed to species protection and to ensuring designation and effective protection for land and marine sites of Community importance.

The hon. Member for Gower (Mr. Wardell) asked us to review the role of the Crown Estates Commissioners in controlling development generally, and not just marine aggregates dredging. As explained in the Government's response, the Crown Estates Commissioners' regulatory role over development is pretty limited: it is confined to marine aggregates and marine fish farming. The Commissioners' role in both areas is subject to considerable scrutiny. We believe that the best way in which to conduct a more general review is to look comprehensively at existing systems of development control and not only at the small element for which the Commissioners have responsibility.

My hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) gave us a wonderful dissertation on underwater archaeology. He and other speakers have argued that the

[Mr. Maclean]

solution to coastal zone management is to extend the existing land use planning systems and other control systems out to sea. As hon. Members are aware, the Government have undertaken to address the issue in their review of regulation below the low water mark. We are currently working to prepare a discussion paper.

We shall need to look at the existing systems for controlling development below the low water mark and to consider whether there are limitations in those systems which need to be remedied. We shall also need to look at questions such as the balance of advantage for different types of offshore development between decision-making at national and local level and the need for cost-effective involvement of environmental expertise. We must also consider the need for effective local and public involvement, which is terribly important.

My hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight asked about the dumping of dredged material and about the environmental appraisal of such dumping. That issue is under review as part of the Government's review of regulation below the low water mark. I hope that that satisfies my hon. Friend.

My hon. Friend the Member for Harwich (Mr. Sproat) made an elegant plea for us to save the Naze. I regret that so far it has not been possible to find a solution which has resulted in its complete protection. I know that my hon. Friend has pressed the case on behalf of his constituents at the highest levels, and I shall draw his comments tonight to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, who has never been, and could never be, described as an old fossil.

The hon. Member for Denton and Reddish was concerned about oil exploration, among other issues. The ones to which I have an immediate answer concern oil exploration. I shall write to him on the other couple of issues he raised. I can tell him that the Department of the Environment was consulted on the blocks recently offered for oil and gas licensing. The Government's adviser, the Joint Nature Conservation Committee, also gave advice on the implications for sea-birds.

Government policy is to attach special conditions to exploration in sensitive areas to protect the needs of environmental interests, including a ban on drilling during seasons when seabirds may be affected. I shall scan the report of the debate carefully. My hon. Friend the Member for Shoreham raised points about compensation, and I shall write to him about them.

I emphasise that the Government's response to the Select Committee report set out a substantial work programme for the better protection and planning of the coast. I shall not repeat that programme; I shall say merely that further opportunity for public debate on coastal issues will come when we publish our promised discussion paper —or papers—on regulation below the low water mark.

I believe that, in our response and our policy, we have a clear framework for action. We have clear commitments to action. We are committed to ensuring that the principle of sustainable development is applied to our coast. I commend our approach to the House.

6.58 pm

Mr. Robert B. Jones: With leave of the House, I welcome the fact that so many hon. Members who are not members of the Select Committee have taken part in the debate. That speaks for itself, as does the degree of support that hon. Members of all parties have given to the conclusions that we reached.

I have served on the Select Committee on the Environment for nine years. During that time, our conclusions have been rubbished from time to time by the Central Electricity Generating Board, Ministers and others. However, our reports have stood the test of time; I can think of no central recommendation, including the recommendation for the creation of the environmental protection agency, which has not been accepted in the end. The fact that we are making progress a little more slowly than I want does not rule out the acceptance of our recommendations in the end.

I must correct my hon. Friend the Minister who, in an otherwise most interesting speech, implied that the Select Committee was in favour of a new Department of State to deal with coastal management. That is certainly not the case. Our aspiration was that that matter should be managed firmly and accountably within the Department of the Environment.

We have had an interesting and excellent debate. It is, I think, one of the most important features of parliamentary government that we hold debates on estimates and Select Committee reports, and I am grateful to have had the opportunity to initiate this one.

The debate was concluded, and the Question necessary to dispose of the proceedings was deferred, pursuant to paragraph (4) of Standing Order No. 52 (Consideration of estimates).

Banking Co-ordination

6.59 pm

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Anthony Nelson): I beg to move,

That the draft Banking Coordination (Second Council Directive) Regulations 1992, which were laid before this House on 17th November, be approved.

The regulations, which give effect to the second banking directive and, in part, to the second consolidated supervision directive, represent a major new development in the framework for supervising banks in the Community and set the foundations for the single market in banking.

As the regulations implement a Community obligation, they are to be made under the powers provided by the European Communities Act 1972. That Act permits regulations to be made by negative resolution. However, on a matter of such importance—a matter which I know is of considerable interest to a number of hon. Members—it is clearly right to lay the regulations in draft and seek the approval of both Houses before making them.

The United Kingdom was in the forefront of those arguing for the adoption of the second banking directive, which offers opportunities for British banks and benefits for consumers throughout the Community. The financial services industry is, and always has been, one of the United Kingdom's key export earners, and the directive offers major opportunities for British banks and building societies that want to offer their services elsewhere in the Community. Rather than having to obtain separate authorisation from the authorities in each Community member state, banks will now be able to rely on their home state authorisation—the so-called single passport—to conduct a wide range of banking and financial services, whether by establishing a branch in another member state or by providing cross-border services. The directive provides for the streamlining of supervision and the reduction of any barriers to entry that may exist in other member states.

Banks from other member states will also be able to operate in the United Kingdom on the basis of their home state authorisation. The success of United Kingdom financial centres has been won as a result of, rather than in spite of, the openness of our financial markets, so the principle that underlies the second banking directive—that of a market without barriers—goes entirely in the right direction.

The directive goes in the right direction for consumers, too. Banking is already, of course, an international market in many respects, but there may be scope for still more competition and diversity. The services and financial products that have been developed in one market may well catch the appetite of consumers in other parts of the Community. The aim of the second banking directive is to enhance the opportunities for banks to break into new markets, and if it succeeds in doing that, banks throughout the Community will be kept on their toes, which is clearly no bad thing.

It is important that increased competition should not be achieved at the expense of standards of regulation. That concern was at the forefront of the Government's mind when the second banking directive was being negotiated. That is why it is so important that underpinning the single passport regime is an extensive body of common standards on the prudential criteria for authorising and supervising banks. Some of that is in the second banking directive itself, and some in the second consolidated supervision directive, which the regulations also implement.

Other important elements are the own funds and solvency ratio directives, which set detailed solvency rules for credit institutions and which have already been implemented in the United Kingdom. The process of refining common standards will be carried forward in two further directives—one dealing with banks' large exposures, the other setting out capital adequacy rules to cover market risk, which are on the point of adoption in the EC.

The harmonisation of prudential rules is a key element of the answer to those who express the concern that, in the wake of the BCCI experience, it is unwise to proceed with a framework for banking supervision that places such weight on the performance of other countries' supervisors. Quite apart from the fact that the whole second directive framework is about setting common basic standards, however, it is important to consider the positive benefits that flow from achieving a clear basis for assigning supervisory responsibility for internationally active banks. The BCCI case has shown clearly the difficulties that supervisors face in dealing with a complex international conglomerate with an extensive branch network in one country and its head office in another. Assigning full supervisory responsibility to the authority in the bank's home state, with host supervisors in a co-operating but clearly subordinate role, is clearly a sensible way of tackling such situations.

The principle of home state supervision established by the second banking directive framework builds to a great extent on the framework that banking supervisors throughout the world have been developing over the years—mainly through the Basle forum—to deal with internationally active banks.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): What if the home state chosen by the bank were Luxembourg, bearing in mind the fact that, at one stage in the BCCI episode, Luxembourg said that it would prefer it if the Bank of England took over responsibility?

Mr. Nelson: In practical terms, as I shall try to explain, much of the responsibility for supervision may be delegated to the host state bank. Indeed, important responsibilities will remain with the host state bank under the regulations. The right hon. Gentleman has put the key question. These extremely complex regulations enact two important directives and the question at the back of my mind is exactly the question that the right hon. Gentleman poses: will banks authorised in a country—in this case, a country within the European Community—whose supervisor may not subscribe to the highest standards, or may not have the resources to operate such standards, be able to operate here? If the right hon. Gentleman will allow me to make progress, I hope that he will obtain some reassurance from my remarks.

Within the Community, the second banking directive takes the Basle principles to a new point by requiring the principle of mutual recognition of standards to be enshrined in national law.

Thus, the Government remain of the view that the supervisory principles underlying the second banking directive remain valid in a post-BCCI world—indeed, that in many respects, they are part of the process of ensuring

[Mr. Nelson]

that a bank could not in future develop as BCCI developed. That view is echoed in Sir Thomas Bingham's conclusions. Sir Thomas said that nothing in the history of BCCI called for the new Community regime to be substantially revised. Like Sir Thomas, however, we take the view that, within the framework, important issues of detail need to be looked at to ensure that all the lessons of the case are learnt.

Four of the issues that Sir Thomas covered in his recommendations are particularly relevant here. First, he emphasised the importance of the principle that a bank's head office—the location of its mind and management—should be in the same place as its registered office. A recital to the second banking directive makes it clear that member states should require that.

Secondly, Sir Thomas recommended that all supervisors should have powers to refuse authorisation, or to withdraw it once given, where banking groups are structured in such a way as to frustrate effective consolidated supervision.

I am pleased to say that both those potential changes in Community legislation were discussed in outline at the Economic and Finance Council on 23 November, and received a broad welcome both from the Commission and from other member states. The Commission has undertaken to bring forward specific proposals with all possible speed.

Thirdly, the Community needs to look again at the issue of supervisory confidentiality and, specifically, the exceptions to it—the so-called gateways—which enable supervisors to communicate as they need to with others engaged in regulating different aspects of the bank concerned, or with the banking and financial system more generally. Sir Thomas Bingham highlighted the issue of exchanges of information between Community supervisors and those in third countries, and I know that the Commission is keen to look at what can be done to facilitate co-operation and exchange of information in that regard.

Action is also in hand which will meet the last of Sir Thomas Bingham's recommendations on the EC framework, which was that there should be agreement as soon as possible on a Community directive on deposit protection, putting it on a home state basis, to parallel supervision.

The Government fully support that principle and a draft of such a directive is currently being discussed and considerable progress has been made under the United Kingdom presidency. The directive will introduce certain minimum requirements for deposit protection schemes and banks will have to make the protection afforded by their home state available to those who make deposits in their branches in any other member states.

I want now to explain in more detail how the broad principles of the directive have been transposed into United Kingdom law by the regulations that we are debating.

The regulations divide broadly into two main parts—the inward and the outward passports. Taking the inward passport first, the approach of the regulations is to ensure that the authorisation requirements under the Banking Act 1987, the Financial Services Act 1986, the Consumer Credit Act 1974, and the Insurance Companies Act 1982 do not bite on incoming EC institutions in respect of the activities listed in the second banking directive which they are entitled to conduct by virtue of their home state passport.

The regulations set out the categories of institutions which may have passport rights. These include not only the so-called credit institutions—the Community term for bank, defined as an institution which takes deposits and lends—but certain of their subsidiaries. The latter are subject to tight conditions, including a requirement that their parent credit institution holds 90 per cent. of the voting rights in the subsidiary and that they have a full parental guarantee.

The activities liberalised by the directive are listed in the annex to it, which is produced as schedule 1 to these regulations. They range from the familiar banking activities of taking deposits and lending, through a variety of activities regulated under the Financial Services Act, such as dealing in equities or giving investment advice, and include also activities such as safe custody services for which United Kingdom law does not require authorisation.

The precise scope of the activities listed in the directive does not correspond exactly with the coverage of existing United Kingdom regulatory legislation, so, for some activities outside the scope of the passport, incoming European institutions will continue to require authorisation under the Financial Services Act and Consumer Credit Act, as now. This is a complex and technical subject and further guidance on the intepretation of the activities listed in the annex, and their interaction with Financial Services Act and Consumer Credit Act activities, will be made available shortly to the institutions that will be affected.

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West): What progress is being made on investor compensation schemes? I do not think that the matter has yet been finalised, but presumably it will be the subject of a subsequent directive.

Mr. Nelson: Yes. I referred earlier to deposit protection. Investor protection is a separate matter and is some way behind. We have some way to go in making progress on deposit protection, top-up arrangements and various other important aspects, and we have even further to go on the investor compensation schemes. Some countries operate investor protection regimes and others do not. We, as my hon. Friend will know, have such a scheme, so investors here should be protected up to a certain level. That matter is being developed, but it is some way behind deposit protection.

The United Kingdom regulators will be able to exercise powers of restriction and prohibition in relation to incoming institutions. That is the key point in answer to the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith). It is important that, although supervision will vest with a home state authority, there will remain with the host state the ability to exercise certain powers of restriction and prohibition in relation to incoming institutions. I believe that that is set out in regulation 9.

However, in recognition of the reduced role of the host state, the grounds on which they can exercise those powers are narrowed by the regulations. First, there is a specific responsibility for the host state, in co-operation with the home state, to supervise the liquidity of the branches on their territory.

In non-urgent cases the host state's prohibition and restriction powers in respect of liquidity of branches have to be exercised initially by approaching the home state and asking it to take action. However, the directive does provide for the host state to take immediate action in emergencies, and the regulations reflect that.

The host state also retains the right to continue to collect statistical information from EC institutions—banks authorised elsewhere in the Community operating in Britain—in its territory and to require compliance with rules it has adopted in the interests of what the directive describes as "the general good". Prohibitions and restrictions can be imposed for failure to comply with those rules.

The general good is an established concept in Community jurisprudence, the essential principles of which are that the rules should be non-discriminatory, should be proportionate to the ends at which it is directed, and should not duplicate equivalent provision in the home state.

The bulk of the general good rules which will apply to incoming institutions in the United Kingdom consist of conduct of business rules under the Financial Services Act and Consumer Credit Act, rules on advertisements, and the requirement that institutions in the United Kingdom be covered by investor compensation or deposit protection arrangements. The latter will in due course fall away when compensation schemes are moved on to a home state basis. Incoming institutions which join self-regulating organisations will also be subject to their rules in relation to investment business.

On the outward passport, the provisions affecting United Kingdom institutions mirror the provisions for incoming institutions in many respects, particularly as regards the procedures for obtaining the passport.

One of the important concepts that the regulations introduce into the Banking Act is the new concept of a credit institution, which is the nearest the Community has to an agreed definition of a bank. In practice, all building societies and most institutions authorised under the Banking Act qualify as credit institutions. But for the handful of authorised institutions that are not credit institutions, either because they do not lend, or because the deposits they take are not from the public, we need to preserve the Banking Act as it is, which we have done by means of a saving provision in the regulations.

The other important criterion to satisfy if United Kingdom banks and building societies are to be sure of benefiting from the passport is set out in article 18(1) of the directive which says that the passport is granted for all activities listed in the annex to the directive which are "covered by the credit institution's authorisation".

In order to produce a regime which unambiguously delivers that, the regulations set out formal links between the different authorisations which banks may obtain from the different functional United Kingdom regulators for activities on the second banking directive list. The informal communications which already exist between United Kingdom regulators are, in the process, put on a statutory basis, as is the supervision exercised by the Bank and the Building Societies Commission over activities for which at present no specific authorisation requirement exists under United Kingdom law.

We have also had to construct new arrangements to enable United Kingdom bank-owned financial institutions to make use of the article 18(2) passport under the conditions set out in the directive. The regulations therefore set up a framework for the Bank and the Building Societies Commission to exercise supervisory powers over those institutions, to the extent that they wish to use the banking directive passport to operate in other member states.

The regulations also make provision that is necessary to implement the EC second consolidated supervision directive. The purpose of that directive is to extend the range of circumstances in which supervision of a credit institution has to be conducted on a consolidated basis. Consolidated supervision means, in this context, that supervisors have to be satisfied about the solvency, large exposures and internal control systems not just of the credit institution in its own right, but when taken together with other credit institutions or financial businesses elsewhere in the same group structure. The aim of consolidation is to enable the risks to which the supervised bank is exposed to be properly assessed.

The first consolidated supervision directive established the principle of consolidated supervision for banking groups, whose parent is a credit institution. The new directive goes beyond that, to require consolidation of financial holding companies where a financial institution has as its subsidiaries, either exclusively or mainly, banks or financial institutions, so long as there is at least one bank. The bulk of the directive will be implemented through revised Bank of England and Building Societies Commission prudential notes, to be issued shortly, but the regulations supplement that by providing the investigation powers that are necessary for other EC supervisors whose exercise of consolidated supervision requires them to investigate entities in the United Kingdom.

The regulations also enable the Bank of England to assist other member states' authorities in those cases.

The regulations that we are debating are, by any standards, long and complex. Without wishing to sound patronising, I am grateful to the House for bearing with me while I go through, in some detail, what some might regard as rather tedious regulations. Others will know that they are extremely important regulations, which will directly affect our banking community, and millions of individual, industrial and corporate customers of banks. They will crucially affect our prospects of taking full advantage of the single market. I know that the House will understand why it was important to set out the regulations in some detail for the benefit of the industry and for hon. Members who take an interest.

The drafting of the regulations has benefited greatly from the many helpful comments received during consultation with the institutions affected, the trade bodies that represent them, consumer bodies and other interested parties. They represent the first step in the process of turning the single market in banking into a practical reality.

The next step is for institutions to take advantage of the opportunities that the process presents. Financial services is an industry where United Kingdom firms are exceptionally well placed to make the most of new markets abroad. In an age when businesses and individuals are becoming ever more financially sophisticated, the prospects of greater competition, innovation and choice will receive an enthusiastic welcome throughout the Community. It is for that reason that I am confident that the regime that the regulations usher in is the right way ahead, and I commend them to the House.

7.21 pm

Mr. Alistair Darling (Edinburgh, Central): The Minister should console himself with the fact that while he explained the regulations, which are indeed long and complicated, the Chamber has slowly filled. If another place that we are not allowed to mention has been cleared during the Minister's speech, I am sure that he will understand that it is because there is a narrow, if not important, interest in such matters.

The directive will open up the European market in banking and financial services and therefore the principle is right, which is why we shall not oppose it. As the Minister said, Britain has a justifiable lead in the provision of banking and financial services in London and many other parts of the United Kingdom. The industry is a major employer and earner of foreign currency. None the less, substantial concerns remain, and I shall draw those to the attention of the House because unless action is taken serious problems may arise.

The introduction of the European second banking directive will mean a dog's breakfast of regulations throughout Europe, leaving the investor and depositor wondering who to see and where to go when things go wrong in many cases. The directive may allow institutions to shop around for the poorest and least efficient system of regulation, just as the Bank of Credit and Commerce International was able to do. In many cases, the consumer will have no idea where a European bank or financial institution is regulated or what regulation means in each case. The consumer will not necessarily know which body is responsible for regulation in each country. In this country we have six main regulatory bodies. The consumer will not know what safeguards, if any, and compensation exist because the regulatory and compensation systems are different in each European Community member state.

I am in favour of competition in banking services and the services provided by financial institutions, but for there to be competition the depositor or investor needs to be able to make an informed choice about what is on sale and what safeguards are available in the event of failure or complaint. The problem is that each EC member state has a different financial system. A bank in Germany is different from a bank in Britain. The regulatory systems are also different and there are different expectations and standards in each EC member state, let alone those countries which expect to join the EC.

In Britain, we have a multitude of regulatory bodies and a continuing debate about what we need. It is necessary for us to draw attention to some of the problems in the United Kingdom so that we can better understand the potential for problems once the directive becomes operational on 1 January. It is regrettable that the Minister seems to have surrendered in the fight to improve City regulation, when he has not been in office for much more than six months. He said that the Government will not introduce legislation, which is vital if we are to regulate banking services in the 1990s and beyond. By telling the *Financial Times* on 4 December that the Government will not overhaul the system, which has some spectacular failures behind it, he is allowing the future of regulation to be dominated by producer group interests.

Nowhere is that illustrated more clearly than in the debate surrounding the setting up of the Personal Investment Authority, which has been dominated by producer group interests while those of the consumer have been left on the sidelines.

Regulation must be as clear and straightforward as possible if it is to succeed. Above all, it must be respected by producer and consumer interests alike. The Government have a duty to give a lead, and they have conspicuously failed to do so. The debate has gone on long enough. It is time to stop the platitudes and to set up a system with clout and, above all, with respect.

Mr. Butterfill: What grounds has the hon. Gentleman for those remarks about the Personal Investment Authority consultation? So far as I am aware, the Consumers Association has been active in making representations and has suggested that there should be greater consumer representation on the PIA. We are awaiting a report from the Office of Fair Trading, so what justification does the hon. Gentleman have for those extraordinary remarks?

Mr. Darling: Every justification. If the hon. Gentleman considers reports in the specialist and the general press surrounding the setting up of the PIA, he will find that there was an unseemly squabble between vested interests and the industry. I know that the Consumers Association and many others have made representations and that some amendments have recently been made, but if the hon. Gentleman studies the proposed composition of the PIA board he will find that it is dominated by the producer groups. The argument turned on which interests should be represented on the board. Would it not have been far better to have a smaller board, with an overall view, rather than trying to produce a board which simply represented the various interests which had to be catered for, especially producer group interests?

The Consumers Association has put forward its views, and many people have expressed concern. Even the Minister did so in his interview with the *Financial Times* last week. The debate surrounding the setting up of the PIA has been dominated by producer group interests, who are understandably concerned about the growing compensation claims made as a result of the failure of members of the Financial Intermediaries, Managers and Brokers Regulatory Association. I recollect that the hon. Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill) has some knowledge of those matters and an interest in the subject, and I understand why he intervened to say what he did. However, I am sure that he will accept that a casual look at the reports and discussions surrounding the setting up of the PIA will confirm my suspicions and those of many people who were involved. I was speaking to some of them today. The debate has been dominated by the interests of the producer groups, rather than by those of the people who will buy the products.

Mr. Butterfill *rose*—

Mr. Darling: I shall not give way as I do not wish to be dragged into a debate on the PIA. I hope that we shall return to that subject in the early part of next year, perhaps just after the referendum is conducted among would-be members. The hon. Gentleman may well catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I do not wish to get bogged down while discussing developments in Europe.

I mentioned the need for proper regulation, and I can think of no better authority to quote than the present

Secretary of State for Social Security who, as we know, is keen on proper regulation of the markets. When the House debated a similar instrument in February 1989, the now Secretary of State for Social Security—then the Economic Secretary—said:

"However, it is a mistake to suppose that a good regulatory regime will generally make banks authorised under it less competitive than those authorised under a weak regulatory regime. On the contrary, most customers would prefer to deal with banks which they know to be authorised and supervised by a strict and prudent regulator than banks authorised by a lax and incompetent regulator".

I could not have put it better myself. Would that it were true. It is ironic that the then Economic Secretary should have gone on to say:

"However, he"—

the consumer—

"will be guided in his judgment by the standards applied by the supervisory body. The expression 'as safe as the Bank of England' still quite rightly carries weight in people's minds. It lends an extra attraction to British banks".—[*Official Report*, 9 February 1989; Vol. 146, c. 1230-31.]

I wonder if he knew that, even as he spoke, the Bank of England was propping up the BCCI and embarking on a course of action which would ultimately end in calamity. Perhaps the Economic Secretary of the time did not know what was happening, but the general point that he was making about the need for efficient and effective regulation was good and underpinned everything that I shall say tonight about the need for the same efficient and hard-hitting regulation, which is vital not only in this country but in Europe as a whole.

Before dealing with the impact of the directive, I repeat what I said on 6 November, when the House last debated these issues on that occasion in connection with the Bingham report. Two actions are necessary to put the United Kingdom regulatory house in order. First, there must be changes to the banking supervision legislation in the wake of the BCCI disaster. The then Economic Secretary conceded that point.

For example, we must prevent forum shopping. That is of direct relevance when discussing the instrument now before the House because there is a substantial risk that some banks or institutions may be tempted to forum shop. I appreciate that the directive provides that host and home countries should do their best to avoid doing that. It is an illustration of where the rules are not deficient but where the will and effective machinery are not present to ensure that it happens.

I remind the House that what went wrong in respect of BCCI was not that the Bank of England did not have the power to regulate, but that it did not actually do it. So it is no good the Minister saying tonight that the directive provides machinery to ensure that people will not move around Europe looking for the least effective regulatory system. We must be sure that in each and every member state a regulatory regime is in place to ensure that it does not and cannot happen.

As I said, we do not yet have that system in the United Kingdom, and our regulatory system is much better than that existing in some member states of the EC. If we cannot get this right ourselves, we are in no position to complain when other EC member states do not have an efficient system.

The need for additional duties for auditors—which hon. Members in all parts of the House accept to be necessary—will, I hope, be implemented throughout the EC. We have seen in this country, in the case of Maxwell, how comparatively easy it is to deceive auditors in one country. I wonder how much easier it would be for someone to deceive auditors if institutions are carrying on business in different EC states at the same time.

The need to provide for a lead regulator is of crucial importance, and the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) drew attention to that. While the mechanism may in theory be there, many of us are concerned that in practice it may not be in place. There will be many cases of institutions using the directive even though they have their headquarters in one country but be substantially transacting their business in another. It is important to ensure that the regulators in both, or all, the countries concerned make sure that there is a lead regulator and that, at the end of the day, someone accepts responsibility.

In discussing the Bingham report, we saw the difficulties which could arise when one country takes a considerable interest in those issues and there is one bank. In that case it was the Bank of England. We witnessed the difficulty involved in getting the different parts of that bank to focus on a growing problem. How much more important it is to ensure that we have a mechanism which will take account of the fact that institutions will get into trouble not just in one but in many member states, and probably in states which are not in the EC.

Ms. Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): My hon. Friend referred to the concern felt by many of us lest the directive lead to lowest common denominator regulations. Institutions may deliberately place themselves in a country such as Luxembourg, which has notoriously lax regulatory standards. As my hon. Friend said, a latent power is not enough. It is necessary to ensure that it is used to achieve proper regulatory standards.

I am sure that people involved in financial services would like to hear the Minister explain how the Government intend to raise regulatory standards in countries such as Luxembourg. We on the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee have heard from Bank of England officials how they are in discussions with Luxembourg monetary officials. As we have pointed out, however, discussions are not enough. Luxembourg has hundreds of banks and a handful of regulators. Unless there is an adequate system to raise standards, we shall continue to fear that lowest common denominator regulatory standards will apply, especially for the ordinary investor and depositor.

Although it is not wholly relevant to today's debate, we must at some stage consider the whole question of financial regulation in this country and whether we have reached the point at which we should consider splitting the Bank of England's functions so that, as in other countries, we have a separate regulatory body regulating financial institutions.

Mr. Darling: I do not know whether my hon. Friend was present for the debate on the Bingham report when I, too, said that the Government would have to examine the last point that she made in her intervention. We on these Benches are considering whether those functions should be split.

My hon. Friend made an equally good point about Luxembourg and other countries. Had Switzerland decided to continue to move towards and then join the EC,

[Mr. Darling]

other problems might have been brought into sharper focus. Switzerland makes a virtue of the fact that some of its regulations, particularly the secrecy available in that country, are an attraction for people to bank there. If one day Switzerland joins the EC—I suspect that it will, though I do not know when—we shall then have to consider how the directive will work there.

As I have said, there are different standards, expectations and requirements. I welcome the fact that the directive will be in force because without it there would be greater problems, but the Minister must explain what he intends to do to ensure that we go on to the logical next step, which is to ensure that, having got the framework in place, we have an efficient regulatory system in every EC member state. We may have the framework, but we do not have it in practice, and my hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbott) was right to draw attention to that.

I have been talking about the need to get our banking supervision in order. The logical next step is to end the dispute about the future of financial services regulation. I regret that, in his interview with the *Financial Times* last week, the Minister conceded more ground than he had to. We should build on what we have rather than scrap the whole system. It would be a mistake to tear everything down and try to return to the situation which prevailed before 1986.

Some of our regulatory system works well, but some of it does not. The Securities and Investments Board should be without a direct regulatory role, though it should have overall responsibility for providing an actively policed system, preferably through two self-regulatory organisations. I would differentiate between the SROs which would deal with institutions—or at least with people who could be expected to be properly advised and thus have a degree of protection behind them—and the SROs which would deal with what one might call the retail end of the market. The differentiation relates to the product rather than to the institutions themselves. There would possibly have to be another SRO dealing with pension regulation. That is outside the scope of tonight's debate, though we shall have to return to that subject in view of the controversy.

The Government must give a lead to ensure that the regulatory system works and is readily understood. The idea of a Personal Investment Authority is welcome, but I have grave doubts about what it would do, if it could be got off the ground, and the threats made by some institutions do not augur well for its future.

Having put the United Kingdom's house in order, or at least by the end of the debate extracted a promise from the Minister that he will attempt to do that, I shall deal now with the problems in the EC, particularly those arising as a result of implementation of the directive. Is it possible for consumers to identify where each institution is regulated so that they know where they stand? I have in mind a simple notice on the front door saying where the regulator is. The Commission may decide that that is anti-competitive, but it seems to be exactly the assistance needed to ensure that there is adequate competition, so that anyone entering a bank or financial institution will know where it is regulated. If it says, "This organisation is regulated in Luxembourg" and the institution next door says that it is regulated in the United Kingdom or Germany, the consumer can take that into account in deciding whether to proceed further.

Many institutions in this country have British names and are well recognised but are owned by organisations and institutions based in other EC countries. For example, Cornhill Insurance, a well known company, is owned by a German company. Although the specialists and everyone in the House knew that, I doubt whether the customers of Cornhill knew it. I wonder how many customers of Sun Life know that a French company has a 26 per cent. holding in it. Those who invest and deposit are entitled to know who regulates a particular organisation.

The passport system has substantial merit, but only if we know what that passport means. In evidence to the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee, which appears in the Fourth Report on banking supervision prepared in conjunction with the collapse of BCCI in the 1991-92 Session, the British Bankers Association made the following useful observation:

"there is a danger that the somewhat vague specifications of the duties"—

contained in the draft directive—

"of the host supervisor may generate an element of confusion and, thereby, in certain circumstances, allow gaps to occur in the overall scrutiny of an institution's activities".

That point is well made and the Government must take account of it.

It is also important to provide what is called, in City jargon, "a level playing field". I understand that the investment service directive has now been substantially agreed, but it is not to be implemented for about three years. If that is so, where does it leave the many institutions in this country which will not be covered by the banking directive but rely on the investment services directive to receive sufficient authorisation to trade in other EC countries?

When discussing that point in the same debate to which I referred earlier, the then Economic Secretary to the Treasury, now the Secretary of State for Social Security, said:

"But if the second banking directive were enacted before the investment services directive, continental banks offering investment services could be given an unfair headstart over the specialist firms. Fortunately, we have been reassured by the Commission's clear statement that its intention is for both directives to be implemented at the same time."—[*Official Report*, 9 February 1989; Vol. 146, c. 1232.]

I do not believe that that has happened—if I am wrong, the Minister will tell me. I understand that the investment services directive is some three years away. Clearly, that will prejudice the operation of many institutions in this country which need their own directive to start trading in other EC member states. I hope that the Government will urge the Commission to do something about that.

What will happen in cases where the United Kingdom presently regulates if it has to withdraw because the area is regulated by another EC country? How can we be sure that those areas where we no longer regulate because a passport has been obtained by an incoming company will be regulated by another EC country? How will depositors and investors be directed where to go? What happens if they go somewhere else? Many institutions will have their activities regulated partly in their home country and partly in their host country. What will happen to new countries admitted to the EC with no experience of banking supervision in a modern society? How are we to ascertain

where an activity in terms of the directive is carried out? For example, is a money-lending activity carried out where the agreement is made or where the money is passed over?

Those matters may be crucial in the event of a dispute. How will the regulators know what they still need to regulate, for example, where an EC institution provides commodities futures business? Importantly, do the United Kingdom regulators have the resources to look after those problems? Although the Bank of England has had many successes, we know that it has had problems with BCCI. We also know that there are problems with the SIB's self-regulatory organisation. I doubt, for instance, that the Financial Intermediaries, Managers and Brokers Regulatory Association could possibly cope with those new obligations because it is already struggling. Is the Minister confident that this country, let alone other EC member states, has sufficient powers to deal with the problems facing us?

How will prudential supervision be exercised with head offices in one state but much of the business in another? The Minister said that the structure exists to deal with that, but what will happen in practice? Is not that where the whole ethos of self-regulation breaks down? Self-regulation depends on people knowing the business and when to blow the whistle. It is difficult enough to do that in one city, let alone several EC countries. The idea that the industry will know what is going on in every corner of Europe and be able to give a nod to the regulator is patently ludicrous.

The scope for abuse—for another BCCI, another home income plan failure or pension scandal—is immense unless there is active, efficient regulation within the United Kingdom and the EC. There is a substantial risk that the supervisory systems will be harmonised down to the most basic level, not up the highest level. If I am wrong, the Minister will tell us what he intends to do to ensure that that does not happen.

The question of compensation is important. I am glad to hear that the deposit protection directive is under way, but sorry to hear that the investor protection measures are some way down the line. Schemes throughout the EC differ greatly. Here our investor compensation scheme under the Financial Services Act 1986 is not working well. Again, I cite the home income plan problem. However, if self-regulation is to continue, it is important that the compensation schemes work, because compensation is one of the best ways to ensure that self-regulation works.

We shall continue to see banks and institutions with British names owned elsewhere in the EC. I hope that we shall see the same thing happening with British firms owning EC institutions. It is all to the good, provided that they are properly regulated. Legislation to set up a regulatory system with teeth is good for the consumer, efficient for the industry, and vital for the good name of the City. Good regulation is a good selling point and will ensure the sale of good quality products.

We have a justifiable lead in providing banking and financial services and it is vital that the directive does not tempt a lowering of standards in the name of harmonisation. I cannot say that I am optimistic. Although the Minister is tempted to throw in the towel about the argument at home, I hope that the Government have the stomach to continue the fight for high standards in Europe. Above all, we need a clear statement of what the Government intend to do at the next stage to ensure that the framework in the directive is built upon, so that the interests of investors and depositors, and the reputation of those institutions, are maintained at a high standard.

7.48 pm

Mr. Terence L. Higgins (Worthing): I shall not detain the House for more than a few moments. We have a massive document before us and I could raise many points arising from its wording. However, there would be little point in doing so, because we must either take it or leave it. We have no way to amend the vast amount of wording, although much of it relates to other legislation to which the House has paid considerable attention in the past. That is not a satisfactory position. As we do not have time to examine the document in detail, I shall simply make one or two technical points.

On page five the basis on which the regulations are made is said to be the fact that

"the Treasury are a government department designated (a) for the purposes of section 2(2) of the European Communities Act 1972".

I greatly welcome the fact that my hon. Friend the Minister has taken over responsibility for financial matters, because I always thought that the split between the Department of Trade and Industry and the Treasury was not a happy one. Various matters tend to fall, if I may use the expression, between the two stools.

The regulations cover several matters relating to the Insurance Companies Act 1982 which I understand have not been transferred from the Department of Trade and Industry to my hon. Friend the Minister. The basis on which the order is made refers to the Treasury. I have forgotten why that Act refers to the Treasury when all other cases refer to the Secretary of State being a designated Minister. Suddenly, when we get to page 58 we find that, like the smile on the face of the Cheshire cat after it has departed, there is reference to a Secretary of State having power to deal with such matters. It is not clear why that does not appear at the beginning of the authority for making such regulations. Generally speaking, it does not seem to be a satisfactory way to proceed.

My second point is that we are renowned for regularly implementing European Community directives by producing such regulations. One feels bound to say that other countries seem to be much slower at implementing directives. That can have a serious adverse affect on British companies in the interim period. I think that we should have a set rule that, whenever we have a specific directive to implement, we should be told in the clearest terms the extent to which other countries in the EC have already taken such action. Perhaps my hon. Friend can explain the position. In many instances I think that we go ahead of the game, which has an adverse effect on British companies.

Given what I have said about the inability to amend such documents, I am worried that there is a tendency for regulations of this sort, which implement a particular directive, to be used to extend legislation on other matters beyond the strict scope of the directive. If that is so, it is done without our having the ability to amend it. I have a suspicion—I put it no higher than that—that some of the regulations are being used to make changes to our law which, on the strict interpretation of the directive, are not necessary, but which would otherwise need to be put before the House in a form of amendable legislation.

These are technical issues. None the less, in terms of the House getting a grip on what is happening, not merely in

[Mr. Terence L. Higgins]

the European legislation, but in the powers that go beyond the requirements of European directives, the issues are important. I take the opportunity to bring those matters to the attention of the House. Perhaps the various bodies in the House could give further consideration to whether possible abuses of this sort—I am not saying that it is so in this case; my hon. Friend will tell me whether it is so—can be avoided.

7.54 pm

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): The final remark of the right hon. Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) echoed a theme which the Prime Minister took up on other aspects of Community legislation relating to the environment and health. Certainly, from my experience, it seems that there are times when those in the United Kingdom who should be implementing the regulations seem to use them to ride other hobby horses which go far beyond the original intention. It would be welcomed if the Government examined the matter generally.

The Government should do something to put the genuine activities of the Community and the Commission, such as the single market, in their proper context and see them for what they are, not cause them to be complained about because of other things that have subsequently been added to them. That is a sensible suggestion which the Government may care to examine.

Many people will be disappointed to learn that the second banking directive is not a directive to British banks to pass on interest rate reductions to their customers, to have a sensible long-term policy towards small business and to stop imposing charges on customers without telling them in advance that they are doing so.

We must break the sad news to our constituents that the second banking directive is of a different character. Nevertheless, it is important to them because it is necessary to ensure that we have adequate banking supervision in the future and that banking and financial institutions and financial services can take advantage of the single market. Indeed, it is a field in which we would expect the United Kingdom to do well, with its considerable experience and expertise in financial services.

The recent experience of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International case must cause us to examine with great care banking supervision and the dangers that might lie in a bank being supervised from a country that could not manage that supervision well. It is not a chauvinistic or nationalistic point. In that context, it must be said that the Bingham report revealed that the Bank of England showed many deficiencies in its supervision of BCCI. Therefore, we are not holding Britain up as an example of a country which has perfect banking supervision.

The BCCI case also showed that Luxembourg was clearly nowhere near adequate to the task of being the lead regulator of the BCCI. The Luxembourg authorities became conscious of that fact, and drew the attention of other countries' regulators to it. At one stage the Luxembourg authorities would have welcomed the Bank of England, where so much more BCCI business was being done, taking on the responsibility of the regulator.

The Minister dealt carefully with many aspects of the matter in his thoughtful and lucid remarks. He gave some reassurance, not least that the matter was actively in his mind and that he was seeking in various other ways to extend the available protection and improve banking supervision, which is deficient.

I do not want to go into the details of the BCCI case because more discussions about it will take place. The Treasury Select Committee still has the matter in its sights and will have further discussions about it. The Committee has issued reports that bear on the matters which we are discussing tonight. The Committee expressed concern about the second banking directive in its fourth report, to which reference has already been made. The Committee also expressed anxiety about the assessment of regulations—how we will know that we can rely on the capacity of other countries as lead regulator and how they will know that they can rely on us.

The absence of any real system to assess supervisory standards was the focus of specific comment by the Committee. The Committee said that there was clearly a need for some mechanism to assess supervisory standards. At present, all we have is the Basle committee. The matter is not the responsibility of that committee. It does not have that sort of locus, any formal machinery or any standing to judge the supervisory standards in member countries, let alone non-member countries. It is a matter of continuing concern which I hope the Government will keep actively in mind.

The issue has been raised by other hon. Members, and I think that perhaps sufficient has been said to alert Ministers to the widespread concern. The report raises a question of how we will organise banking supervision in the United Kingdom in the future. The BCCI case has focused attention on banking supervision, and caused many of us to believe firmly that there is a case for separating banking supervision from the work of the Bank of England as monetary authority. I believe that the Bank should have independent responsibility in the conduct of monetary policy. In some ways that makes a much stronger case for separating those two areas. If anything, the United Kingdom has it the wrong way round. Perhaps the Bank should have been more accountable for its supervision of the banking system and less subject to accountability for monetary policy.

I hope that the Government will continue to examine the arguments for a system such as the German one in which a separate institution has responsibility for banking supervision, but which draws on the experience and knowledge of the Bundesbank.

There can be no effective system of monitoring and supervision that does not draw on the expertise which the central bank is bound to have. But there is a strong case for a separate focus of responsibility. Also, there is obviously a clear case, so long as the system remains in its present form, for a substantial reorganisation of the Bank of England, such as it has already begun. I must add that I remain concerned that there appears to have been no disciplinary action and no resignation and no one has moved jobs within the Bank of England following the BCCI case.

I see the directive as an appropriate part of the moves towards a single market. But before the Commission becomes too excited about its successes in moving towards a single market, it should look at other matters on which progress seems to be slow. The hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) mentioned the insurance market. I understand that the pensions fund

directive has not yet been fully agreed. That is another area of financial services in which uncertainty remains and sufficient progress has not been made.

The more that we move towards the single market, the more apparent it will become that it is difficult to operate a single market in financial services without a single currency. It will also become more apparent that the movement of capital, which is inherent in a free market in financial services, will make it difficult for national currencies to maintain their position.

If institutions increasingly operate across national boundaries with free movement of capital and if that movement is further enhanced by the freedom of customers in each of the member countries to place their deposits with, or take their loans from, banks in other countries, the amount of capital flow across frontiers will become ever larger and will increasingly dwarf the reserves available to central banks to defend individual currencies. That reinforces my view that we must move to a single currency if we wish to operate a free market—which I do.

I know from the speeches that the Minister made before he took up his ministerial post that I shall receive a sympathetic hearing from him. I do not wish to embarrass him unduly, but I hope that he is fighting his corner on the issue in government. The capital movements that are implicit in the single market in financial services, along with the effects that we have already seen of the removal of restrictions on capital movement, will become incompatible with the maintenance of national currencies at differentiated levels by traditional means.

Increasing capital movements will make it that much more imperative that we stop talking about opting out of the single currency and dedicate ourselves to achieving the convergence conditions. I cannot understand why anyone is against the convergence conditions. They are supposed to be good for the economy in any case, so we should hardly argue about them.

I see the directive as part of the process of development in Europe, which it is difficult for Britain not to be part of, still less stop. However, that does not stop me wishing to express anxieties about whether, when combined with other regulations under discussion, the directive will be sufficiently effective in protecting bank customers from experiences such as that which BCCI customers faced. There will never be another fraud like BCCI. It is a mistake to design one's system to suit the last fraud. But it certainly will not be the last banking fraud. Our system must be strong enough to be alert to and deal with potential fraud.

8.3 pm

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Minister on the action that he has taken in bringing the directive before the House. It is true to say that the regulations amend some important legislation that we passed in the House after lengthy debate. I participated in scrutinising some of that legislation, such as the Banking Act 1987 and the Financial Services Act 1986.

We must recognise that the financial services sector is important for the United Kingdom. The ability of our financial institutions to operate freely throughout the European Community is of vital national interest to us. There are immense opportunities for British business in that sector.

I pay tribute to the work done by the Minister and his colleagues in the Treasury in securing the directive. It is true that the restraints and controls in many other European countries are not so strong as in Britain, but I am reassured by the fact that those who operate in the United Kingdom under the terms of the directive will come under the control and supervision of the relevant supervisory authorities in the United Kingdom.

The hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) complained about investor compensation. He should remember that the United Kingdom is the only EC country which has in place an effective compensation scheme. The reason why we have not reached a conclusion on that is largely the inadequacy of the provisions in other member countries. The hon. Gentleman would be right to say that we must not drop our standards: we must try to persuade other countries to conform to them. However, to denigrate our standards when by and large the Financial Services Act has worked well is an unfortunate line to take.

Mr. Darling: The hon. Gentleman is wrong. There are investor compensation schemes in other EC countries. Admittedly, some of them are not very good—that was my point. I accept that we have such a scheme in Britain, but I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will accept that it is not without justifiable criticisms.

Mr. Butterfill: I accept that our schemes are not yet perfect. They are being developed. They are self-regulatory regimes. That is infinitely preferable to a statutory form of regulation, which the Labour party views with some enthusiasm. Countries which have such regimes do not view them with quite the same enthusiasm. They look at ours with envy. Nevertheless, our schemes could be improved. I hope that the Personal Investment Authority will be established and will do its work in a much more efficient way than the present components of what will be the PIA. I have some doubts about whether that can be achieved without further legislation.

It will probably be necessary to give the Securities and Investments Board the power to direct people into a particular self-regulatory organisation and get rid of the SIB's own regulatory organisation—which is an unfortunate development. Not many of us anticipated the development of that organisation when we debated the Financial Services Act 1986.

On balance, we can feel some satisfaction with the system that we have set in place in Britain. It is infinitely superior to that which exists elsewhere in the Community and in the world. Our byword must be to improve consistently on it, not simply to run it down. Therefore, I congratulate the Minister on the work that he has done on the directive. I wish him success in future discussions on other aspects of financial services.

8.7 pm

Mr. Nelson: With the leave of the House, I should like to respond to the debate. I thank all hon. Members for their contributions to the debate. It is an important subject, as all who spoke recognised. It directly affects the prospects, employment and profitability of the services offered by our banking and financial services community and industry in Europe. Several of the points that have been made in the debate are extremely cogent. They will

[Mr. Nelson]

certainly be taken on board by the Government. They are helpful to me in scrutinising future legislation and the implementation of other directives.

The hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) started and finished by talking about the separate but related issue of financial services regulation and supervision. He suggested that I had thrown in the towel at an early stage in my ministerial career on that issue. I hasten to assure him that the principles which lay behind many of the representations that I made as a Back-Bencher are alive and well in the Treasury. I am seeking as best I can, as I did then, to improve depositor and investor protection in Britain. However, given the collective wisdom of fellow Ministers, it is not always as easy to say or do certain things as it was on the Back Benches. I hope that I shall not "go native" too fast, because the matters involved are important, and not subjects of partisan difference.

I think that I agreed with what I thought the hon. Gentleman was saying. I do not want to abandon the existing legislative structure; I see no great advantage in embarking on early, hasty and wholesale reform of our supervision of financial services. After all, such reform visits great uncertainty and great costs on the industry. Unless there is consensus on what is to replace the current arrangements, and a clear way forward which will deliver higher standards of investor protection, it is a foolhardy Government who embark on such a course without lengthy consideration and consultation.

As I have suggested outside the House—I hope that we shall have further opportunities to debate these critical issues inside it—I believe that much can be done within the existing structure to beef up the system of supervision and regulation within the Financial Services Act. It would not be wise to toss aside legislation passed by the House of Commons, to undermine the authority of those who are trying to do a good job, and to embark on an uncertain course.

Mr. Darling *rose*——

Mr. Nelson: Let me make a point that relates to what the hon. Gentleman and others have said about compensation. There is a growing feeling in financial services and banking that there is a trade-off between the costs of supervision and regulation on the one hand, and the costs of paying compensation on the other. Many people would be content to pay for a high standard of supervision and regulation if they did not expect to have to pay increasing amounts of compensation, which this year has amounted to some £50 million.

Mr. Darling: I wholeheartedly agree with what the Economic Secretary has said about compensation and the need for tough regulation. I also appreciate that, as a member of the Government, he is not an entirely free agent: as long as the Chancellor remains his boss, he may find that he is constrained. Does he accept, however, that —while there is much to be said for legislating in broad agreement with all the people who will be affected—unless the Government say that they are prepared to step in and take a lead, many people who do not want change and are happy for the present mess to continue will see what he has said as a sign that that can go on for much longer, perhaps for years, before the Government are driven to act? I urge the Economic Secretary to get a grip on the situation now, rather than waiting until another crisis turns up on our doorstep.

Mr. Nelson: I hear what the hon. Gentleman says, but imperatives of a different order are also at work. There is, for instance, the liability that institutions and SROs are having to incur to raise the money among their authorised firms to pay for new orders of compensation: that in itself is driving the case for reforms. It is not really a question whether the Government are forthright or reluctant to bring about change: change is being forced on the system in any event. The City wanted self-regulation, and it now has a high degree of self-regulation; so it must now self-regulate.

In the process of consultation over PIA, I look to the SROs and the firms involved to find a positive way forward. I am limited in what I can and should say about such matters at this stage, but that strikes me as a way forward that is on offer—a way that takes account of the representations that have been made, and the latest response to the consultation process. That reponse has pointed to a number of important changes that should give confidence to potential participants. I hope that a positive, constructive approach to the PIA proposals will be adopted.

The hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central said that it was not enough for supervisors to have the powers: they must exercise those powers. That point was echoed by the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith), and I think that it was the most critical observation of all. Even if we have the best possible system of supervision, if we do not have the right people and the willingness to exercise the powers concerned the system will be wasted. Similarly, a deficient system may work if good people are operating it. A perfect system can never be arrived at, but any system will involve problems. We can do much to improve resources, in terms of ability, numbers and the financial resources available to supervisors and regulators; we can build on the excellent work that has already been done.

The hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central spoke of the duty placed on auditors to report. That duty was announced in response to Sir Thomas Bingham's report on BCCI. Rightly, it will be subject to consultation with the professional bodies; it is important that we get it right. The bodies concerned are adopting an extremely constructive approach, for which I am grateful. I also appreciate what the hon. Gentleman said about the common approach of hon. Members on both sides of the House to the need for a duty on auditors to report.

The hon. Gentleman asked about notices on doors; he wanted to know whether people would be aware that a European institution was different from an authorised bank, and would know what sort of country was supervising that institution. Registers will be issued by the Bank of England and other institutions clearly stating the identity of the home country and the home supervisor. There will be procedures to ensure that misleading names are not used by companies passporting their services into other countries.

It is not possible to go too far down that line, however: at the end of the day, we are aiming for a common market for these services. We are not trying to differentiate; the central objective must be common supervisory standards, and a universal reliance on the common application of

those standards throughout member states. We would not want people to have to choose—but there should be no need to choose the bank with which one deposits money according to the identity of its home supervisor.

The hon. Gentleman asked whether there were gaps in supervision. I can tell him that memoranda of understanding are being drawn up between the various member states to ensure that no such gaps exist. He also asked what was happening about the investment services directive, on which common agreement has virtually been reached after a protracted negotiation period. Both the investment services directive and the capital adequacy directive—technical as they are—represent major strides for Britain in Europe. I believe that they will protect our main interests at home and in other member states, while ensuring common standards of protection for those who use the services involved. They will also give major opportunities to British firms that are moving into the rest of the European Community.

We would have liked the investment services directive to come into force at the same time as the banking directives, as was originally planned, to give investment firms more generally the passport at the same time as the banks; but we saw no benefit in agreeing, at an early stage, an investment services directive that would restrict activities and damage markets. The United Kingdom and her allies were right to hold out in negotiations for the liberalising directive agreed by the EC Finance Ministers on 23 November.

Many of the larger UK-based investment firms in competition with EC banks are already established in the member states in which they wish to operate. These firms may not need the ISD passport to continue to compete effectively. United Kingdom markets will in turn continue to be as open to EC and overseas investment firms as they are at present.

The ISD will come into force on 1 January 1996. Although we might have preferred an earlier date, this is realistic, as implementation of the rules to underpin the directive will require considerable work by United Kingdom regulators and firms.

The hon. Gentleman asked how new members of the European Community will comply with the regulations. Phased provisions enable countries acceding to the Community to adopt and translate their laws to comply with the Community's. This, like many other directives, will be an essential part of that process. We must not be prepared to extend the passport to countries that do not comply with the standards of supervision and the regulations.

The hon. Gentleman asked whether we have enough resources. I think that we have adequate resources but could probably do with some more in the banking and investment sectors. I hope that we shall achieve consensus on the proposals for the financial services and banking sectors.

The hon. Gentleman and others dwelt on the importance of adequate compensation. The Commission has proposed a working party on the depositor protection directive, which contains important, sensitive and costly issues for the banks to consider.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) made some extremely interesting points. However hard one tries, one can never prepare for all the questions that one is asked, and his point fell into that category. He said that it was not satisfactory that we could not amend the regulations. I understand that, but, as I said earlier, they could have been subject to the negative resolution procedure. We brought them before the House for debate because we wanted to take on board the views expressed and to take account of them in implementing the regulations.

As my right hon. Friend will know, the Treasury and the Department of Trade and Industry issued a consultation document on this matter. He asked why the Treasury is responsible for insurance, whereas the name of the Secretary of State appears later in the regulations. The European Communities Act 1972 gives the Treasury power to make provision in relation to credit institutions. The amendments to the Insurance Companies Act 1982 fall within that designation. The Secretary of State retains his responsibilities under that Act and, as my right hon. Friend pointed out, the regulations reflect that.

My right hon. Friend asked an important question about what other member states are doing to implement the directive. I asked the same question of my officials, and the answer is that other member states are implementing it in the same way at about the same time.

My right hon. Friend asked an interesting question about the changes in law beyond the scope of the directive that are unamendable. I hope that I can assure him that the scope of the regulations does not extend beyond what is provided for in the directive. That shows the value of bringing measures before the House and of giving hon. Members an opportunity to question whether what is being proposed is beyond the scope of the directive. The House must have the opportunity to revise, amend and vote on such measures.

The right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed asked how we can rely on other supervisors. As I said in opening, this is the key question. Other supervisors will have to implement the same standards. As my right hon. Friend the Chancellor announced in response to the Bingham report, a peer group review process involving the G10 supervisors committee and the EC banking advisory committee will ensure that the best ways forward are implemented and that supervisory standards are assessed.

The Government and the Bank propose the establishment of peer group reviews under this process. Member states other than the United Kingdom will be responsible for accepting applications for authorisation from banks. They will have to comply with legislation under this directive. They will then be required to notify the Bank of England that a European institution wishes to passport its services into the United Kingdom and we shall have certain powers.

I refer hon. Members to regulation 9, which sets out requirements on such things as liquidity and compliance with regulations. If they are not complied with, they can provide the basis for restriction or revocation, and action can be taken by the host state.

The right hon. Gentleman mentioned the fascinating question of a split in central banking responsibilities, with supervision of banking being hived off from central banking functions. That point was echoed by the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbott). I referred to this at some length on 5 or 6 December in my speech on BCCI, in which I set out as clearly as I could the arguments for and against.

I said that the Government are not minded to do that, but no doubt the legitimate debate on it will go on. On the basis of BCCI, Lord Justice Bingham found no case for

[Mr. Nelson]

such a change, although many hon. Members will know that other EC members have such a separation of powers with a banking commission as well as a central bank. With the arrival of a European central bank or independent central banks within member states, there is often a more compelling case for the separation of such powers. As we do not have that, we have no intention of changing our present arrangements.

I am most grateful for the long interest of my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill) in these issues. He emphasised the importance of banking and financial services to the United Kingdom economy and the great opportunities that will result from the introduction of the directive and the regulations. I wholeheartedly concur with him and pay tribute to the way in which, over many years, he has brought his experience and keen interest in investor and depositor protection to the attention of the House, to the benefit of the legislation that has been passed.

We have seen today the fruition of contributions and efforts by many hon. Members over many years. We shall not get it absolutely right. Sadly, there will be failures and collapses in the future. We cannot devise a wholly fail-safe system, but we can improve the situation substantially. We can improve the opportunities for British business, banks and investment companies abroad to ensure not only their greater profitability, growth and employment for the future but, critically and above all, the highest standards of investor and depositor protection, which have always been the hallmarks of attracting funds to this country and which are why Britain—not only the City of London but Scotland and other parts of the country—remains the financial centre of Europe. We should be proud of that, and should be careful to enhance and protect it for the future. The regulations will bring about exactly that possibility.

It is with much confidence and pleasure that I invite the House to agree the banking directive, which will be an enormous advantage and opportunity to these great industries.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Banking Coordination (Second Council Directive) Regulations 1992, which were laid before this House on 17th November, be approved.

Package Travel

8.28 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Technology (Mr. Edward Leigh): I beg to move,

That the draft Package Travel, Package Holidays and Package Tours Regulations 1992, which were laid before this House on 1st December, be approved.

The regulations are intended to implement in United Kingdom law the EC directive of the same name. This is an important landmark in the development of consumer protection in this area.

The directive and regulations have three main objectives. The first is to ensure that organisers and retailers of packages maintain proper professional standards in their dealings with their customers. The second is to require organisers and retailers to take full responsibility for the proper performance of their contract. The third is to ensure that organisers and, in some circumstances, retailers have security for the refund of any advance payments made by consumers, including the cost of repatriation in the event of insolvency of the organiser or retailer. It may be for the convenience of the House if I indicate very briefly how the regulations address these objectives.

Regulations 1 to 3 deal with definitions and application. Basically, the regulations would apply only to packages sold or offered for sale after 31 December 1992, but the provisions regarding protection against insolvency affect all contracts in place on 31 December 1992 which remain to be performed in whole or in part. This means that organisers or retailers must on that date have security for all prepayments that they hold. It would clearly be unacceptable if a tour operator became insolvent at, say, the end of January, and those customers who had entered into contracts subsequent to 31 December were protected, while those who had entered into contracts before that date were not.

Regulations 4 to 6 deal with requirements as to brochures. Brochures must not contain any misleading information, must contain—in so far as it is relevant to the package—at least the information contained in schedule 1 and, subject to certain qualification, will be binding on the organiser.

Regulations 7 and 8 deal with information to be provided before the contract is concluded. This includes, for example, passport and visa requirements, details of travel arrangements, and the name, address and telephone number of the organiser, or a representative of him, whom the consumer can contact if necessary.

Regulation 9 deals with the content of contracts. The contract must contain at least the elements spelt out in schedule 2, unless these are clearly irrelevant to the package in question, and the consumer must be given a copy of the contract in writing.

Regulation 10 gives the consumer certain rights to transfer a booking.

Regulation 11 deals with the important question of surcharges. Surcharges are permitted only under certain restricted circumstances: specifically, to deal with variations in the price of fuel, fluctuations in exchange rates or increases in certain dues and taxes.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): On surcharges, does the hon. Gentleman not think it a little odd that this statutory instrument is labelled "Consumer Protection" when most

consumers in this country wish to be protected from the existence of surcharges at all? He is legalising a practice that most people want to see abolished.

Mr. Leigh: This is a very interesting point and it has been a difficult balance to strike. The package holiday industry is highly competitive and the view held by Government is that generally the consumer gets an extremely good deal. It would be possible, of course, for the Government to outlaw surcharges. If we were to do that, the only result for the general consumer would be to push up prices. I repeat that the consumer in this country generally gets a very fair deal and very good value holidays. We believe that we have struck the right balance. We do not believe that it is opportune to change long-standing practice in this country.

In this case, therefore, we have gone beyond the strict requirements of the directive to provide that the organiser must absorb the first 2 per cent. of any increase. I hope that that will go some way to allay the concern expressed by the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce). This mirrors the current requirements of the code of practice of the Association of British Travel Agents.

Regulation 12 permits the consumer to withdraw from the contract without penalty if there is a significant alteration to an essential term of that contract, and regulation 13 spells out the consumer's rights in this situation and also in the event of cancellation by the organiser.

Regulations 14 and 15 deal with the rights of the consumer while the contract is being performed. Under regulation 14, a duty is placed on the organiser to make alternative arrangements if a significant proportion of the services contracted for are not provided. It also provides the consumer with a right to compensation where appropriate and a right if necessary to be returned to his point of departure.

Regulation 15 is important and makes the organiser, or possibly in certain circumstances the retailer, strictly liable for the performance of the contract. This means that it will no longer be open to the organiser to disclaim responsibility if, for example, a hotel is not of the standard, or does not offer the service, which has been promised. There are certain qualifications. For example, the organiser is not liable for a failure due to an event which he could not even with all due care have foreseen or forestalled, and liability other than for death or injury may be limited, so long as that limitation is reasonable.

This brings me to regulations 16 to 22, which deal with security for prepayments and against the possible need for repatriation in the event of insolvency. I would like to take a moment or two to explain our approach to this very important provision in the directive.

The first point to stress is that the number of organisers or establishments in the United Kingdom that offer packages is extremely large. There are no statistics, and any estimate can only be in the nature of an educated guess, but we believe that the total number is between 10,000 and 20,000, not counting the many people who organise packages on a voluntary basis. Many of those who offer packages are not tour operators at all, but hotels and similar establishments which offer a tourist service —perhaps golf, or fishing—in addition to accommodation. Among tour operators proper, the range varies from the giants of the package travel trade to one-man—or, frequently, one-woman—companies exploiting some niche in the market.

Faced with this diversity, the philosophy that we adopted was to offer the widest possible range of choice for meeting the requirements of the directive. These choices are spelt out in the regulations.

Regulation 16 is a general provision and contains exceptions for packages covered by the existing air travel organisers licence system—which will not, of course, be affected by the regulations—or by arrangements in force in another member state. There are two particular points about this regulation which I would like to draw to the attention of the House. The first is that we have not provided how the requirement to have arrangements for repatriation should be met. This is because there are a great many possible ways of meeting this requirement, and it would have been over-prescriptive for us to try to list them all. The second is that we have provided that, for a period of three months following entry into force of the regulations, organisers will not have to have in place one of the specific forms of protection spelt out in regulations 17 to 21, though they will still be committing an offence if they do not have sufficient security to protect consumers if they became insolvent. This is because the interval between approval of these regulations and their date of entry into force is likely to be very short indeed, and we needed to give the very large number of operators who currently have no protection time to make appropriate arrangements.

In addition to meeting the general requirements of regulation 16, organisers of packages will need to meet one or other of the alternative provisions set out in regulations 17 to 20 or, if they are not acting in the course of business, regulation 21. Regulations 17 and 18 provide for organisers who wish to follow the well-established bonding system which is already mandatory for holders of air travel organisers licences and is operated on a voluntary basis by the main trade associations in the industry. It is envisaged that most, if not all, of those trade associations will become bodies approved under the regulations by the Secretary of State as having bonding arrangements in place which will meet the requirements of the regulations.

Regulation 19 offers an alternative to bonding in the form of insurance, and is designed primarily for those organisers who are either unable or do not choose to join one of the "approved bodies" provided for in regulations 17 and 18.

Regulation 20 provides that organisers may, if they wish, meet the requirements of the directive by placing pre-payments in a trust account from which they can be withdrawn only on completion of the contract. This option is designed primarily for hotels and similar establishments, which take only a relatively small proportion of the cost of a package by way of pre-payment.

Finally, regulation 21 makes special provision for the voluntary sector. The effect of this regulation is that an organiser not acting by way of business need ensure only that any payments that he receives are kept separate from his personal bank account so that they cannot be seized by his creditors in the event of his insolvency.

I can pass over the remainder of the regulations very quickly. Regulation 22 deals with offences arising from breach of regulations 20 and 21. Regulation 23 calls up the enforcement schedule, regulation 24 provides a due

[Mr. Leigh]

diligence defence against any breach of the regulations which carries criminal penalties, and regulation 25 makes rules regarding the liability in the case where a person commits an offence under the regulations as a result of an act or default committed by some other person. Regulation 26 deals with prosecution time limits. Regulation 27 provides that no contract shall be void or unenforceable, and no right of civil action shall arise, by reason only of the commission of an offence under the regulations, while regulation 28 provides that an organiser cannot escape his contractual requirements under regulation by making contracts subject to a law other than that of the United Kingdom.

The regulations will for the first time provide a thorough and comprehensive framework for the protection of customers of packages. In most places, they follow closely on the provisions of the directive. They aim to strike a balance between the legitimate expectations of consumers and the need to ensure that competition is not restricted and that consumer choice is not reduced by overregulation.

I stress that, in preparing the regulations, we have sought to place the minimum extra burden on industry consistent with proper implementation of the directive and proper protection for the consumer. It was not an easy balance to strike. Many people would have had us go further while others did not want us to go so far.

Sir Michael Neubert (Romford): If, as he says, the Minister is anxious not to impose undue burdens on the industry, why has he sought to add additional requirements to those required by the directive which this measure enforces?

Mr. Leigh: In fact, the additional requirements that we have added are very small. They deal with surcharges, a point with which I dealt in response to the hon. Member for Gordon. When I was responsible for consumer affairs, which have subsequently become the responsibility of my noble Friend Baroness Denton, I was determined to ensure that while we carried out the spirit of the directive—if we did not do so, we could have been taken to the European court—we did not want to impose any more burdens on British industry than was absolutely necessary. It is essential that the Department of Trade and Industry abides by that principle. We have been wholly loyal to the spirit of the directive and concerned to implement it properly in the United Kingdom, but we have also been concerned not to impose any unnecessary burdens on industry.

I recognise that some aspects of the regulations are controversial. It would not have been possible to please everyone and we have not tried to do so. Nevertheless, I believe that we have got the balance about right and that the new regime which will be created by the regulations will bring valuable benefits to the consumer. I commend the regulations to the House.

8.41 pm

Mr. Nigel Griffiths (Edinburgh, South): The Minister is not only at the Dispatch Box but in the dock. For three years the Government have refused Labour's pleas for better protection for holidaymakers. Now Ministers are being forced to take action by the European Commission, but they have left it until the very last minute. They have conducted the minimum of consultation with business and others and have ignored critical representations by those who know far more than them—travel agencies, enforcement departments and the consumer movement.

We have forced a debate on the Floor of the House because of widespread criticism of the Government's legislation: the Association of British Travel Agents has told the Minister that the legislation is unworkable; trading standards officers say that it is unenforceable; and the Consumers Association said in a letter:

"These provisions are so flawed that the government will be actionable in the European court for failing to implement the Directive and adequately protect consumers."

For three years, since the directive was published, the Government have dragged their feet and failed to introduce tough controls over rogue elephants in the travel trade. They have dragged their feet time and again and their inaction has allowed disreputable companies to print misleading brochures, to lie about holiday facilities available and to avoid paying any compensation for that, to cancel flights, to change arrival and departure times at will, to impose surcharges and, worst of all, to take customers' money without holding any insurance against insolvency.

Tens of thousands of holidaymakers have been taken to the cleaners in the past year alone because the Government have refused to act until forced to do so by the European Community. The European Commission is now forcing them to introduce this measure by 1 January. However, the Government's proposals are so weak that some of the abuses that I have listed will continue virtually unabated. Because the measure is being introduced at the last possible minute, it is riddled with loopholes and is weaker than the current voluntary code of the Association of British Travel Agents. With 21 days to go, key sections of the travel industry have no time to implement the legislation. It is a recipe for chaos.

Let us consider one key aspect of the measure—bonding, or insolvency insurance. Three years ago this month, the Minister's predecessor, the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth), said that the financial provisions were the guts of the measure. No wonder the current Minister skipped over that so quickly. He cannot find anyone outside the Government who believes that the bonding regulation will work.

In a report dated 8 December, Keith Betton, speaking for ABTA, told the Minister:

"The present Regulations will result in piecemeal protection for consumers without there being any guarantee of refund or repatriation where insurance or trust options are adopted by an organiser that subsequently fails . . . the government appears to have failed in its obligations to properly implement the Directive."

That is a point I made earlier with reference to the Consumers Association.

The Minister also knows the views of the people whom he wants to police the measure. Mr. Bob Wright, who chairs the key sub-committee of the Institute of Trading Standards Administration, told the Department of Trade and Industry:

"The present draft regulations are seriously flawed and should be redrafted if they are to be meaningfully enforced".

These seriously flawed enforcement powers are set out in paragraph 3(1) of schedule 3.

Keith Hale, a senior executive officer of the Local Authorities Co-ordinating Body on Food and Trading Standards, which co-ordinates consumer enforcement on

the Government's behalf, said in his submission to the Minister that this measure gives enforcement officers powers to inspect bonding documentation only

"when there are reasonable grounds for suspecting that an offence has been committed."

He asks what grounds are likely to be considered reasonable and concludes:

"The obvious answer is of course when a company goes to the wall . . . in other words officers will only be able to act when it is too late".

That is the view of people whom the Minister expects to enforce the measure. That advice has been ignored by the Minister, by the Government and by his party.

There are not enough enforcement officers to carry out checks on rogue travel companies. The Minister should know that trading standards officers are currently 10 per cent. understaffed and have more laws to enforce than ever.

By ignoring the views of people in the travel business, the enforcement agencies and the consumer movement, the Government are leaving many travellers far worse off. By bonding without licensing, the Minister is giving thousands of consumers a false sense of security. Bonding without licensing will be unenforceable. The trade says that it will not work—the Minister says that it will. The enforcement officers say that it will not work—the Minister says that it will. The consumer organisations say that it will not work—the Minister says that it will.

Clearly, the Minister trusts no one else's judgment, but the fact is that no one trusts the Minister's judgment. The Minister has a track record and, because of that record, it is not difficult to understand why no one trusts his judgment. He is the Minister who received a letter from the Boston Conservative club which alerted him to the case of Land Travel, a travel company whose director failed illegally to file the books. The company ran at a £2 million loss, its auditors heavily qualified the accounts and the director had previously run a travel company which went bust. The Minister failed to take appropriate action and one year later the company went bust, leaving 40,000 people without their holidays and their money. Tonight he asks us to accept his assurances but not those of ABTA, the Consumers Association, LACOTS or trading standards officers.

Under these regulations the bonds will be worthless in many cases. In spite of calls from ABTA and others for a licensing scheme, the Government refuse to license any travel companies. For non-ABTA members licensing is the best way to ensure that a bond is not worthless, but the Government refuse to license, in spite of being told that that is the only way of guaranteeing protection to consumers. ABTA, the trade body whose members provide 90 per cent. of holidays, already requires bonding and polices vigorously its own scheme. However, more than 1 million people travel with non-ABTA companies. From 1 January Arthur Daley companies will simply sign a certificate claiming to be bonded, but no one will be checking them. As the Minister knows, local government trading standards officers cannot undertake that work.

So much for bonding. Let us look at other flies in this unsavoury ointment. There are several other flaws which disadvantage consumers. The Minister is prepared, as he has admitted, to allow surcharges to continue. I have never understood why, when a holiday is paid for in advance, the holidaymakers' payments should be given to the airline, bus company, hotel, or other suppliers of services at the price agreed, and that when payment is made they can have that payment revised and additional demands made on them. In some circumstances, some of these surcharges amount to little short of extortion.

Now the Government are proposing even weaker controls on surcharging than ABTA imposes on its members. The current ABTA scheme permits surcharges in some cases, but only after the company has absorbed 2 per cent. and only after every component of the cost increase has been written down and vetted by ABTA's inspectors.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: Does the hon. Member not also think that it should be borne in mind that in many cases companies that buy forward make excess profits from currency speculation and use of the money from the people who have paid for those holidays and in no circumstances and on no occasions is that excess profit shared with the customers?

Mr. Griffiths: That is indeed the case and in 1988 I understand that 5 million holidaymakers in this country had their holidays subject to surcharge. It is important to realise that the Minister has ignored that in framing the regulations. He is permitting the trade to levy a surcharge on the basis of self-certifying that the rise has been properly incurred and that gives yet another opportunity to the unscrupulous trader to make a killing at the consumer's expense. I am reminded by that helpful interjection that it is also the case that when money is taken from cutomers in advance, often thousands of pounds a year in advance, no interest is paid on that and the travel agent and tour operator are able to make a profit on the interest. That has not been addressed at all by the Minister.

When *Holiday Which?* conducted its last survey in 1991 it highlighted two further key complaints that the regulations fail to address properly—the cancellation and consolidation of holidays. According to *Holiday Which?*, one in five consumers last year had their holiday arrangements changed by companies after the booking was made. The Government intend to see that continue.

Do the Government and the Minister think it fair that in the 1990s a family booking their annual holiday and paying in full and in advance should have it cancelled because the company has got its sums wrong? That is what he is permitting. Regulation 13 will allow travel companies unilaterally to cancel holidays without compensating, giving the excuse that the holiday was under-subscribed. In effect, the Minister is allowing companies to hold money for months on end, pocket the interest and, at the end of the day, cancel the holiday. It cannot be right that people's holiday plans should be ruined without their getting a penny in compensation.

Can it be fair that the present high incidence of changing flight times and airports is allowed to continue? Hon. Members will know the stress that is caused to people when they have their flights switched from 7 am to 7 pm, not because of any unforeseen circumstances but, again, because the company has got its figures wrong. The last-minute nature of this legislation includes a new requirement on travel companies retrospectively to seek bonding for holidays that have already been booked and paid for, but the trade was told of that only in the past week or so. There is a fear that many smaller companies may falsify their bonds in desperation to comply with the

[Mr. Griffiths]

new regulations. However, the Government would not listen to me when I urged them to warn the trade in advance that all holidays booked this year for 1993 will have to comply with the new regulations. The Government show just how out of touch they are with the needs of business. There are further problems arising with people who make up their own packages and ask travel agents to book them. The Government have given no guarantee at all that people travelling hundreds of miles within the United Kingdom on package holidays from Shetland to Land's End will be taken home at no extra expense if the company they use collapses.

With 21 days to go before the regulations become law, let me remind the Minister that ABTA says:

"The association is of the view that the following areas remain inadequately addressed by the Government in spite of strong industry representations."

It lists financial protection, then surcharges and then tailor-made travel arrangements, organisers' liability insurance and telephone bookings.

In summary, Labour is raising tonight a number of grave concerns: the need to license all non-ABTA travel agents and tour operators to give protection from fraud. We need to tackle consolidation. For too long, customers have seen their travel arrangements changed late in the day and at considerable inconvenience, forcing them to hang around airports for hours. Compensation for cancellations has not been considered and that is wrong. Surcharges have not been properly addressed. The way the Government have handled this measure is deplorable. They are achieving none of the three objectives that the Minister outlined at the beginning of his speech. The Government have lost any respect they had in the travel business and any friends they had among consumers. They will bring in weaker consumer rights than ABTA provides, ineffective policing and chaos in the travel trade.

Sadly, it is now too late for the Government to listen to those who know better. The victims of that arrogance and incompetence are the holidaymakers who continue to be duped by unscrupulous travel operators. This was the chance to put those operators out of business. What a pity that such an opportunity has been missed.

9.1 pm

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): I shall not follow the somewhat political polemic of the hon. Member for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Griffiths). Nevertheless, I have a serious criticism of the regulations.

I was interested to hear my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) tell the Economic Secretary to the Treasury in our earlier debate that the House was discussing an affirmative resolution so it was not possible to amend it. The same seems to apply to the measure before us, but I should be interested to know whether the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Technology will say to me what the Economic Secretary to the Treasury said to my right hon. Friend—that although the regulation cannot be amended there are certain curious ways of implementing it.

I must declare an interest in that for many years I have had the honour of being an adviser to the Guild of Business Travel Agents—a body consisting of about 40 of the largest business travel agents in the country, responsible between them for nearly £3·5 billion in turnover and for four out of every five business flights to and from the United Kingdom. Those companies employ more than 17,000 people.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: Will the hon. Gentleman tell the House how much he is paid for that service?

Sir Anthony Grant: Not nearly enough.

In the light of the Single European Act, the Guild of Business Travel Agents took the initiative of forming the Guild of European Business Travel Agents. About eight countries are involved. Perhaps the Minister will tell us when he winds up whether those other countries are implementing the directive properly and enforcing it.

I emphasise that the guild is distinct from ABTA. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, South-West (Mr. Page) will talk about some of the problems involved if he manages to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and in discussions with him I have found that I entirely share his views on the matter. I shall therefore confine my remarks to business travel.

The subject was last discussed in the House on 18 December 1989. I pointed out then that as a trading nation this country essentially depends on exports, so it is vital that we be able to move our business men around the world speedily and economically. That is more important now than ever. Yet the regulations will do nothing but harm to the business travel industry; in fact, they are not strictly relevant to it.

For example, regulation 16 deals with:

"sufficient evidence of security for the refund of money paid over and for the repatriation of the consumer in the event of insolvency."

That is sensible in the case of poor Mrs. Snooks who is stranded somewhere in the Mediterranean. It is vital that she be recompensed and repatriated. But business travel involves people such as ICI employees moving all round the world. Such companies pay the travel agent in arrears anyway. They can repatriate their staff without any difficulty, and they do so.

Much business travel involves incentive travel. Large companies such as ICI and Ford like to send their salesmen and other people abroad for incentive purposes. They instruct a large business travel agent to arrange the trip, but that agent will have nothing to do with the internal organisation, which is arranged by the large company.

The best protection for corporate clients, who are the bulk of the clients of business travel agents, is vigorous competition. During the debate in December 1989 that point of view was well understood by my hon. Friend the present Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Schools, who was then the Minister responsible. He made his view clear:

"It is true that business travel was never intended to be part of the directive",

and said that he intended that

"the final text of the directive . . . will have attached to it a minute statement"

to the effect that the directive would not cover

"'business trips which involve separate bookings of transport and hotel accommodation which do not constitute elements of a pre-arranged package, even though they are invoiced simultaneously'

That is Community jargon for saying, broadly speaking, that business travel will not be within the directive's scope. I hope that that gives my hon. Friend the assurance that he seeks."—[*Official Report*, 18 December 1989; Vol. 164, c. 166-67.]

It was—but alas, those hopes were dashed because, due to a curious quirk of Community law, the European Court ruled that such a minute was ineffective to alter a directive. So the whole purpose was thereby frustrated and defeated.

Following the ruling, I had meetings with the Minister and with his officials. We sought vigorously to find a solution, which everyone desired, which would exclude business travel from all the burdens. Unfortunately, none was discovered. We heard nothing further of the results of all the thinking which I assume went on among officials not only in the Department of Trade and Industry but in the Department of Transport. We were never told whether they had come to any conclusion or whether solutions could be found. That caused great uncertainty. It is ridiculous that all the regulations, important though no doubt they are, should apply to business travel. The only effect will be to pass costs on while not providing anything relevant to the vast bulk of business travel.

One solution which I know was mulled over was that a way out would be to decide whether the business travel was allowable for tax purposes. That would be a suitable definition and a way to exclude such travel from the regulation, but we never heard from the Government whether that was workable or not.

Unless the Minister, under this procedure, can express some hope for the business travel industry, I shall continue to believe that the directive is bad for the industry, bad for business travel, bad for exports and therefore bad for Britain.

9.6 pm

Mr. Alan Milburn (Darlington): The hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-West (Sir A. Grant) could have added that the directive will be bad for consumers and not only for business travellers. This debate takes place against a background of increasing concern about the state of the travel industry, culminating in the Land Travel affair. That concern arises not only from the industry, which is welcome, but from consumers' organisations, from individual consumers and from enforcement officers.

Recent collapses, most notably the collapse of Land Travel, have prompted some serious questions about the current inadequacies in the regulatory framework for the travel industry. Over the past few minutes, the debate has been dominated by the concerns of business travellers. The hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-West is no doubt right to say that there are serious concerns in that regard.

It is as well to remember that the holiday industry also touches the vast majority of members of the public. Every year, millions of people pay large sums, usually in advance, for their annual holidays. Many of them pay not just throughout the year, but for many years, to be able to afford the largest chunk of consumer expenditure undertaken annually. The holiday industry is very important.

Does the regulatory framework adopted by the Department of Trade and Industry deal with the consensus of concern that we have heard from the Association of British Travel Agents, from the Consumers Association, from my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Griffiths), from individual consumers, from the Liberal Democrats and from others? The answer is that it probably does not. The proposals are both too little and too late to deal with the majority of consumers' concerns.

I shall illustrate those rather sweeping remarks by the example of the recent collapse of a travel company in my constituency—Scotts Greys Travel Ltd. The Minister may be acquainted with the case because I recently wrote to the President of the Board of Trade about it. Scotts Greys was a well-established, Darlington-based company which had been trading for many years. It provided travel arrangements within Britain and abroad. The company collapsed in September, leaving many hundreds of holiday makers in Darlington and in the north-east not only short of an annual holiday, but desperately out of pocket to boot.

I have been collecting some information about the sort of grievances that some of my constituents have about Scotts Greys. To date, I have been contacted by 218 people in and around Darlington who have lost out to the tune of £24,335—more than £100 per head—as a result of the company's collapse. Not a penny has been forthcoming in compensation, for reasons to which I shall allude in a moment.

I will give the House some examples of the innocent victims of that collapse. Morag Williamson, who is running a campaign to ensure that compensation is paid to the victims, is herself a victim. She had arranged for a party of seven people to visit EuroDisney in Paris. She paid out well over £1,000. To date, Morag Williamson has seen neither EuroDisney nor a penny of her deposit back.

Mrs. Grey, who is 81, has not had a holiday since her husband died eight years ago. She stands in marked contrast, perhaps, to some of the ICI executives to whom the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-West paid so much attention in his speech. She arranged to take her sister, aged 85, to Blackpool. She paid a deposit of £28—perhaps not a large sum to hon. Members but a very large sum to an old-age pensioner with no other income. Mrs. Grey lost both her £28 and her holiday.

For more than 12 years, Mrs. Denny regularly organised party bookings through Scotts Greys for her family, friends and work mates. She booked a holiday for a party of 26 people who, for many months, had been saving £10 a month for their trip to Belgium. Mrs. Denny paid out £900 the week before the company closed its doors to the public, and had the difficult task of informing her 25 friends that their holiday would not be happening.

Those people are the innocent victims of the collapse of what appeared to be a well-established, credible local travel operator with a solid reputation. The company was not ABTA bonded, but it was a member of the Bus and Coach Council. As hon. Members may realise, the BCC operates a very good bonded scheme. Scotts Greys took advantage of its membership of the BCC, displaying the council's logo prominently on its letterhead and claiming its membership in advertising material. The company never once pointed out, however, that it was not a member of the BCC bonded scheme.

I repeat that, to the majority of holidaymakers, the company appeared to be a reassuringly credible, well-established local operator. In fact, Scotts Greys resigned its membership of the BCC in July. Needless to say, it did not bother to tell any of its customers of that fact. No one—least of all the holidaymakers—knew that it had resigned.

That was only one of a series of warning signs in connection with the company's standing. In fact, far from being a credible, financially secure and reputable company, it was in deep financial trouble. All the evidence

[Mr. Alan Milburn]

was there. The problem was that no one bothered to look —indeed, that no one was empowered to look—for that evidence, even though it was staring people in the face.

I will give some of that evidence. My research has revealed that Scotts Greys consistently filed late accounts with Companies house. Hon. Members will know that every company has a duty to file accounts with Companies house within 10 months of the end of its financial year. The end of Scotts Greys' financial year coincided with the end of the calendar year, 31 December. Yet over the past six years not once did Scotts Greys manage to get its returns into Companies house on time. It filed eight, nine, three, three and three months late. Remarkably, in 1990, its performance improved and its returns were only eight days late.

However, the last set of accounts contained a clear health warning from the company's auditors who said that the financial statements had been drawn up on a going concern basis on the assumption that the company would continue to receive the support of its bankers and other group members.

Those right hon. and hon. Members who know a great deal more about accountancy than I do will realise that that was a serious health warning that the company was not a going concern and was in deep financial trouble. That was not surprising because during the previous 12 to 24 months the company had been disinvesting from its bus and coach fleet. It had been flogging off its assets. The December 1990 accounts showed that the company, rather like Land Travel, had rather more liabilities than assets.

In addition, there was a final health warning that no one bothered to spot. In 1987, Scotts Greys took advantage of sections 247 and 248 of the Companies Act 1985 which allow small companies to file only the most rudimentary set of accounts. An unscrupulous company, such as Scotts Greys, is thus able to hide its financial dealings and financial ill health.

Hon. Members will agree that there were any number of warning signs of Scotts Greys' vulnerability. Yet no one in Companies house even raised an eyebrow. Certainly no Minister or civil servant at the Department of Trade and Industry bothered to heed any of the warning signs which were clear to so many people. As a consequence, hundreds of people, not just in Darlington but throughout the north-east, lost their holidays and a great deal of money to boot.

I have asked the President of the Board of Trade to conduct an investigation into this shambolic affair and, in particular, into the role of Companies house and his Department. It is not the first time that the right hon. Gentleman has been asked to conduct such an investigation. I hope that the victims of the Scotts Greys fiasco receive a better response than the victims of the Land Travel fiasco. The two have certain similarities.

I have also asked the President of the Board of Trade to consider reviewing the Companies Act 1985. It is wrong that a company, purely on the basis of its size, can get away with filing only the most basic of financial information. Surely a consumer safeguard should be built into the Act to ensure that the companies trading with many members of the public as travel operators do should have to file fuller financial information than the Act requires.

Quite simply, the Department of Trade and Industry and Companies house are culpable, but none of that helps any of my constituents who, frankly, were fleeced by a company which was still taking money and bookings on the day it closed its doors to the public in Darlington. The company directors knew that it was going down the tubes. They had known it for months, possibly years, yet they unscrupulously filched from members of the public in the north-east and were allowed to get away with it.

The Scotts Greys affair proves the need for regulation and for more effective and regular monitoring of the travel industry before a problem arises. The major problem with this measure is that it does not allow that. It will allow problems to be spotted once they have risen and once holidays and money have been lost, but not before.

The regulatory framework is inadequate and the proposal will create a great deal of confusion in the public mind about whether a company is bonded, has insurance or is financially viable. The proposal allows too much room for the cowboys in the industry. Thankfully they are a small minority, but they can have a devastating effect on so many members of the public. The measure will allow the cowboys to bypass a system which remains so lax that it amounts to licensed theft.

My hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, South alluded to the role of trading standards officers. I have here a letter from one officer, who says that, although they would like to be able to police the measure, they are under-resourced as there are 10 per cent. too few of them. However able or willing trading standards officers are, and however much expertise they have, they will be unable to monitor and police the system because the resources are not being made available for them to do so.

In some ways, other proposals that the Minister and the Department are producing will only make matters worse. I understand that one proposal will allow even more small companies to file only the most basic financial information. Once again, more loopholes are being created which will ensure that proper regulation of the travel industry is not implemented. I am afraid that the result will be that yet more people will lose out.

9.22 pm

Mr. Richard Page (Hertfordshire, South-West): May I declare an interest, as I am a parliamentary adviser to the Association of British Travel Agents. In that capacity I have witnessed numerous discussions and debates during the past three years, as the Department of Trade and Industry has laboured to translate the aims of the directive into workable legislation.

I disagree with the comments on consultation made by the hon. Member for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Griffiths), who led for the Opposition. Through the Minister, I should like to express my appreciation for the detailed way in which the travel industry and ABTA were consulted by Department officials when producing the legislation. Not everyone has got what they want, and everything has certainly not been translated into this regulation. The case for a full and statutory licensing authority has been argued, but the cost of setting up such a body seems to have been conveniently forgotten. I understand the Government's natural reluctance in that matter, and I wonder how much of the cost would be translated into a cost on each holiday if it ever came to pass.

There is no doubt that, despite the remarks of the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Milburn), the directive will provide an overall increase in protection for holiday-makers not already covered by booking through certain of the trade associations. Even so, some holidaymakers face loopholes through which they might still fall.

It has correctly been said that many variables exist in relation to repatriation. I shall speak primarily about the costs and mechanisms of repatriation in the event of tour operator failure. That is made more important these days by the growing trend of long-haul holidays. No longer is it a question of dragging back a coachload of lager louts from Spain. We could easily be faced with a plane load of Himalayan hikers as a problem to resolve.

We must feel concerned lest, when a tour operator fails, insurance policies do not provide a 24-hour repatriation service. It is not enough to require a client to finance his own repatriation, with only the prospect of possible reimbursement on his return. Many clients will not have sufficient funds and others will not have the knowledge of travel procedures to repatriate themselves. I should like to go into the matter in detail, but, because several hon. Members wish to take part in the debate, I shall truncate my remarks.

I come to telephone bookings and the serious problem of late bookings. The regulations place an obligation on organisers and retailers to give the consumer information before a contract is made and about the communication of the contract. The consequences of failure to comply are criminal in regard to regulation 7 and civil in regard to regulation 9.

The Minister will be aware that a vast amount of business is transacted by telephone, particularly in the travel industry. Indeed, some companies in the industry reckon that they do 90 per cent. of their business that way. That especially applies to business travel, and my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-West (Sir A. Grant) raised an important point when he spoke of the possibility of the business traveller being caught by the directive. As we know, it was not the original intention to bring business travellers into the net.

The Minister will appreciate that it will be difficult to comply with the directive in relation to late bookings. Will he give guidance on the period within which contractual details under regulation 9 need not be communicated in full before the contract is made where, for example, the booking is made very close to departure? Perhaps I might open the bidding by suggesting 14 days. Clarity, as ever, is vital to the industry and the consumer.

I also am concerned, because it affects the whole business community, about the principle that anyone trading—I am thinking particularly, in connection with the directive, of those who are organising—should be responsible for the services that are sold. Such an imposition of liability can be effective only if there is a legal requirement for organisers to insure themselves against liability. Under its code of conduct, ABTA now requires all its members to carry that liability insurance.

Consider what might happen if an organiser is not obliged to take out insurance and does not do so. For example, if somebody went on holiday and had a serious injury, he would be left without a remedy if the organiser failed. I have raised that issue previously. I hope that avenues can be explored to see whether, at a later stage, the problem can be resolved, not only for the travel industry but for trading generally.

I shall not respond to the point made by the hon. Member for Edinburgh, South, who got much of the matter completely and utterly wrong, but shall simply ask for clarification. Will VAT increases be encompassed within regulation 11 so that, if the organiser wishes, he can pass on those increases?

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: I invite the hon. Gentleman to give two or three examples of what was wrong.

Mr. Page: With respect to the hon. Gentleman, several other hon. Members wish to participate in the debate and time is squeezing on. I am prepared to give the hon. Gentleman an education in the travel industry later.

Surprisingly, I agree with the hon. Gentleman about the fact that an increase in the duties of trading standards officers in policing that directive will be considerable. I hope that they will be equal to the task. Hotels that provide activities will be brought into the scope of the directive. The size and volume of the task has not been adequately appreciated.

People are apprehensive that the monitoring will, of practical necessity, be difficult. Some in the travel industry may not willingly comply, to the consumer's disadvantage. It may be necessary, at a later stage in the light of experience, to tighten up the monitoring of those travel agents and tour operators who are not covered by those other organisations.

I realise that I have presented my comments in a staccato fashion, having distilled them from representations and views put to me by those in the travel industry. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will be able to respond in the short time left for his reply. I conclude on the same note on which I started, by paying tribute to those who have put so much effort into translating the directive's theory into operational practice.

9.31 pm

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): As the debate is short, I shall speak essentially about surcharges but shall raise a couple of other points at the outset.

The position of Land Travel has already been mentioned, but it is pertinent that the House should know that my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) received today a letter from the Prime Minister. It says that not only was Companies house aware that the company was trading at £2·1 million adrift in terms of liabilities in relation to assets, but that Ministers were also aware of it and initially denied it. The letter confirms that Ministers were alerted to the problem by the hon. Member for Holland with Boston (Sir R. Body) but nevertheless took no action. That is a sad indictment of the Government's competence in failing to protect consumers.

I have no doubt that there has been sustained and active consultation between the Department and ABTA, but it is important that Ministers understand that dealing with trade associations does not always mean that every corner of the trade is reached. For instance, my hon. Friend the Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) has received correspondence from a company in his constituency, Shalder Coaches, which said that it learned of the regulations' implications late in the day and will have considerable difficulty in complying with them. It feels that, too often, Ministers concern themselves with

[Mr. Malcolm Bruce]

ensuring that the big operators know what is going on, while the small operators are left to struggle to catch up in due course.

The public are greatly concerned about surcharges. Consumers view the practice with hostility and suspicion with good reason, because many of them have suffered what they can only describe as a "rip off" in the past. It is worth pointing out that companies can impose surcharges up to 30 days before departure. The fact that we are getting a 30-day ruling, as opposed to the 20-day ruling in the directive, is a small gesture, considering that we are legalising surcharges. I believe that the directive provided the opportunity to abolish surcharges.

If, by countenance, the consumer wishes to cancel, the penalties imposed on him or her are much more disadvantageous than those that the companies impose on themselves. It is true that in the past few years the issue of surcharges has not been topical, but it will certainly be topical in the coming months.

In the past few weeks, Conservative Members, at least from certain quarters, have been happy to trumpet the great choice of leaving the exchange rate mechanism and the freedom for the pound to float. Consumers will not always be entirely happy with the consequences of the floating of the pound because it will reintroduce perforce the surcharges that the directive will legalise. The simple question is: why on earth should we allow a trade to have such a legal benefit? What is the conceivable justification? I do not think that the Minister has made any case that I regard as sustainable, credible or justifiable. There are few other business sectors that would have the audacity to ask for a legal benefit, or expect it. Terms of trade are terms of trade.

It is a very uneven contract between consumers, who have virtually no bargaining power, and large tour operators, who hold virtually all the trump cards. So that I am not misunderstood, it is right to say that millions of people in the United Kingdom take package holidays and in most cases such holidays offer good organisation and value for money. However, problems arise when things go wrong, and at that point the law must enter the fray and defend the interests of consumers.

Tour operators get money many months in advance. Large operators almost universally buy forward. Therefore, they avoid the risk of losing money as a result of changes in fuel prices or exchange rates. They use the money that they can get their hands on in time. They buy competitively, and they can get good results. They can also benefit from accumulated interest from the use of their customers' money and playing successfully on the foreign exchange markets.

The Minister is saying that those companies, having completely covered themselves against the losses, can nevertheless come within 30 days of departure and say, "Oh dear! The exchange rate has gone in the wrong direction and fuel charges have gone in the wrong direction. The fact that they have not affected our company one iota is irrelevant; we will surcharge you." That is a complete and absolute rip off. Tour companies make an excess profit for which no risk has been taken and no effort expended, and consumers should not be expected to pay for it.

When the boot is on the other foot and companies make substantial benefits when fuel charges fall, as they have done in the past, and when exchange rates move favourably, as they have done in the past, there is no obligation whatever to reduce the price of the holiday 30 days before departure and, indeed, give the consumer the benefit of a windfall spending money to take with him. It is an uneven contract. Frankly, I am appalled that Government Ministers have proposed to enshrine that as a legal justification for a trade. That trade may well have an established practice, but we should not be extending it; we should be stamping it out.

The matter of the 2 per cent. absorption is marginal. A much more effective constraint to prevent companies from introducing surcharges gratuitously would be to allow an absolutely unconditional right of cancellation at any time that the surcharge is being imposed, with full compensation. In such circumstances, it would certainly concentrate the minds of those who run travel companies who would be unwilling to lose the risk of total business for the sake of 3, 4 or 5 per cent., especially when they had not incurred the loss. I know that Conservative Members will say that there will be enforcement provisions. However, it has already been said that it is not possible to enforce such provisions. It is not possible to investigate the detailed mix of surcharges that are being sustained by any one company. It will simply be an excuse for excess profiteering at the expense of consumers.

It was stated in the House of Lords report that in 1988 companies imposed fuel surcharges of up to 20 per cent. In the case of a 737 aircraft, the extra cost was calculated at £2·85 per customer on the price of the package holiday. That is surely an amount which any tour operator could absorb. Indeed, *Holiday Which?* stated that the amount of money paid over in surcharges was the equivalent of the Brink's-Mat bullion robbery. Robbery is exactly what it was, particularly because fuel charges fell, yet surcharges were still imposed.

A practice has recently developed of introducing second and third brochures with revised prices. Surely that is the way for the industry to move forward. If operators want to say that their prices have increased, those who contract later in the year can pay the higher price. But the price that people contract when they buy their holiday should not be alterable.

To raise a constituency point, holidaymakers from the north of Scotland who go on package tours are effectively surcharged before they start because of the point at which they start. If they face surcharges, for example, as a result of currency changes, the charge is usually a percentage of the holiday price. A substantial part of the higher holiday price for leaving from Scotland is for flying costs across the United Kingdom and is nothing whatever to do with the exchange rate. So a percentage is not valid. There should be an absolute charge which relates to the real extra cost of the holiday. I do not see why people who live in the north of Scotland should pay more than people in London when the cost to the holiday operator is exactly the same. That point has not been addressed.

The Minister could argue that the absence of surcharges could lead to higher costs. I suggest that that is not true. It would certainly not be true in a highly competitive market in which some of the conditions that I have suggested applied. Operators would know that if they

passed on surcharges that were not justified, other operators might not do so and they could lose business, especially if unconditional cancellation were allowed.

Even if there was a marginal increase in price to take account of the insurance provision, most consumers would probably prefer that. They would then know exactly what they had paid and could budget for it. They would prefer that to knowing that they could face an extra £20, £30 or £40 per holiday 30 days before they departed—an arrangement which is unjustifiable.

The debate is entitled on the Order Paper "Consumer protection". The regulations are the exact opposite. They are protection of the industry. They give operators the right to rip off consumers and make profits that they have not earned and to which they are not entitled. I urge the Government to think again. This summer surcharges will be imposed and complaints against the industry will increase. The Government will be responsible for failing to take action to protect the consumer in ways that the consumer would expect the Government to act. I assure all hon. Members that they will feel it in their post bags next year.

9.43 pm

Mr. Robert Banks (Harrogate): In a debate of one and a half hours, the Chair should have some discretion to limit the length of speeches so that those Members who wish to make a speech are able to do so.

I welcome this measure to harmonise package holiday legislation within the European Community. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will explain exactly what other countries are doing to bring themselves into line with the measure, which is important. Everyone realises the significance of giving the consumer protection from companies that go bankrupt and leave them stranded on their holiday or with a lost deposit. The Association of British Travel Agents has done a good job historically in bringing to the notice of the public the consumer protection that it offers. It has been one of the pioneers in the business. I applaud it for that.

I hope that Britain's lead in Europe was significant in framing the directive. I do not entirely agree with all aspects of it, but it is important that we take measures to protect the consumer. I regret that the industry has not given greater support to the directive and that a way has not been found to obtain its support.

The important consideration is whether the measure will deliver the goods. I have a feeling that it will, but it may not be so good as some of the alternatives that were suggested by the industry, such as universal licensing and its own monitoring and bonding arrangements. That would be a good arrangement, but the costs would have to be examined carefully. I gather that the Government feel that consumers would find the cost difficult to bear.

I am disappointed by the exclusion of package holidays within the United Kingdom. Many people take short-break holidays that cover travel and hotel accommodation, and I see no reason why they should not be protected automatically in exactly the same way as those who are travelling only 20 miles or so across the channel to France.

Obviously, some people make bookings by telephone. One of the strictures of the directive is that failure to provide the person taking the order with the necessary information about the terms on which he is agreeing to the holiday would constitute a criminal offence. I hope that some common sense can be brought into that. If someone picks up a telephone and makes a fairly short-notice booking with a tour operator, it is inevitable that he cannot provide all the necessary details before the booking is finalised.

I think it perfectly fair for surcharges to be made, given the possibility of unusual developments. Everybody recognises that oil prices can go roaring up, for instance. Under the directive, the company has to bear the first 2 per cent. of increased costs before it can impose a surcharge, which I consider a fair arrangement. VAT can go up by 5 per cent., which could have a significant effect on some bookings.

We are on the threshold of the industry's new year marketing effort. Many of the brochures will have been printed for the 1993 winter holidays, and the summer holidays that will follow; but they will not contain information that it is important for them to contain. I hope that the Minister will appreciate the difficulties that the industry will experience in complying with the regulations when it has already printed brochures but has not made them available to the public. I hope that he will turn a Nelsonian blind eye to any proceedings that may result!

9.47 pm

Mr. John Denham (Southampton, Itchen): It is noteworthy that every speaker has been critical of the Government's position, although the Government have had three years to work on it. I am not about to buck that trend.

A number of references have been made to the collapse of Land Travel, the Bath-based company which cost 40,000 people their holidays last summer. Had I more time, I would refer to some of the several hundred of my constituents who have written to me from the south Hampshire area about Land Travel. In any case, the factors involved in its going bust are very clear. It was obvious to many people that it was going under. It was obvious to Price Waterhouse, the auditors, and the state of the company was drawn to the attention of Ministers by Conservative Members of Parliament and local Conservative clubs. Despite that, the company continued to trade. It took money from one of my constituents in April this year and it took more money in June and July, only to deprive that constituent of a holiday in August.

Will this measure leave our constituents any better protected? Will it lead to better protection for one of my constituents who lost £275 on a trip to EuroDisney? She is unemployed and her husband has occasional casual work from an agency. They have lost their first holiday in six years. They are typical of the 40,000 people who lost their holidays through the collapse of Land Travel. Unscrupulous companies target their business on those least able to pay—people who, because they are most vulnerable, need most protection.

The regulations amount to a system of self-policing, which will not be followed by companies such as Land Travel. The absence of a licensing requirement means that such companies will continue to exploit loopholes until they are caught, and people such as my constituents and those of other hon. Members will suffer.

It is desperately sad that, despite having so long to prepare the legislation, the Government have failed

[Mr. John Denham]

abysmally to protect our constituents. We are told that the obstacle is cost. What estimate have the Government made of the cost of licensing? I suspect that constituents who lost £275 or £500 would have accepted a slightly higher cost if they could have kept their holiday.

9.50 pm

Mr. Leigh: I am grateful to those hon. Members who have participated in the debate. Others such as my hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field), who came to see me about the regulations, wished to participate but could not do so.

I inform my hon. Friends the Members for Harrogate (Mr. Banks) and for Cambridgeshire, South-West (Sir A. Grant) that under Community law all member states are required to implement the provisions of the directive and must notify the Commission of measures adopted to do so. If a member state fails to implement, infraction proceedings may be taken. We shall keep a close eye on such matters.

In a characteristically forthright speech, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Griffiths) accused us of minimum consultation. My hon. Friends have shown that that is not true. In July 1991, we consulted all ABTA members and members of other trade bodies, consumer groups and other interested parties, including operators who do not belong to trade associations. That meets the point made by the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce).

The main thrust of the attack of the hon. Member for Edinburgh, South was why we were not licensing operators. I can only repeat the point that I made earlier: the number of operators who would fall within the scope of the regulations would be significant. Many of the operators would be small and the unit cost of issuing each licence would be high, disregarding the costs of providing protection for repayments. That point was emphasised by my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, South-West (Mr. Page), and we acknowledge the expertise that he brings to these matters. At best, such a licensing procedure would increase cost to consumers; at worst, it would potentially drive small operators from the market and reduce consumer choice.

Any licensing system would have to be paid for by the licensees; there can be no question of any Government money. We believe that more than 20,000 operators would need to be licensed, and the number could be even higher. It would be a massive, frighteningly expensive operation.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: How much does the Minister estimate that licensing would cost?

Mr. Leigh: I have just said that there is no direct evidence of the number of operators, but there could be between 10,000 and 20,000. Any licensing system would have to be paid for by those operators. Many of them are small operators, and the costs would fall on them and ultimately on the consumer. It is impossible for a Minister to say how much it would cost, but if one accepts that there are more than 20,000 operators the cost would be high and it would fall on small operators.

We acknowledge the expertise of my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-West in relation to business travel and the contribution that business travel makes to the economy. Unfortunately, we cannot exempt packages which satisfy the definition given in the directive. We must carry out the directive. Many arrangements made by business men are not pre-arranged and offered for sale or sold at an exclusive price, so they would not fall within the scope of the regulations.

I will mention one point to my hon. Friend which I hope that he will welcome. The incentive travel industry was particularly concerned about absorption of the first 2 per cent. of any surcharge. As a result of the representations made to us by my hon. Friend and others, we have now modified this regulation so that it is only individual consumers, and not corporate consumers, who will benefit from this provision. I hope that this meets some of the objections and concerns of my hon. Friend.

Another major thrust of the case put forward by the Opposition was a point made particularly by the hon. Members for Edinburgh, South and for Gordon. My hon. Friend the Member for Harrogate dealt in his speech with the problem of surcharges, but I have to reiterate the great difficulties that anybody seeking to prohibit surcharges would be under.

When prices increase, tour operators can cut into their profit margins, take some form of insurance, or impose a surcharge. I accept that from the consumer's point of view the first is to be preferred, but I hope that the hon. Member for Gordon will accept that that may not always be possible. He recognised that the package travel industry is highly competitive and that costs are generally cut to the bone. A company's capacity to absorb a significant rise in prices which is outside its control is, therefore, likely to be limited.

The other routes also have their costs. Insurance would involve a certain cost, whether it was done by conventional insurance or by building a margin into the price at which the tour was sold. Many tour operators therefore prefer to keep their initial price as low as possible and to cross the bridge of increased cost when they come to it by reserving the right to impose a surcharge if need be. This seems to be a matter of legitimate commercial choice, so long as customers are made fully aware of the terms of the contract they are entering.

Regulation 11 places conditions on the circumstances in which an operator may surcharge, which is similar to the regulations which currently work well from the consumer's point of view.

I shall deal now with a point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, South-West on telephone bookings. There is nothing in the directive to stop telephone selling, last-minute or otherwise, which is a point that he raised. Except where the booking is last-minute, the customer must be given the terms of the contract before the contract is concluded, and the terms must include those specified in schedule 2 of the regulations. Often, however, the information can be given to the customer via the organiser's brochure, which he will have in his possession.

Another point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, South-West concerned repatriation. I agree with the comments that he made. We believe that the proper interpretation of this requirement of the directive is that repatriation arrangements should be made on the spot, not simply that the customer may reclaim the cost of repatriation after having made his own way home. The regulations mirror the wording of the directive. We have not defined in the regulations how the repatriation requirement is to be met because there are many ways in

which this could be done and we were anxious not to be over-prescriptive. Of course, failure to have proper arrangements for repatriation will be a criminal offence.

Some of my hon. Friends raised the question whether repatriation arrangements would be needed for domestic packages. The directive does not define what is meant by repatriation and our regulations have not attempted to do so. It is the view of the Government, however, that the repatriation requirement does not extend to domestic packages. I can reassure my hon. Friend the Member for Harrogate, however, that this directive and its implementing regulations apply to domestic packages. A requirement for repatriation within the United Kingdom could be extremely burdensome. A very large number of weekend breaks of which travel forms a part would be caught by the regulations. To require them all, however short the distance travelled, to provide a back-up would be bureaucratic and in most cases unnecessary.

Another point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, South-West concerned compulsory liability insurance and why we have not made liability insurance compulsory for operators and retailers. We have given careful thought to what we know to be the strongly held view of much of the travel industry that liability insurance should be compulsory, but compulsory insurance would be an additional burden and, as such, undesirable on deregulation grounds. Whether to take out insurance will be a matter of commercial choice. Also, an enormous variety of organisations would be offering packages, many of them quite remote from the mainstream travel industry. It would be unreasonable to require them all to have liability insurance.

The hon. Member for Edinburgh, South and other hon. Members said that all travel agents should be bonded. We believe that if an agent takes money on his own behalf and not on behalf of an organiser, the regulations require him to have protection for any prepayments taken. If the agent puts together a package himself, he would become an organiser and would thus need to have protection in place like any other organiser.

This has been a difficult task for the Government. We have consulted widely, and I believe that it is a major measure of enormous importance to the consumer. We have had an excellent and fair-minded debate. Once again, the Government have shown that they are prepared to act for the consumer but not to load undue burdens on British business.

It being one and a half hours after the motion was entered upon, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Order [4 December].*

Question agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Package Travel, Package Holidays and Package Tours Regulations 1992, which were laid before this House on 1st December, be approved.

ESTIMATES

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER, *pursuant to paragraph (5) of Standing Order No. 52 (Consideration of estimates), put the deferred Question on Estimates, 1993-94 (Vote on Account) (Class VII).*

Question agreed to.

Resolved,

That a sum not exceeding £17,763,619,000 be granted to Her Majesty out of the Consolidated Fund, on account, for or towards defraying the charges for civil services, in Class VII, for the year ending on 31st March 1994, as set out in House of Commons Paper No. 232 of Session 1992-93.

ESTIMATES

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *then put the Questions which he was directed to put at that hour, pursuant to paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 53 (Questions on voting of estimates, &c.) and Order [1 December].*

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES

Resolved,

That a further sum, not exceeding £4,384,141,000 be granted to Her Majesty out of the Consolidated Fund to complete or defray the charges for civil services for the year ending on 31st March 1993, as set out in House of Commons Paper No. 231 of Session 1992-93.

ESTIMATES 1993-94 (VOTE ON ACCOUNT)

Resolved,

That a sum not exceeding £65,973,856,000 be granted to Her Majesty out of the Consolidated Fund, on account, for or towards defraying the charges for defence and civil services, in Classes I to VI, VIII to XIX, XIX,A and XIX,B for the year ending on 31st March 1994, as set out in House of Commons papers Nos. 232, 233 and 234 of Session 1992-93.

Bill ordered to be brought in upon the foregoing Resolutions by the Chairman of Ways and Means, Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Michael Portillo, Mr. Stephen Dorrell, Sir John Cope and Mr. Anthony Nelson.

CONSOLIDATED FUND BILL

Mr. Stephen Dorrell accordingly presented a Bill to apply certain sums out of the Consolidated Fund to the service of the years ending on 31st March 1993 and 1994: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill 96.]

National Rivers Authority

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

10.2 pm

Mr. David Evans (Welwyn Hatfield): This debate is about my constituents who, at the hands of successive water authorities—especially the National Rivers Authority—have been humiliated by a disgraceful lack of concern or action to alleviate their genuine fear for their lives through flooding.

On 8 December I received a letter from Lord Crickhowell, the NRA chairman, which said:

"I fully understand the anxieties of those who live in the area and their impatience to find a solution."

How long would the House and you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, think that my constituents should wait before they can be charged with impatience—one month, three months, six months, one year, two years, 10 years, 20 years, 30 years or 60 years? My constituents have been waiting for some action since 1928.

It is an old adage, but nevertheless true, that an Englishman's home is his castle. Furthermore, it is a saying which is fundamental to Conservative beliefs. As a Tory, I believe in the sanctity of property, and in property becoming an extension of an individual's personality. All my instincts tell me that it is property which gives an individual a stake in society. Those who have worked hard to buy their own property, or, indeed, those who rent it, have a right to expect that their households will be protected.

If a house is burgled, the public expect the people involved to be caught and punished. If riots break out and a mob threatens to attack a house, the occupants have a right to expect the powers that be to repel that attack. Yet in my constituency, there are law-abiding families who have lived for more than 60 years under repeated threat of attack, of having their homes damaged and their valued possessions destroyed, and their repeated requests for action to the relevant authorities have gone unheeded for 64 years. It is a disgrace, and totally intolerable.

This threat comes from our most insidious force, which is often not taken as seriously as it should be. One of our greatest natural assets has also become a home wrecker. I am talking about Britian's rivers. Flooding is not just property-destroying, it is soul-destroying. Years of saving, a lifetime of memories, can be swept away in a night's work. People therefore rightly look to the relevant authorities to offer protection.

Tragically, as the residents of Warrengate road in my constituency know to their cost, the National Rivers Authority and its predecessors have not attended to a problem that has been with them for 64 years. They have negated their duty and almost their honour.

Although the first serious flooding of Warrengate road took place in 1928, occurred again in 1936, and again in 1947, the position worsened dramatically in the early 1950s. I take hon. Members back to 1955, when "Rock Around the Clock" was the best-selling single in both America and Britain; Elvis was just 20; Attlee was still leader of the Labour party, and Winston Churchill was succeeded as Prime Minister by Anthony Eden. That was also the year in which the residents of Warrengate road yet again warned of the danger of flooding from the Mimmshall brook. Since then, this country has witnessed 11 general elections and had nine Prime Ministers, and still nothing has been done to alleviate the fears of my constituents.

While the tide of history has ebbed and flowed, the water authorities have allowed the houses on that street to be flooded twice—first in 1979 and then three months ago in the early hours of Wednesday 23 September— despite the fact that, almost every year since 1955, residents wrote in the clearest terms of the threat to their homes.

I shall quickly list them: January 1928, serious flooding; January 1936, serious flooding; March 1947, serious flooding; 1955; July 1958, flooding of the whole road; 1960, December 1965, 1975, 1977, 1978 and 1979, flooding to the road with flooding to 11 properties to a depth of 3ft, plus road flooding; 29 October 1987, flooding up to the doors of properties and road flooding to a depth of 3ft; 29 January 1988, flooding to the road to a depth of 3ft; 1990, flooding of the road to 3ft; 23 September 1992 flooding to 18 residential properties and four commercial properties to a depth of 4ft.

Up to 1979, while not violating the housing in the street, heavy flooding occurred, and the level of the brook rose dangerously high; but nothing was done. After 1979, in response to the first disaster, some widening and a little dredging took place, but residents warned that the steps taken were not adequate to deal with the problem. Their warnings were ignored even when, in 1989, the brook flooded to the doorsills of Warrengate road.

The flooding of the houses in 1979 was still regarded by the water authority as a once-in-50-years event, yet, as the residents repeatedly pointed out, the potential for flooding has increased rather than diminished. The surrounding area has been developed and urbanised, which has led to an enormous increase in the amount of surface water run-off which finds its way back into the brook. The development of the A1(M) has further added to the problem. Another disaster was just waiting to happen, and it did, in September this year.

When faced with the dangers of flooding, Noah spent 40 days and 40 nights building an ark. Confronted by the same problem, the National Rivers Authority finally, after 64 years, conducted a feasibility study. The study was begun in 1991 and has still not been made public. Even the NRA chairman, Lord Crickhowell, received a copy of its conclusions only last Friday. That is a classic case of too little, too late.

Reading the National Rivers Authority's literature, one would think that it was an organisation to rival the United Nations. Apparently, in the day it took up its duties,

"it became the strongest environmental protection agency in Europe",

and it is invested

"with extensive powers and responsibilities by Parliament".

More than half its manpower is involved in flood defence projects, and from its flood control rooms staff are supposed to keep a round-the-clock check on weather conditions and river levels. Staff interpret the information and give the emergency services early warning of possible flooding. Yet the authority ignored warnings dating back to 1928.

This is not the case of a watchdog with no teeth, but rather a case of a watchdog which has curled up and gone to sleep by the fire. Indeed, until this year's flooding, letters from the residents to Lord Crickhowell went unanswered,

or the answers were unacceptably delayed. Furthermore, the two-stage channel which was promised to alleviate the problem never materialised.

Let us return to September. It is 4 am, and the homes of old-age pensioners, some of whom fought in two world wars, are flooded. The Minister's grandfather would know what those people gave him and the nation, yet here they are at 4 am. They survived the German blitz, yet now the National Rivers Authority is putting their lives in danger. Young children are terrified, and there are rowing boats and fire engines everywhere, all because of the incompetence of the NRA. Families and old-age pensioners will spend this Christmas in bed-and-breakfast accommodation, and all because, after 60 years, the authority cannot solve the problem—I hope that Lord Crickhowell hears about that.

The right honourable Baron Crickhowell of Pont Esgob—that sounds like something that comes out of the water rather than someone who regulates water—wrote to me recently. The penultimate paragraph of his letter added insult to injury by saying:

"I must, however, make it clear that it is a possibility that the study may be judged unacceptable on economic grounds to alleviate the flooding to only 16 properties."

I have news for Lord Crickhowell: one property is too many.

We are told that the scheme would cost £2 million. But think of the £1 billion stolen from the social security every year—or is it £2 billion? What about the new age travellers? Are we prepared to spend millions of pounds on them but not on my residents who fought in two world wars? Oh no, they are not considered worthy of having £2 million spent to look after their properties, which they have spent a lifetime buying and living in. It is a statement that fails to recognise the traumas suffered by the residents and it ignores the fact that they have been complaining since 1928.

Furthermore, the letter contained a number of factual inaccuracies, not surprisingly, which did nothing to inspire confidence in my constituents. Lord Crickhowell got the name of his own chief engineer wrong. For his benefit, I can tell him that his name is Brian Izzard. Lord Crickhowell also noted that arrangements were in hand by the Countryside Commission to have trash removed from the swallow holes. In fact, the countryside management service organised a band of volunteers to carry out clearing work in March 1991.

This case is a classic example of how a public authority has woefully failed in the execution of its duty. I am surprised by the tolerance exercised by my constituents. All they have ever wanted is for their homes to be protected from flooding, yet they have twice endured the disasters that they had predicted. On several occasions, they have held their breath and only by the grace of God have they escaped further flooding. If I were in their shoes, I would sue the water authority tomorrow. Let us get a writ out and let us get this Crickhowell man off his whatsit——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. The hon. Gentleman is not allowed to speak of Members of another place in such derogatory tones. Perhaps he would like to rephrase his remark.

Mr. Evans: I withdraw that remark, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

If successful, public authorities can be awarded charter marks, can we consider conferring official black marks on organisations such as the NRA that fail to deliver the services for which they are responsible? The NRA calls itself the guardian of the water environment. It is a pity that it has failed to carry out its duties to my constituents. It is a pity that the chairman and his officials chose to ignore my constituents' plea for something to be done to protect their lives in September and in future.

10.16 pm

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Nicholas Soames): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn Hatfield North (Mr. Evans) on securing a debate on such a crucial matter in the interests of his constituents. He made a speech full of clarity and vigour, with all the force and candour for which he is rightly famed in the House. I fully understand that the question of flooding is of fundamental importance to him and to his constituents. I assure him that the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food takes the issue very seriously. We have the deepest sympathy for those who have suffered damage, distress and inconvenience through the flooding.

My hon. Friend was right in his views about the sanctity of private property and about the importance that ordinary constituents—those whom we represent—rightly attach to it.

Flood defence is an important and sometimes controversial issue. In recent weeks, we have seen the serious effects that flooding can have in a number of areas of the country. Before commenting on the specific points raised by my hon. Friend, it may be helpful if I explain how flood defence matters are handled.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has policy responsibility for the alleviation of flooding—whether by rivers or by the sea—and for the protection of the coastline against erosion. The Ministry sets broad national priorities and my hon. Friend will not be surprised to learn that these give greatest emphasis to the protection of life and hence, generally speaking, to the protection of urban areas.

Secondly, the Ministry also makes substantial sums of grant aid available each year to the various local bodies that carry out flood and coastal defence capital works. In the current financial year, grant aid provision amounts to some £62 million. That grant aid covers, on average, about half the capital costs of the schemes, the remainder being raised locally and reimbursed through the revenue support grant. Thirdly, the Ministry gives guidance on the engineering, environmental and economic factors that bodies responsible for carrying out flood defence works should take into account.

My hon. Friend, who has a detailed knowledge of these matters, will be aware that responsibility for the design, construction, maintenance and operation of flood defences in particular locations lies at local level. Schemes are undertaken by local authorities, by internal drainage boards or—in the case of our major rivers—by the National Rivers Authority. In the case of Mimmshall brook, to which my hon. Friend referred, responsibility for flood defence works rests with the NRA's Thames region.

It is those local bodies that decide whether to put forward proposals for flood defence works to the Ministry for grant aid. Although the Ministry's regional engineers

[Mr. Nicholas Soames]

can and do give advice to the NRA and other local bodies on the need for works, the Ministry cannot direct an authority to undertake particular flood alleviation measures.

In considering applications for grant aid, the Ministry expects the local flood defence authority concerned to have examined a wide range of options for tackling flooding at a particular site and to have compared those options with the implications of taking no action whatever. In effect, the "no action" scenario provides a benchmark against which the relative advantages and disadvantages of public investment to resist the forces of nature can be judged.

Proposals for flood defence work are considered first by the Ministry's regional engineers for the relevant area, who have the necessary professional expertise. Essentially, there are three yardsticks against which all such proposals must be judged: planned schemes must of course be sound in engineering terms; they must be environmentally acceptable; and they must be economically worth while.

Naturally, as I told my hon. Friend earlier, the protection of life remains the overriding priority. Subject to that imperative, it is essential that all proposed flood defence works should meet the three criteria that I have mentioned. The economic yardstick applied is that a scheme is regarded as economically worth while if the benefits flowing from it—for example, in terms of physical damage or other detriment avoided—are at least equal to, or greater than, the costs of undertaking the work.

I hope that my hon. Friend, who holds strong and sensible views on financial prudence—stronger, almost, than those of any other Conservative Member—will agree that that is an essential safeguard to the interests of the taxpayer. The resources that the Government devote to flood and coastal defence, although very substantial, are of necessity finite. It is therefore right that expenditure should be focused primarily on areas of dense urban settlement, where the economic, social and environmental costs of flood damage are greatest.

Even in such areas, schemes can generally only reduce the incidence of flooding; they cannot hope to prevent it altogether. Nevertheless, in the majority of such cases, the costs of carrying out flood defence will be comfortably outweighed by the resulting benefits, but in cases where the costs of a proposed scheme are in excess of the benefits that would accrue, the investment of public money cannot be justified unless there is imminent risk to life. The Ministry's financial support for flood warning schemes is, of course, a direct response to the need to avoid risk to life.

I accept that it is very difficult to put precise figures on all the costs and benefits of particular schemes, and my hon. Friend made a very powerful case tonight. But the Ministry makes every effort to quantify so-called intangible benefits of schemes—for example, the social or environmental benefits to which my hon. Friend referred tonight—and to take account of them in its decision making, even where they cannot be quantified.

I hope that my hon. Friend will agree that, although it may have been rather long-winded, it was worth my setting out at some length the principles to which my Department has to work.

I come now to the particular problems of the residents of Warrengate road and the Mimmshall brook near North Mimms in my hon. Friend's constituency. As my hon. Friend said with such clarity and force, the area has a history of flooding problems, and that is probably an understatement. The resolution of those problems poses particular difficulties, of which my hon. Friend is well aware from his correspondence with the chairman of the NRA, Lord Crickhowell.

Given the serious threat of recurrent flooding, along with the technical and other difficulties attending the possible solutions to it, the authority was right to embark upon a detailed study of the whole of the Mimmshall brook catchment. That thorough analysis was completed only in the last day or so, and my Department and my hon. Friend—I know because we spoke on the telephone about it—have received a copy of it.

The Ministry's river and coastal engineers are carefully considering the NRA's study as a matter of urgency, but I hope that my hon. Friend will accept that I am truly not in a position tonight to tell him what conclusions they are likely to draw.

However, I am aware that the report considers a wide range of possible options for dealing with my hon. Friend's constituents' serious problems, and that one of those at least appears to be broadly consistent with the rules to which the Ministry has to work and which I have outlined.

My hon. Friend and I must look to the NRA in the first instance to consider the options that it has now identified locally and to present formal proposals to the Ministry in support of its preferred course of action. I can give my hon. Friend and his constituency my guarantee that any such proposals will be handled by the Ministry's engineers as a matter of the highest priority.

In conclusion, I assure my hon. Friend and his constituents that we do not underestimate the grave seriousness of the problem that he has rightly brought to the Floor of the House tonight. As I have said, I fully appreciate the concerns of those affected and I, with my right hon. Friend the Minister, have expressed our deepest sympathy and concern for the care and safety of the residents in the light of the distress that they have endured.

I hope that my hon. Friend will agree that the solution is not straightforward, black and white or easy. The engineering and economic complications involved must be fully addressed. I hope that he will agree that I have been entirely open about the procedures that we are obliged to follow.

My Department is ready to act quickly to assess any formal proposal from the NRA when it comes. In doing so, we shall take into account the points that my hon. Friend has raised in reaching future decisions on this most difficult and distressing case.

Once again, I congratulate my hon. Friend on securing this debate, and on representing his constituents' interests with vigour and clarity in a robust speech, which I greatly value, having had the opportunity to reply. I assure the House that we shall do everything that we can to assist my hon. Friend's constituents.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-eight minutes past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 11 December 1992

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PETITIONS

Forests

9.34 am

Mr. Cynog Dafis (Ceredigion and Pembroke, North): It gives me great pleasure to present the "Reforest the Earth" petition, which concerns the destruction of the world's forests, and its effects on the global environment and on the local environment of the regions immediately affected and their indigenous peoples. It has been organised by the forests lobby—a coalition of environmental groups—and is signed by more than 10,000 people. It states:

> Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your honourable House urge Her Majesty's Government to:
> (1) immediately institute a moratorium of all timber coming from primary/old growth forests or from areas where indigenous peoples are struggling for land rights or where there are human rights abuses occurring.
> (2) encourage and promote major re-afforestation in Britain, where so much forest has already been destroyed, and
> (3) adopt the Forests Manifesto for Britain.
> And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.,"

It is signed by Ms. A. C. Zelter, Valley Farmhouse, Cromer, Norfolk and Tigger of 10 Little Bethnal street, Norwich, Norfolk.

To lie upon the Table.

Disabled People

9.36 am

Mr. Stuart Randall (Kingston upon Hull, West): I wish to present to the House a petition that has been presented to me by the organisation MIND which you, Madam Speaker, with all your considerable political experience, will know is highly regarded throughout the United Kingdom for its excellent work. The petition is signed by a substantial number of people from the county of Humberside and from my city, Hull, who are deeply concerned about the way in which disabled people—both mentally and physically disabled—are unjustly discriminated against.

The petition reads:

> To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament Assembled.
>
> The Humble Petition of North Humberside Association for Mental Health (MIND) sheweth:
>
> That disabled people must have a right to the same equality of opportunity in all aspects of their daily life as non-disabled people.
>
> That people who are disabled or perceived to be disabled (for whatever reason) are continually having to face widespread unjustifiable discrimination.
>
> That legislation is necessary to outlaw this discrimination.
>
> Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your honourable House introduce legislation to outlaw unjustifiable discrimination against people with actual or perceived disabilities as soon as possible.
>
> And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

To lie upon the Table.

Orders of the Day

Local Government (Overseas Assistance) Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

9.38 am

Mr. Jim Lester (Broxtowe): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

I shall tell the House why I have chosen to promote this Bill rather than one of the many other options that I had. After 18 years of balloting, I am still getting over the shock of coming first. I thought about what I could achieve and felt great joy as I did so, which was why I chose this Bill. I shall explain what the Bill is intended to achieve and how it fits in with my own political experience since I was first elected to a local authority almost 30 years ago.

The Bill gives new powers to local authorities in a rapidly changing world. It gives them powers to mobilise their expertise in the most practical and cost-effective way, to assist the people in many countries who can make best use of their undoubted qualities and inherent skills—subject to certain conditions. It is not, and it would never be, my intention to restrict or control the powers that local authorities exercise now; the purpose is to encourage a genuine sense of international interdependence, providing that the costs of such help fall on the taxpayer in general and not on local charge payers. Know-how, properly and continuously given, is at a premium if we genuinely seek to forge new alliances based on the democratic values that local and national government adhere to in this country.

The sponsors of the Bill, who come from all parties, have one thing in common: they are internationalists who recognise the importance of such links. Some of them are members of the Council of Europe, some of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, others of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, others of the all-party group on overseas development and others still of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee. Because of their experience in such groups, they recognise the importance of reaching out to narrow the differences in the world and to share knowledge and experience with the wider world, if we are to have any hope of defeating those who thrive on overt nationalism and ethnic differences, evidence of which is all too obvious today.

My first contact with the International Union of Local Authorities was a long way back, in 1970 when I attended a conference in Toronto. I was a delegate representing Nottinghamshire county council—I was the chairman of its finance committee. I vividly remember the impact of our contacts and discussions at that conference. We recognised the problems that others face, the values of shared experience with developed and developing countries and the sense of a one-world community, although at that time many parts of the world were not part of that community. Still, we understood what could be achieved through contacts and knowledge.

My second relevant experience was in the early days of my second Parliament—my first had lasted only six months. As a keen European, I asked to be sent to the Council of Europe in 1974-75. I remember arriving in Paris and telling the leader of our delegation that I was a new member. He looked at me in a puzzled way, so I said, "Surely you know me, Sir John? I am a great friend of Kenneth Clarke." He said, "Well, I hope you pair with him regularly".

Shortly afterwards, I was made a member of the twinning committee. My hon. Friends who are members of that committee will know that it is part of the Council of Europe, and it is doing incredibly good work to give flags to local authorities that have shown themselves to be working for the wider European ideal. I remember being bitterly ashamed of the fact that only two applications had come in from the United Kingdom; many more had arrived from other member countries.

I remember returning from the meeting and going straight to my newly formed local authority, Broxtowe borough council, and pressing it to set up a twinning committee to seek links with other parts of the world. I am happy to say that that has been successfully done, the more so because it was decided to involve all parts of the community in Broxtowe. The local authority enabled others to join together. The result has been remarkable. We now have many links with Gütersloh in Germany; these include school children exchanges exchanging a bagpipe band for an oompah band, industry exchanges, fire brigades exchanges and police exchanges.

We had a moving experience on the 10th anniversary of our twinning. The German police paraded through the centre of my town beside our own policemen. In all these ways, our society has improved—in terms of knowledge, friendships and many other benefits.

I am glad to say that twinning has become far more extensive in western Europe, particularly among the more enlightened authorities. Many of them have links with eastern Europe and Africa. My right hon. Friend Baroness Chalker has encouraged this, as has the International Union of Local Authorities. The practice is criticised only by those who cannot comprehend the value to local interests of wider experiences and contacts. There are now more than 1,600 such links between this country and the wider world; and I have already said that it is essential that linking should go on between whole communities, not just local authorities.

I have had a great deal to do with the Foreign Affairs Committee. We have travelled widely and, together with the all-party group, we have twice promoted the one-world programme across Europe, linking north and south under the slogan, "Think globally, act locally". With the considerable help of the BBC, Channel 4 and others, in 1988 and again last year, we promoted the idea of the global village—of common values and of the great importance of an interdependent world.

I realised that the natural extension for me of such activities was the necessity for technical exchange, brought so sharply into focus by the end of the Soviet domination of central and eastern Europe. Countries such as Poland, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Bulgaria and Albania exhibited a desperate need to establish democratic local government, as did the Commonwealth of Independent States. The need to provide these countries with services never before sought was being hampered, despite the availability of money from the Foreign Office in the shape of the know-how funds. That enlightened policy of assistance was being hampered by a lack of legal clarity. It seemed that a private Member's Bill was needed to provide the relevant statutory powers.

So it was that I naturally used my number one position in the ballot to further this desirable aim. Local authorities have a vast fund of experience which is directly relevant. Previous contacts through twinning are helpful, certainly, but not essential. What is essential is subsequent continuity; local authorities can maintain contact and establish personal relationships based on trust. They can thus build a more meaningful human bridge from which both partners benefit.

If an initiative is begun with a local authority in another country it is possible to return and offer assistance when problems arise. Officers can go on exchanges, people from the other local authority can be brought over to look at the next stage of a project. That is a far surer way of delivering the necessary assistance.

Despite using examples taken solely from eastern Europe, I have no wish to place any geographical limitations on this scheme. As other parts of the world seek help through other agencies—the Overseas Development Administration, European development funding or United Nations bodies—the same ability to twin in a technical sense would be covered by the Bill.

I have a special sympathy for many countries in Africa. Ethiopia has been ravaged by war, tragedy and famine for a long time, but it now has an interim Government trying to do the right thing by their inhabitants, but desperately in need of know-how. The establishment of a know-how fund specifically to help that country is precisely the right way to mobilise the expertise of local authorities. That can link the major towns in Ethiopia and reach out to establish the essential fabric of democracy and service. The same applies to Mozambique, Angola and the black townships of South Africa where there is a desperate need for expertise and know-how.

When looking for flesh and blood examples to bring the matter into focus, one looks first at one's own locality. My county council has had links with Poland and Czechoslovakia which pre-date the overflow of communism. Those friendship links have given us a clear understanding of the needs and economies of cities such as Poznan in Poland or Kolin in Czechoslovakia. As a result of that knowledge, Nottinghamshire county council pressed for part of the Government's know-how fund to be specially earmarked for local authority technical links. When the scheme was established, the council bid successfully for three projects.

Kolin was assisted with local government structures and economic development. Kolin is a large town, but it is too small to market itself effectively and resource itself adequately to provide the range of economic development services that are provided in a county such as Nottinghamshire, which has been a catalyst in bringing together Kolin and its neighbours in mid Bohemia. It has provided advice for the provision of an economic development strategy and that project is proceeding.

Kolin is ringed by chemical plants, and we are all aware of chemical tragedies that have occurred in different parts of the world. An accident at one of those plants could have serious consequences and set back the recovery of the town. Nottinghamshire county council reviewed the fire service provision and paid particular attention to fire prevention and minimising fire risk. As a result, the Czech authorities have adopted Kolin as a model of good practice for their country. The project is still under way and a positive side benefit is business for manufacturers and traders in fire-fighting equipment.

We understand that, following a visit to the Home Office by Mr. Zeman, Czechoslovakia's Vice-Minister for the Interior, and Kolin's chief fire officer, the British model for national and local management operation and control of the fire service is likely to be adopted for the whole of Czechoslovakia. That is expected to result in further consultancy work for United Kingdom institutions, especially the Fire Service College at Moreton-in-Marsh.

The scheme in Ponzan is dealing with waste disposal and economic development. Any successful economy needs to remove its waste cleanly and effectively, and the shared experience of Nottinghamshire and Poznan is developing best practice. One of the ironies about so much of eastern Europe's centrally planned economy was that it did not provide very well for waste disposal, and pollution is now a serious problem in many parts of eastern Germany and central Europe.

Energy conservation and economic development are also being promoted in Poznan. In theory, the market economy should rationalise the consumption of scarce resources. However, even in western economies the market is distorted, especially in energy. Nottinghamshire county council has won many awards for its energy conservation schemes and achievements and has been asked by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to undertake this fourth know-how project. I could continue to speak about my county, but I should like to enlarge the debate.

Under the existing scheme, Bradford is represented in Czechoslovakia. Doncaster, Hull, Dorset, Berkshire, Scunthorpe and Southampton are all working in Poland. Hungary has schemes from Croydon, Chorley and Kent. In the Ukraine, Peterborough, Brighton and Barnsley are represented. Dartford is represented in Estonia and Islington is working in Budapest. St. Helens is linked with Vybong. The great benefit of those schemes is the relatively low cost, but the assistance and add-on value from the know-how transfer is almost immeasurable.

In drafting the Bill, I made every effort to consult and to carry the local authorities and their associations with me. I have tried hard to overcome any suspicion by local authorities that part of the Bill requires the Secretary of State's consent. There have been several drafts of the Bill. It is so simple and small that it should have gold edges to maximise its importance. Consultations continue and we are willing to consider helpful and meaningful amendments.

I am confident that changes in the Bill in the use of general consent procedures and de minimis provisions will not in any way hamper those local authorities that see real value in participating in this wide-ranging and important scheme. The Bill has had to have its scope widened to cover joint authorities such as fire, police, waste disposal and passenger transport. We have considered especially the request of the local authority associations to provide assistance to bodies in other countries that cover the same functions and services as United Kingdom local authorities. Therefore, there is no way in which we can minimise the ability to transfer.

I am delighted at the evidence of good will on all sides. My sponsors include Members of all the major parties and I understand that the Opposition support the Bill. I welcome that. Local government and those of us who are involved in it provides the genuine sinews of democracy. The partnership of local and central government, coupled with European initiatives and United Nations schemes, provides the warp and weft of a civilised society. We see at

[Mr. Jim Lester]

present the result of breakdown in society and the suffering that ensues for those who have no power to prevent it. That can happen in the heart of Europe, as much as in the wider lands of Africa.

By passing the Bill and showing a better way, the House will light thousands of candles. That will bring people together in service to their fellow citizens, which is the motivation of most hon. Members.

9.57 am

Mr. Piers Merchant (Beckenham): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) on his success in the ballot. My hon. Friend's shock at winning is matched only by my shock at being called so early in the debate. I also congratulate my hon. Friend on rejecting more glamorous alternatives. His Bill could be described as technical, but it is important and has major ramifications for local authorities in Britain and those abroad which will be able to be assisted more by its provisions.

I have two main reasons for strongly supporting the Bill. First, it corrects an apparent ambiguity in the present law governing local authorities. Secondly, it will bring to greater public knowledge the possibilities that it contains. It will draw attention to the importance of the technical twinning scheme and to other ways in which local authorities in this country can benefit those abroad. I therefore welcome the publicity that will flow from the Bill's introducion.

Local government has a significant role to play in assisting development in other countries, and such work is particularly important in eastern Europe at this time. I cannot stress too much the importance of Britain and other countries in the west supporting the reform process in eastern Europe. One might ask why it is particularly important to support eastern Europe. After all, it does not provide our immediate neighbours and, to some in Britain, the countries of eastern Europe might seem almost irrelevant.

There are a number of reasons. There are simple reasons of national interest. It is undoubtedly in the interests of the people of this country to help to foster stable and friendly political institutions in eastern Europe. That has not always been the case. In fact, until recently one could describe the systems of such countries as stable up to a point, but distinctly unfriendly.

An even more dangerous possibility looms ever-present today—that of countries having political systems that are both unstable and unfriendly, and therefore highly unpredictable in their political and military development. To the extent that local authorities and other institutions in Britain can help the development of stability and of democratic processes in such countries, that is broadly to be welcomed.

A second form of development that could be described as being in our national interest, as well as in the interest of those other countries, is economic development. The more that countries in eastern Europe and elsewhere in the world can be encouraged to develop economically, and the more that we help in that process, the more the economy of the whole world will benefit—and that will benefit this country, particularly as our nation is so dependent on trade.

There is also the motivation of supporting in idealistic terms the development of democratic structures. They cannot be imposed from above but must develop from below, and they cannot just rest on undemocratic structures that are at the centre of a nation—the state structures—but must develop equally at a grassroots level. We would describe that as the local authority level. Whatever term or description one uses, they are those structures that serve the local provision of services to people in towns and villages throughout the world.

The development of that process can be underpinned and perhaps will develop specifically from know-how, human resources and expertise. We all know that many countries in the world, particularly those in eastern Europe, are desperately short of know-how and expertise. That is where we can provide immeasurable support.

The cost challenge of development in eastern Europe will be immense, and it would be unrealistic to imagine that this country alone could make such a significant contribution that a major part of the problem could be overcome by us alone. There are limited possibilities, purely because of the vastness of the problem. It is only right that international institutions should seek to give assistance. The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the PHARE scheme will tackle some of the major problems of debt and investment.

The Government know-how fund, which I have always warmly welcomed—I believe that it contributes greatly to helping and developing eastern Europe—is specifically designed to support human resources, technical know-how and training. That can be matched most effectively at local level, through the technical twinning scheme. The scheme was small when it was started, but it has proved to be so successful and has contributed in such a uniquely useful way that it has grown fast. A number of go-ahead local authorities, some of which my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe mentioned, have already contributed a great deal and have shown the worth of that scheme.

My own local authority, Bromley, has knowledge and expertise, matched by many others in the country, which could be of practical help in, for example, waste disposal —which may be mundane, but it is important—and the way in which the police force deals with local problems. That is something in which police forces in eastern Europe have hitherto, perhaps, not been very skilled, or have not attempted.

There is also organisational, structural change—such as privatisation. In many eastern European countries, privatisation is a driving ideal after the experience of past decades. It is something which many local authorities in this country have also seen as new. It poses many challenges that have been successfully tackled by several leading local authorities in Britain.

Recently, my own local authority effectively privatised its housing stock—at least, through a complicated process, the housing has passed out of direct local authority control in its entirety. Perhaps a better example is what is being done with direct labour forces—which could certainly be matched in eastern Europe. Much of the expertise acquired in this country could be used to great effect abroad.

The Bill will encourage all those possibilities and the ideal of the further technical links that are so important. The earlier processes attempted in Britain hit snags. In many senses, they were technical snags. They were not problems with the application of the idea so much as with

the ultra vires nature of the powers used. In fact, a number of district auditors—and more recently the Audit Commission—questioned the validity of local authority involvement in technical twinning schemes. The Bill therefore plays an important part in sorting out that dilemma and anomaly. I welcome that, because for a local authority to operate effectively, its powers and responsibilities, and the legal basis of them, must be clear.

To rely simply on section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972, as has been done in the past, to promote areas of spending and activity not encompassed by other areas of the law could be rather dangerous. That apart, it is quite controversial. During the 1984 miners' dispute, a number of local authorities sought, in their wisdom, to use their finances and resources to support various aspects of the miners' strike. They did so amid great controversy and widespread opposition from their ratepayers, because in many cases the authorities did not have any direct link with the dispute or mining, or have any mines in their areas. That put local government in bad repute. It will be much better to have a law that clearly defines, in simple and direct language, as the Bill does, what may or may not be done. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe on the way in which his Bill has been drafted.

It is the best sort of Bill. It is brief—which is certainly to be welcomed, clear, and simple in its objective. It will benefit both the providers—local authorities in this country—and the recipients, the local authorities in other countries that need our support and help so desperately.

10.9 am

Sir Paul Beresford (Croydon, Central): I, too, congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) on the Bill. I have considerable experience of local government. My authority, Croydon, was mentioned earlier; I know that the current restrictions have inhibited it drastically, preventing help from reaching eastern Europe and other countries all over the world. The clarification provided by the Bill is very welcome, for a number of reasons.

As a member of a local authority, I have had to run around using the Local Government Act 1972 as a sort of cover in my attempt to assist overseas countries. The provision of expertise has been inhibited by the lack of available personnel for the task. Assistance is also needed within this country, for instance with the selling of contracts. I am thinking in particular of Wandsworth selling to Lambeth. In that instance, twinning was obviously not desirable. Having bought the contract and the software, Lambeth had some difficulty in understanding the details and putting them into action; every other council in the country managed, but someone murmured something about difficulty with joined-up writing.

Particular emphasis has been placed on this subject since we began helping eastern European countries. It is important that the right expertise reaches developing countries. This has, of course, happened before, within the restrictions imposed by the current legislation. My personal experience of trying to help such countries as Russia—Moscow in particular—and Poland, especially Warsaw and Gdansk, has shown me the appalling lack of even basic local government structures in those countries. There is no simple, fundamental planning: they have no structure, no understanding of such matters, and they do not know where to go. Housing is an example of that. I was told by Moscow's deputy mayor that Russia had no banks or building societies to speak of; everywhere flats were in a poor state of repair; people wanted to purchase their homes, but they could not do so because they did not understand the procedures involved. Basic amenities that are taken for granted even by school children in this country were not available.

I realise, of course, that the main problem is the different system that operates in such countries, but they are trying to break out of that system—for instance, through use of the private sector. They are seeking to follow the example set by many local authorities in this country to obtain a better service, at a competitive cost, for the people whom they serve.

When I worked for Wandsworth council, I found it impossible to help a number of countries—apart from Russia and Poland, which I have already mentioned. We were unable to help Latvia and Estonia, for example, because of the restrictions imposed by the current legal framework; we were forced to resort to section 176 of the Local Government Act 1972, which involved the mayor and other leading council members and came under the general heading of official courtesy. Sending officials to Latvia and Estonia stretched the regulations somewhat.

Bridges between this country and eastern Europe can be built by forming links with British businesses. Opportunities are being sought but not fulfilled, and local government in this country may have to act as a catalyst, introducing services of a reasonable quality to the countries concerned and also bringing in useful foreign currency. In this connection, not only eastern Europe but Africa is relevant. Because of the restrictions that I have mentioned, Wandsworth council was forced to turn down invitations to visit Ghana and Tanzania and provide expertise, particularly private-sector expertise.

What has not yet been mentioned is the opportunity for British local government to earn money overseas. That opportunity is, of course, limited by the current legislation, but the Bill would largely overcome the problem. South Africa, which has sent two delegations to Wandsworth, is now trying to introduce competitive tendering to help the black community and the smallest businesses to provide local government services, and to overcome its current difficulties.

Wandsworth has had some intriguing contacts. New York, for instance, has asked for help with competitive tendering and privatisation, as have a number of other American states. Both New York and Hong Kong have sought information on housing management; Paris has asked for help with local government management and competitive tendering. The front-line competitive tendering council in France—Reims—is now using contracts sold to it by Wandsworth council, which is earning a few francs for this country. The story is the same in Canada, Australia and New Zealand: they are using competitive tendering and working with the private sector, and contracts are being sold.

It is interesting to return to some of those countries and find the contractors working as consultants, taking local government contracts and specifications from this country, attaching their own names and selling them. Fortunately, most of the countries concerned recognise that the contracts originated here: they return to this country, and further income is generated.

Japan and Taiwan are two more examples of countries that seek not only help with privatisation, but the expertise

[Sir Paul Beresford]

that we can offer in relation to local government management of computer systems. Norway and Sweden are doing the same. Commercial organisations outside local government are also seeking assistance: they have visited this country, and have invited local authority members and officers to go to their countries and provide expertise. The Bill will enable us not only to help eastern Europe, but to expand and bring ourselves extra income.

On the tube on the way here, I made a rough calculation of Wandsworth council's earnings last year as a result of its efforts in this regard. Operating under the existing restrictions, it probably made over £100,000; and, of course, it levies no community charge.

I have some qualms—although I am open to reassurance—about the possibility of flagrant junketing on the council tax. "Junketing" was the word used by a Labour member of Wandsworth council. Back in the days of the GLC, there was junketing on the rates: the GLC provided facilities for a small minority group of what were described as anti-racist Maoris from New Zealand. I could not see those people as distinguished members of any community. They had been rejected by the Maori community in New Zealand and by New Zealand local government, and had come here to find a home. The GLC met their need.

I hope that the Bill will put an end to such abuses. With a bit of luck, we may receive some advice later from our poacher turned gamekeeper.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I cannot recall the example that the hon. Gentleman gave, but I shall assume that it is accurate. He called it an abuse. I assume that, by that, he means an abuse in the sense that he disagreed with it, rather than an abuse of any legal powers that the Greater London council then had.

Sir Paul Beresford: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his suggestion, but I made an objection because I felt that it was an abuse of the law as it stood. It was not questioned; it was not presented to the auditor, for it was too insignificant to bother with. Nevertheless, it was an example. I could see no way in which we could call these visitors distinguished visitors. They were not entertained by the leader of the council, although that might nominally have been so. It was an insult to a country that is extremely friendly and has very close links with this country. It was also an insult to the Maori people of New Zealand.

Mr. Tony Banks: I apologise to the hon. Gentleman for interrupting his speech again. I shall not enter into an argument about the points he has made. If necessary, I shall have the opportunity to do so later. I cannot, however, let him get away with saying that he thought that it was an abuse of the law. He knows that a legal opinion would have been given to the local authority by its officers with regard to any such proposal, They are sensitive to any matters that involve overseas expenditure. In the circumstances, the hon. Gentleman cannot suggest that the officers of the GLC connived with law breaking. I ask him to think very carefully about that and to withdraw what he said.

Sir Paul Beresford: I am raising a question rather than an allegation. It is an example that we need to bear in mind. I am sure that we shall receive assistance from the hon. Gentleman—as I have already said, a poacher turned gamekeeper—to ensure that the Bill covers that difficulty and makes certain that it does not arise again.

The Bill provides the opportunity for an overdue clarification of an extremely difficult area. Local government expertise could be paid for by the various bodies that are already waiting to take advantage of it. It also provides an opportunity to attract considerable income from overseas to this country. If one small council can earn more than £100,000 a year, the potential, if we multiply that sum by the 650 other councils in England and Wales, is considerable.

10.21 am

Mr. Richard Ottaway (Croydon, South): I join others in paying tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) for introducing the Bill. It is a worthy Bill and typical of my hon. Friend, in that it seeks to do good rather than to grab the quick headline. I applaud him for his approach. He and I were parliamentary neighbours in the 1983 to 1987 Parliament. At the time, I had the constituency of Nottingham, North. We fought together for the establishment of the Union of Democratic Mineworkers; we may hear more about that in the new year.

I am pleased to support the Bill. Frankly, I am astonished to find that it is necessary. I have no experience of local government—I bow to my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, Central (Sir P. Beresford) and to other hon. Friends with local government experience—but the fact that the Bill is necessary makes it clear to me that the loophole must be removed. When we look back at the battles of the past decade between central Government and local government, we find that it remains as important now as it was then that local government should remain a pure creature of statute and that its powers should be clearly defined.

We live in a fast-moving world where the instant conveyance of communication has become part of everyday life. During his retirement speech, Ronald Reagan pulled out of his pocket a micro chip and said that it had done more for the progress of the world than he or any other politician had done. The instant communication of information is very much a part of the Bill.

As we seek to maintain our standing in the world and to influence progress in the world, we have to move forward just to stand still. I take my hat off to the progress made by the BBC world service in that respect, particularly its television service in Asia and Africa, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe alluded. Perhaps I may be allowed to digress for a moment to say that I hope that the BBC world service will not suffer as the debate on the future of the BBC continues next year.

We must seek to influence world events by allowing local authorities to pass on their advice and expertise. We must also remove any doubts that have been raised by the Bill. I became convinced in my youth of the need for educational exchanges. My father was the founder of the veterinary school at Bristol university, which now has an international reputation. It was the twinning of Bristol and Hanover that led to his invitation to lead a team of young veterinary surgeons to Germany in the post-war years. I accompanied him on one of those trips in the 1960s. I listened to my father, this mild and intelligent man, speaking in fluent German to those German students,

impressing on them the need for an understanding of animals and referring to the anatomy of the horse, as envisaged by the artist Stubbs. As I did so, it became clear to me why there should be a consensus for peace. That consensus has lasted for nearly five decades. I hope that it will continue for at least another five decades. Cultural and educational exchanges are important to that peace.

I am concerned about the fact that local authorities face the threat of judicial review when they may have exceeded their powers. The ultra vires rule is essential. It provides a remedy against the abuse of power by local authorities. I was surprised that the inquiry's report into the Western Isles investment in BCCI proposed the scrapping of the ultra vires rule. I am pleased that the Audit Commission opposed the suggestion, as do I. That makes the Bill essential.

I am pleased that the scope of the Bill is global. I was also pleased to hear my hon. Friend say that that was his intention. He, too, will no doubt have an interest in Africa, particularly its population and development. I hope that some of the educational advantages that may flow from the passage of the Bill will address the population issue in both Africa and Asia, where assistance is needed.

The Bill is primarily targeted on eastern Europe. As my hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham (Mr. Merchant) mentioned, the end of the cold war has brought about a new era in international relations in eastern Europe. But it is a fragile era and the events of recent weeks suggest that it is becoming even more fragile as backward steps are taken in eastern Europe. Every effort must be made by the House and the Government to bridge the gap between east and west. We must try to convey the ideas of innovation and the culture of the west, which have succeeded so well in recent years. An important element in building bridges with eastern Europe is the establishment by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office of a know-how fund to convey our ideas to that part of the world.

I understand that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office has agreed to revise the technical links scheme to cover the agreed costs of technical twinning projects. There are two views of twinning. My hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, Central mentioned the first view—junketing. Any twinning arrangement must have a sound and economic purpose. No one would support junketing of any kind. I do not want to enter into a discussion with the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) about what that might include.

The second view of twinning is the concept that we are addressing today: partnership between local authorities and the wider community. My borough of Croydon has forged such a link. In the post-war years it established the Croydon-Arnhem link. It was founded in 1946 by a Dutch journalist, Albert Milhardo, with the late Group Captain Cummings of Croydon and Alderman Lewis.

Initially it was a sporting exchange, fostered by a cup donated by the local newspaper, the *Croydon Advertiser*. Since the establishment of the link, 3,000 people have been to Arnhem, exchanging cultural, artistic and sporting views. The link has developed in a way that all would applaud. We have seen exchanges of the Multiple Sclerosis Society, and now the police are considering an exchange. Most important, in 1988 it moved from being a cultural relationship to a commercial one when we had the Arnhem cultural and commercial week. That was a great success, with exhibitions in the Whitgift school promoting the relationship.

The end of the year will see the establishment of the single market, which will provide a further incentive to explore the potential of twinning for the promotion of economic development. My hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, Central mentioned waste disposal information as the sort of area that can be developed during the expansion of the single market.

Perhaps surprisingly, I use the borough of Chorley as an excellent example of the type of exchange that will flow from the Bill. In 1990, Chorley established links with a Hungarian town called Szekesferhervar—I will let the *Hansard* reporter have a note of that later. Hungary is one of the most progressive countries in eastern Europe and the town to which I have just referred is 35 miles outside Budapest. It is an important production centre which has the largest aluminium processing plant in central Europe. Through the British ambassador, it conveyed the fact that it wanted cultural and educational connections as well as commercial and economic connections. It wanted to stress the economic side of any proposed links and settled on Chorley.

Chorley has a number of empty mills and has developed technology for incubation houses for hens. Outside the town there are many empty barracks, which, I am pleased to report to the House, are now filled with incubation units. That is a fairly humorous but excellent example of the transfer of technology. Such nuts and bolts technology at local level—or should I call it chicken and egg technology?—is so important.

Mr. Merchant: Will my hon. Friend use this opportunity to stress the provisions of clause 1(5), which ensures that the cost of such measures will be paid not by local authorities or residents but by the Government through the know-how fund and other sources?

Mr. Ottaway: I cannot confirm that, but if my hon. Friend says that that is the case I am sure that it is, which makes the Bill all the more important.

That transfer of nuts and bolts technology and advice is important and is at the heart of the Bill, which is why I support it.

10.33 am

Mr. Tim Rathbone (Lewes): Like my colleagues, I should like to tip my hat to my very hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester). I remember from my earliest days in the House that he established with me his interest in foreign affairs when we were joint members of an Inter-Parliamentary Union team to Tanzania, where the need for legislation such as the Bill to improve local government became apparent many years ago.

For a long time I have supported the Government's activities through the know-how fund and have urged on them and other Governments of the western world some form of Strasbourg plan akin to the Marshall plan. I still feel that there is room for vast improvement in the amount of financial and know-how assistance that we give to the developing countries of eastern and central Europe as they struggle from being directed communist dictatorships into something approaching what we termed until recently a western economy and method of government.

Like my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South (Mr. Ottaway), I am no expert on local government—we stand in stark comparison with my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, Central (Sir P. Beresford) or my

[Mr. Tim Rathbone]

hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe. I have had some experience in recent years, as a member of the United Kingdom delegation to the Council of Europe, of the evolutionary process through which the central and eastern European countries are going. Later today, I am pleased to say, a visiting member of the Lithuanian Parliament is coming to my constituency to see how things work at the consistency level. It will be interesting to hear that representative's reaction to our debate.

There is hardly an area of governmental activity or life that local government does not touch on directly, so the Bill will help those evolving states. The movement from the centrally directed planned structure of the communist world to the western approach cannot but be helped by the establishment of local structure plans, local development plans, local environmental health systems, the building of local roads and even the provision of local housing. I say "even the provision" because we are moving on from the method whereby local government provides all local housing—a welcome step which perhaps can be adopted by the developing countries.

In introducing the Bill, my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe briefly mentioned policing and the way in which he has established contact between his local police authority and a local police force and opposite numbers on the continent. There must be far more room for such contacts and such cross-learning, not confined merely to police forces and activities but including the broader concept of civil defence and the emergency services such as the fire services.

Personal services are being slowly introduced in all the developing countries of western and central Europe at enormous cost. One of the greatest difficulties that they have to overcome is the introduction of the concept of individual responsibility and the Government providing only the backdrop or safety net, such as we have in Britain, to enable individuals increasingly to look after themselves and their own families. It is crucial, therefore, that local authorities in those countries—town, village or some form of geographical area wider than that—can understand how they should structure local health administration, the provision of social services, the administration of social benefits and, looking to the future as, excitingly, those countries always are, the provision of ever better education to the young people who must grow up in a developing and changed world from that in which their parents grew up.

I remember visiting a hospital outside Prague and meeting a distinguished recorder; I think that his title was administrator of the local hospital. He was most apologetic for speaking such bad English, yet he spoke perfect English even though he had not spoken it for 40 years. He spoke to a group in impeccable English about not only general subjects of interest but specific and technical subjects of medical achievement. I remember asking him what we as politicians, with no great power but a little influence, could do to help him perform even better with his basic materials and hospital plant. He immediately said that if only he could be a regular reader of the *British Medical Journal* it would make all the difference in the world to him.

In the lowest level, know-how fund way, I spoke to a constituent who is a retired doctor but who still skims through that journal to keep up to date. From that moment to this, the retired doctor, instead of throwing away his copy, has forwarded it to the doctor in the hospital outside Prague. I hope that it is helping, even if in the simplest but inter-human way, to apply the know-how fund principle of assistance to the doctor and his colleagues who, I am sure, are benefiting.

That is an example of the personal side, but there is a hard-edged financial administrative side with which we can also be of assistance and on which the Bill would make it possible to give better assistance to evolving local authorities. Examples include the problems of how best to raise local revenue and, having raised it, how best to spend it; how to apply expenditure planning not only for the current year but for the future; how to establish budgetary responsibility and how to react properly to budgetary accountability.

We tend to take such ideas for granted, except in our more acid debates in the House or at local government level. We and most countries of the western world regard them as an accepted way of life, but, goodness gracious, that is certainly not so for evolving local authority organisations in central and eastern Europe.

Like other hon. Members, I have accented the way in which the Bill would assist people in evolving states in central and eastern Europe because of the extreme importance of their correct and proper evolution into democratic and economic freedom. They are part of our continent, but one must not overlook the parallel needs of other parts of the world, such as Africa and elsewhere, which are passing through dissimilar but equally pressing difficulties.

We are part of Europe and, as the Prime Minister said, we must be at the heart of Europe. It is appropriate that, as the future of Europe is being discussed this very day in Edinburgh, we are discussing ways in which we can help the future of local communities, towns, villages and whole areas in the evolving parts of Europe to become the free association of peoples which we wish to encourage.

I close by complimenting my very hon. Friend the hon. Member for Broxtowe on the Bill. I wish it well on Second Reading and through its later stages in the House and in another place.

10.43 am

Mr. David Atkinson (Bournemouth, East): I also warmly welcome the Bill and congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) on his good fortune. The Bill will legislate for much of what has been happening for a long time—the provision of assistance in so many ways by British local government officers and authorities for so many people elsewhere in the world.

I share the experience and conclusion of my hon. Friend and several other hon. Members, which is that British local government is widely regarded as pre-eminent throughout the world. Today, international demand for its advice and the benefit of its long experience is becoming almost overwhelming with the unprecedented establishment of so many new democracies following the collapse of communism in eastern Europe and the end of Soviet influence throughout the world. British pre-eminence in that respect is seen especially in the demand for impartial, objective and, above all, experienced advisers and observers during the holding of free and democratic

elections. I am sure that it is such advice and assistance in the electoral process which my hon. Friend had in mind as one of the aims of his excellent Bill.

A growing number of hon. Members have been observing such elections in recent years. I did so in Nicaragua in 1990 with my hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest (Mr. Norris), now the Minister for Transport in London. I also observed the Turkish referendum for the new constitution in 1982 and the peace processes in Angola, Namibia and Nepal as well as those in many of the countries that were formerly part of the Soviet empire in Europe.

The lesson of those and many other elections being held for the first time in many countries—especially those being held in nations that we still regard as rather primitive—is that to observe polling day itself does not provide a sufficient basis on which to judge whether the elections are free and fair. The entire period of the campaign must be observed to enable us to determine whether the election is free—for example, whether it is free of one party's domination of the media, free of any threats and intimidation in advance of polling day and free of the monopoly of the resources and assets of the former dominant party, usually the Communist party. That can take several weeks, which is an impossible time for us parliamentarians to spend.

In such circumstances, experienced British local government officers can make a crucial difference by advising, as well as monitoring whether a country has held free and fair elections and therefore qualifies as a democracy.

I am extremely privileged to hold one of the most exciting jobs in Europe, that of the chairman of the Council of Europe's committee for relations with European non-member countries. My hon. Friend the Member for Lewes (Mr. Rathbone) was until recently a very valuable member of the committee, which is responsible for dealing with the applications of all the newly independent states of central and eastern Europe to become full members of our parliamentary assembly.

In order to qualify, a country must satisfy our standards for multi-party pluralist democracy and abide by the rule of law on human rights as we define it under the European convention on human rights. It must have its laws and constitution analysed in depth by a member of the European Court and the European Commission and to have had fully observed free and fair elections.

To date, four countries—Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria—have become full members of the Council of Europe since the peoples' revolutions of 1989. My hon. Friend the Member for Lewes was the rapporteur for Bulgaria's application for full membership and he did an excellent job. We have offered special guest status to a further 10 countries in recognition of their clear commitment to economic and political reform. That status enables them to send parliamentary delegations to Strasbourg, but not, of course, to vote. The special guest status countries are the three Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, the three Slavic states of the former Soviet Union—Russia, Ukraine, Belarus—and the four Balkan states of Slovenia, Romania, Albania and Moldova. We hope that as Slovenia and Lithuania have held free and fair elections, they will become full members by February's part-session of the Council of Europe.

That leaves four other countries whose applications we are now considering. They are the two Caucasian states of Armenia and Azaberbaijan, and two other Balkan states—Croatia and Macedonia. Two other countries that clearly have not even got around to applying for special guest status at the Council of Europe because of their other preoccupations are Bosnia and Georgia, where there are civil wars. The Council does not want to know the new Yugoslavia of Serbia-Montenegro, in view of the clear denial of human rights for which they are responsible.

There are then the five Asian republics of the former Soviet Union: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. They are countries with which hon. Members will be familiar, as they are with the pronunciation of their names. They are not part of the European continent, so they do not qualify as members of the Council of Europe although they were part of the Council of Europe when the Soviet Union had special guest status there. We are discussing the possibility of consultation agreements with them because it is important that our European heritage and all the standards we seek to uphold in democracy not only at national level, but at local level, should be encouraged in those countries.

Those countries are increasingly coming under pressure from one of the most fundamental Islamic influences to the south, which is very worrying. There is civil war in Tajikistan and in Uzbekistan between the democrats and Islamic fundamentalists. There is also the influence from the east of the last remaining evil empire—communist China.

The 10 special guest countries in the Council of Europe have access to all the collective expertise, advice and assistance acquired by member states of the Council of Europe. The Bill can only enhance that for local democracy.

I am glad that the local government side of the Council of Europe, the conference of local and regional authorities in Europe, is reforming itself into two representative bodies so that it can respond more effectively to the growing trend towards regional government in central and eastern Europe and so that it can give practical implementation to the well-known principle of subsidiarity, which I hope is very much on the agenda in Edinburgh today, on which the European charter of local self-government is based.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham (Mr. Merchant) and others have mentioned, the emerging democracies can benefit from the European Community's PHARE programme as well as from the know-how funds provided by this country and others. They can also benefit from the town twinning arrangements to which my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe referred. Those arrangements can do so much to increase knowledge and understanding between communities.

For those important reasons, the Bill is timely in encouraging British local government expertise to be more available. In so doing, it will help the new local democracies to survive the inevitable backlash and disillusionment throughout the former Soviet empire in central and eastern Europe as people find that freedom does not bring instant democracy.

A document published this year by the Council of Europe illustrates perfectly the benefits and help that the Bill could bring to the emerging democracies. The document is a handbook for observers of local or national elections in emerging democracies. It is a veritable checklist of the basic rules to be followed by the teams responsible for advising on and monitoring free elections.

[Mr. David Atkinson]

It lists the tasks to be undertaken in the run-up to polling day, on polling day itself, at the count and in the process of reporting back on the outcome of the election.

I mention the handbook especially because it was prepared by Mr. Keith Lomas who, until earlier this year, was the town clerk and chief executive of my borough of Bournemouth. The book is based on his considerable experience of having helped to organise the independence elections in Rhodesia, where he was based for three months, under the late Lord Soames in 1980. More recently he monitored the elections in Romania and Namibia on behalf of the United Nations. I am pleased to have the opportunity to pay tribute in the House to Keith Lomas and to his 20 years of dedicated service in the borough of Bournemouth. He has the British local government experience whose spread the Bill seeks to encourage.

My hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe referred to the help that his local fire service is providing in eastern Europe. I cite another example of a constituent of mine who is an officer in the Dorset fire service. He has been seconded by the Home Office to British dependencies in the Caribbean where he is to report on the efficiency of the local fire services on the islands. His report could be very revealing. There is no fire cover there because, in practice, there is no emergency fire service. The inhabitants of the islands are at total risk, as are all visitors and tourists who use the hotels, the public buildings and the tourist complexes. There is wide scope for further assistance to establish effective emergency fire cover for those for whom this country continues to have a responsibility. Such assistance could be provided under the Bill.

I very much hope that the Bill will be given a clear passage through the House and that the Government will give it full support. I look forward to the response by my hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire), the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment. There has never been a better time, since the establishment of our second empire one and a half centuries ago, for British local government to be a force for good local government throughout the world. There is great respect and a great demand for such a force. I hope that the Bill is given a clear passage through the House. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe on his good fortune and on his foresight.

10.56 am

Dr. Liam Fox (Woodspring): It seems that there will be a commercial break shortly after I begin my speech. I reiterate the thanks to my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) for introducing the Bill. It must be extremely tempting for an hon. Member who comes top of the ballot for private Members' Bills to go for something glamorous and to hit the headlines—although the experience of so many colleagues who have hit the headlines in the past couple of days may be a good reason for going for a discreet and timely measure.

One of the main reasons why I fully support the Bill was explained by my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, Central (Sir P. Beresford). It is worrying to many of us that those who work in local democracy who want to help those outside their own immediate area by giving them expertise should be dissuaded from doing so by the current law. It is a matter of urgency that the House should change the law, because it cannot be right for us to expect those who want to help to cower, hoping that they will not be picked up under existing legislation. My hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, Central, who is not here now, raised an important point.

There will always be those who ask why we should give such help in the first place. I am sure that all hon. Members who have travelled not only in the emerging countries of eastern Europe, but in the member countries of the Commonwealth and in other third-world countries will be only too well aware from their own experience why the Bill is needed. We need to help countries such as Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia, which I have visited, and the countries of Africa such as Kenya, which I have also had the pleasure of visiting.

The town of Nailsey in my constituency was one of the first to twin with an east European town—Chrzanow in Poland, which is considerably easier to pronounce than some of those mentioned by my hon. Friends.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, East mentioned some of the important respects in which our friends in eastern Europe are under-privileged, but perhaps it is the small things—the anecdotal evidence—that bring the point home to us. We all take for granted the facilities provided at hotels, including the sweets sitting on the reception table. While I was staying at a hotel in Prague, I watched with some amusement as two children, who had been standing outside waiting their chance, dashed through the revolving doors, picked up a bag of sweets and ran away along the nearest escape route. That sad story brings home the fact that people in eastern Europe do not even enjoy the minor privileges that we in the United Kingdom take for granted. The children were forced to stand there like little vultures.

It being Eleven o'clock, MADAM SPEAKER *interrupted the proceedings, pursuant to Standing Order No. 11 (Friday sittings).*

Arts Funding

11 am

The Secretary of State for National Heritage (Mr. Peter Brooke): With permission, I should like to make a statement about the funding of the arts.

Over the past two years, there have been a number of significant developments or commitments in relation to the funding of the arts. First, at regional level, arts associations have been replaced with incorporated regional arts boards and the development of a system of integrated planning and accountability. My right hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Sussex (Mr. Renton) announced in December 1990 that final decisions on the extent of funding responsibility for regional arts boards would be taken after the new boards had had time to establish themselves.

Secondly, a national arts and media strategy, entitled "A Creative Future", has now been completed by the Arts Council. I am grateful to all those who contributed to the extensive consultations involved in its preparation. It will form an important point of departure for future decisions. Thirdly, in the Conservative party election manifesto, the Government committed themselves to re-examining the role of the Arts Council.

I must say that it is difficult to decide the right balance between local and central decision making. I have consulted arts organisations widely and found that there is no clear consensus on the way forward. When it met to consider the issue on 3 November, the Arts Council itself did not reach a unanimous view. However, we are now in a position to be clear about the roles and responsibilities of those who operate the funding system, and there is need for a firm decision after such a long period of expectation.

I should like to confirm the earlier decision taken by my former right hon. Friend the Member for Shoreham, who was then the Minister responsible for the arts, that the Arts Council should retain its funding responsibility for the Royal Shakespeare Company, the Royal National theatre, the Royal Opera house, the English National Opera and the south bank and for those clients who have a nationwide distribution base, either because they tour or because they publish.

However, at a time of public expenditure restraint, I do not want to add to administrative costs by duplicating unnecessarily staff at central and regional levels. I have therefore decided that the Arts Council should retain funding responsibility for those other arts organisations whose comparators are so few and far between that they can be properly assessed only at national level. All other clients will be delegated to the regional arts boards.

I am arranging for lists of both sets of organisations, drawn up in line with these criteria on the basis of Arts Council advice, to appear in the *Official Report*. In all, a further 42 clients will be delegated in addition to the 22 already delegated on 1 April this year.

Within that system, I as Secretary of State will remain accountable to the House for the way in which the Arts Council decides to spend the grant in aid. In particular, I have a close interest in the economy, efficiency and effectiveness with which that money is spent; in the appropriate balance between public and private sector funding; and in such matters as the emphasis to be given to touring, access for disabled people and educational work by arts organisations.

As a result of the decisions, the regional arts boards will have responsibility for a wider range of clients. It is right that decisions should be taken as close as possible to those affected by them, within an overall policy framework. The Arts Council will continue to have a central role in providing that framework and in managing the funding system. It will continue to fund a number of clients directly. It will decide how much of its grant in aid should be allocated to each board on the basis of the corporate plans submitted by the boards and of the comparative evaluation of arts organisations across the country. The council will also continue to play a crucial role in monitoring developments in each region, in setting standards, in joint assessments of clients and through its continuing involvement in periodic in-depth appraisals of delegated clients.

Those conclusions carry organisational implications for the size and organisation of the Arts Council. The council also needs to consider what scope it has for introducing further market testing and subsequent contracting out of those services that do not constitute its core functions of grant allocation and client assessment. In addition, I shall shortly be announcing the implications of the new national lottery for the work of the Arts Council.

I am therefore commissioning consultants to examine the council's existing structures and to make proposals for change to be implemented progressively from April 1993. I shall also be asking the council to report to me by the end of next June on whether the existing regional arts board staffing and structures offer the expertise and value for money needed to operate the new funding system effectively. I expect the new system as a whole to produce administrative savings.

The organisational changes need to be completed before delegation is introduced if the exercise is to be successful. I have therefore decided that delegation should now take place one year later than originally envisaged —that is, on 1 April 1994. The Arts Council and the regional arts boards have also been considering the extent to which responsibility for schemes and projects should be delegated. I should like discussions concluded by next May, with delegation in this area completed by 1 April 1994. A common framework for delegated schemes and projects will be in the best interests of artists around the country.

The debate over delegation has been prolonged and the resulting uncertainty has not been helpful. However, I believe that, in current circumstances, the decisions I have announced will best meet the longer-term interests of the arts organisations that the funding system has been created to serve. In order to provide a much-needed period of stability, I do not plan to reopen the issue in the lifetime of this Parliament.

Following are the lists:

Arts organisations for which funding responsibility will be retained by the Arts Council.

In addition to the national companies, including the south bank, touring companies and publications with a nation-wide remit, the following will continue to be directly funded by the Arts Council:

Northern Ballet Theatre
City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra
London Philharmonic Orchestra
London Symphony Orchestra
Philharmonia
Royal Philharmonic Orchestra
Hallé Orchestra

[Mr. Peter Brooke]

Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra	
Western Orchestral Society	
Opera North	
Northern Sinfonia	
City of Birmingham Touring Opera	
Serpentine Gallery	
Whitechapel Art Gallery	
Museum of Modern Art, Oxford	
Arnolfini Gallery, Bristol	
Ikon Gallery, Birmingham	
English Stage Company (The Royal Court)	
Institute of Contemporary Arts	

Funding responsibility for the following arts organisations will be delegated to the Regional Arts Boards from 1 April 1994

Kokuma	West Midlands Arts
Ipswich: Wolsey Theatre	Eastern Arts
Watford Palace Theatre	Eastern Arts
Leicester Haymarket	East Midlands Arts
Nottingham Playhouse	East Midlands Arts
Alternative Theatre Company (The Bush)	London Arts
Black Theatre Forum	London Arts
Caryl Jenner Productions (Unicorn Theatre)	London Arts
Greenwich Theatre	London Arts
Hampstead Theatre	London Arts
London International Festival of Theatre	London Arts
Lyric Theatre Hammersmith	London Arts
Polka Children's Theatre	London Arts
Soho Theatre Company (Soho Poly)	London Arts
Talawa Theatre Company	London Arts
Young Vic	London Arts
Royal Exchange Theatre, Manchester	North West Arts
Bolton Octagon Theatre	North West Arts
Liverpool Repertory Theatre	North West Arts
Merseyside Everyman Theatre	North West Arts
Oldham Coliseum Theatre	North West Arts
Manchester Young People's Theatre (Contact)	North West Arts
Tyne and Wear Theatre, Newcastle	Northern Arts
Salisbury Playhouse	Southern Arts
Nuffield Theatre, Southampton	Southern Arts
Bristol Old Vic	South West Arts
Northcott Theatre, Exeter	South West Arts
Plymouth Theatre Royal	South West Arts
Birmingham Repertory Theatre	West Midlands Arts
Belgrade Theatre, Coventry	West Midlands Arts
New Victoria Theatre, North Staffs	West Midlands Arts
West Yorkshire Playhouse, Leeds	Yorkshire and Humberside Arts
Sheffield Crucible Theatre	Yorkshire and Humberside Arts
York Citizens Theatre (Theatre Royal)	Yorkshire and Humberside Arts
Bath Festival	South West Arts
Eastern Orchestral Board	Eastern Arts
Wigmore Hall	London Arts
Notting Hill Carnival Enterprise Committee	London Arts
Photographers' Gallery	London Arts
Wolverhampton Art Gallery	West Midlands Arts
Stoke City Musem and Art Gallery	West Midlands Arts
Walsall Art Gallery	West Midlands Arts

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): It is regrettable that an important statement on the future of arts funding should have been smuggled into the House on a Friday morning in the middle of the Edinburgh summit. The regions affected by the Minister's proposals should have the widest possible representation by hon. Members on such occasions.

I welcome the general approach of the statement, and some of its contents. In particular, the arts world will be reassured that the Minister does not propose to continue to pursue the centralising tendencies of the Government but will allow regional arts boards considerably more say. Is the right hon. Gentleman aware, however, that he is continuing to create a two-tier system of clients for the immediate future? Some will be funded centrally, and they will be seen as first division clients, but those who are funded regionally will be seen as second division clients. That will divide and demoralise the arts world and will be extremely counter-productive.

The Minister has referred to "accountability" and "cutting administrative costs". The Opposition know that those are weasel words. The right hon. Gentleman has not made it clear what the financial implications of his statement will be. He referred to a reduction in administrative costs. He should know that the £2 million saving originally envisaged by Mr. Richard Wilding in his report has long since disappeared, and everyone in the arts world estimates that it will cost many extra millions of pounds to implement the reorganisation strategy. Can the Minister assure us that that money will not come from the top-slicing of arts clients?

In the regions, the arts policies of local authorities are being butchered by the Government's policies, including the poll tax and poll tax capping. The Minister said that the regions were important. He should understand that his policy should give local authorities statutory responsibility for arts funding and thus attract and be eligible for revenue support grant in that regard. That is the Labour party's policy. If the Minister could confirm that that might also be his policy in the future, his words on delegation would have some real substance. However, we welcome the Minister's attitude against centralisation and towards devolution. Although we realise that the word "devolution" is anathema to the Conservative party, considerable devolution to the regions is continuing on the arts side at least. We clearly welcome that.

The Conservative party promised in its election manifesto to maintain support for the arts. However, the Chancellor of the Exchequer did just the opposite in the autumn statement. The Secretary of State referred this morning to the future role for the Arts Council and spoke about the implications of the new national lottery for the work of the Arts Council.

There is considerable interest in the implications of the new national lottery for sports and the arts. Does the Secretary of State propose to ring-fence money for the arts? Will the national lottery money be additional to that ring-fenced money? We should like that assurance this morning.

Putting off devolution for yet another year is unfortunate and will cause considerable unease. I wonder precisely why the Secretary of State has decided to put it off for another year. He referred to uncertainty, and to the debate on devolution being prolonged. How far is that uncertainty due to the indecision of the Government? I believe that we know the answer to that.

Many aspects of the statement need further and detailed consideration. The Secretary of State referred to the Arts Council retaining funding responsibility for the other arts organisations, and to other clients being delegated to the regional arts boards. Does that mean that there will be more or less than originally envisaged? Is the Secretary of State confident that financial arrangements to deal with the extended devolution will be suitable and considerable and enough to cover the work that he expects the regional arts boards to carry out? Has the framework been put in place?

Many of my hon. Friends will want to consider in some detail the implications of the list announced by the Secretary of State. However, I stress once more that if decisions are to be taken—as the Secretary of State said—as close as possible to those affected by them, why does not the right hon. Gentleman say today that he is prepared to involve the local authorities as well as the regional arts boards in his plans?

Mr. Brooke: The hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) has asked me a significant number of questions, and I will seek to respond to them in the order that she asked them.

I appreciate the inconvenience of taking a statement like this on a Friday morning. Frankly, my preoccupation was to make absolutely certain that we made the statement before Christmas because of the uncertainty that has bedevilled this particular issue. It would obviously have been desirable if we could have made the statement last month.

I have consulted widely with the interested parties before making the decision, as that seemed the right thing to do. I am afraid that that has caused us to be a little behind our programme.

I am grateful to the hon. Lady for welcoming the Government's general approach. I hope that the chalice that she has handed across the Dispatch Box will not too greatly poison my relations with my colleagues on the Back Benches. However, if we can maintain a bipartisan approach on the arts, that is all to the good.

The hon. Lady said that she feared that we were creating a two-tier system. When we consider the specific categories of the theatres, the visual arts and the orchestras, it is clear that specific criteria have determined our particular choices. In the context of the theatres, the hon. Lady will see that the Royal Court is the only theatre that I have added to the previous list. All other theatres have been delegated. That would be at variance with a two-tier suggestion. The decisions that we have made are extremely close to those originally recommended by Mr. Wilding.

The hon. Lady necessarily became rather more partisan in her reference to weasel words. Words like "accountability" have significance on the Conservative Benches. They also have significance in the country at large.

The House will be glad to hear that the regional arts boards are now costing less to run than the regional arts associations before them. The decisions about the allocation of funding will, of course, necessarily be taken by the Arts Council.

While I understand the Labour party's position in respect of local authorities, the Government and a large number of local authorities do not agree with that view and wish to maintain as much freedom as they can in the allocation of their expenditure.

In terms of the role of the Arts Council, the hon. Lady's reference to the national lottery and the ring-fencing of money for the arts, I should stress that it is envisaged that the national lottery will not in any way be a substitute for public expenditure. In those circumstances, it will be necessary for those who are responsible for distributing it to ensure that they are distributing it to things for which there would not be an ordinary public expenditure equivalent. That constitutes the kind of ring fencing that the hon. Lady seeks.

The hon. Lady said that delay is potentially causing unease. The benefit of announcing a decision, even if it is for implementation in 1994, is that it removes the uncertainty that has surrounded these matters over the past two years. As for the period between now and 1994, there would have been much greater unease if we had sought to go forward on 1 April 1993, because of the lack of total preparation for the changes.

I have announced consulting work in connection with the Arts Council, and I have indicated that there will be an analysis in the summer to discover whether the regional arts boards are administratively prepared for the extra duties to be passed to them.

I must apologise to the hon. Lady because I did not catch her penultimate question. However, I will read it in *Hansard*. If she passes her question across the Dispatch Box to me, I will try to answer it today.

In respect of the process of delegation, there is already in place an integrated planning system which will of course be further refined during the next 15 months. That is intended to cover the specific questions that the hon. Lady asked about the monitoring of delegation.

Mr. Tim Rathbone (Lewes): In responding immediately to a rather complicated statement, may I ask my right hon. Friend what decision making he will be passing down the line to the incorporated regional arts boards to tap and encourage local sources of funds from local government, individual benevolence or local businesses? In parentheses, I hope that nothing that he has said today will have an adverse effect on the quite excellent business sponsorship of the arts that has been going on for so long.

In the context of the national lottery, which will soon be with us, will my right hon. Friend also elaborate on whether local fund-raising activities will be given the same freedom to tap sources of funds as will be given to the national lottery when it is launched? That is important, and I am sure that my right hon. Friend would wish to allay any fears on that point.

Mr. Brooke: In the context of the responsibilities of the regional arts boards, I can confirm that one of the powerful sources of energy that has flowed from existing transfers is the enthusiasm that can be generated locally for particular projects. An encouraging feature of the developments in business sponsorship of the arts this year has been the fact that, although some of the larger sponsors have reduced their funding during the recession, the amount of overall sponsorship has been rising. That is because of the very large number of smaller contributors who have been doing things locally—for instance, jazz festivals in their immediate neighbourhoods. In that respect, we will add further impetus to the calculations.

I fear that I missed one word of my hon. Friend's question about the national lottery. He was concerned about somebody in particular being disadvantaged. It would assist me if he would say on whose behalf he was speaking.

Mr. Rathbone: With permission, Mr. Deputy Speaker. All other fund-raising bodies or potential fund-raising bodies which may be circumscribed in their abilities to appeal for funds, as compared with the freedoms being given for fund raising through the national lottery.

Mr. Brooke: I think that I take my hon. Friend conceivably to be asking a coded question in relation to

[Mr. Brooke]

charities which are potentially affected by the national lottery. I assure my hon. Friend that those considerations have been taken into account in our preparation for the Bill.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): Does the Secretary of State accept that the effectiveness of his proposals for the transfer of responsibility to regional arts boards cannot be judged until some time has passed, and that it will be judged by the extent to which they increase access to the arts and help to redress the metropolitan bias of arts funding, to which the Arts Council has drawn attention in the national strategy for arts and media?

The right hon. Gentleman's desire to achieve stability, in view of the uncertainties flowing from five Secretaries of State or equivalent Ministers in rather fewer years, is desirable. It is not possible to close down the debate in the manner that he described at the end of his statement, for substantial parts of the country lack facilities that will be required to be built up and, in practice, his proposals might require to be looked at with flexibility which should not undermine the certainty that he seeks to achieve.

Does the Secretary of State also recognise that the effectiveness of the structural proposals will be undermined if funding is not placed on a more secure basis than the autumn statement provided, that triennial funding is to be preferred to annual funding, and that a separation of structure from funding cannot be total?

Mr. Brooke: The hon. Gentleman's question about effectiveness is obviously well targeted. I agree that the test of the decisions that I announced today, in line with previous policy under previous Ministers, will be the extent to which the arts flourish. The success of the arts organisations in the response that they evoke from the nation is the critical criterion.

One of the disadvantages of the uncertainty of the past couple of years, when decisions were quite properly and deliberately delayed, has been not properly to test the ability of regional arts boards to handle the issues concerned. Of course the hon. Gentleman is right to say that we will consider the manner in which they handle responsibilities now that that uncertainty has been removed.

On the hon. Gentleman's question about the absence of facilities in certain parts of the country, one of the attractions of the national lottery—again I refer to what I said earlier about its not being a substitute for public expenditure—is that it will be possible to envisage capital projects that are clearly one-off events and are not instead of anything that might be happening at the relevant time. I have said that we will obviously keep matters under review. I was seeking to say that we will not pull up the system by its roots during the life of this Parliament, because that would be the worst possible development in terms of uncertainty.

Mr. Alan Duncan (Rutland and Melton): I invite my right hon. Friend to comment on one respect in which the moneys that were announced today will be spent, and that is the extent to which the Arts Council is or is not entitled to appoint its own members to the boards of artistic companies. I appreciate that my right hon. Friend cannot comment on a specific example, but may I none the less cite one?

I refer to a constituent, Dr. Mary Malecka, who used to sit on the board of the Haymarket theatre in Leicester. She received a letter saying that she was no longer able to do so. That letter came not from the Haymarket theatre but from the Arts Council. To what extent is the Arts Council risking going beyond its statutory position in doing that, and is it in the interests of artistic freedom that we should allow it such licence?

Mr. Brooke: My hon. Friend was kind enough to say that I would not be able to comment on the specific constituency case that he mentioned. I will certainly consider the circumstances that he addressed.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): Is there not a danger that there will be less money for London arts, ethnic minority arts and disabled persons arts? What does the Secretary of State mean by the Arts Council "privatising" client assessment? Does that mean that it will hire private detectives at great cost to snoop on drama groups and artists? Should not the Government make extra funds available to the arts in advance of the national lottery?

Mr. Brooke: The Arts Council will, of course, make decisions about its allocation of funds to the regional arts boards on the basis of the responsibility that those boards have. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman, also as a London Member, will share my pride in the reputation that the London arts board has built up since its inception. As for the second part of the hon. Gentleman's question, I am conscious that, from time to time, we enter the wilder forms of conspiracy theory, but I do not think that what the hon. Gentleman has suggested is likely to occur.

Mr. David Atkinson (Bournemouth, East): I thank my right hon. Friend for using this opportunity to end the uncertainty in arts funding and for confirming that the Arts Council will continue to support the great British arts institutions—ballet, theatre, music and opera. What effect will my right hon. Friend's statement have on popular bodies such as the Bournemouth symphony orchestra, which successfully performs in not just one but several regions in this country, as well as internationally? Will it be entitled to grant aid not just from its own regional body but from any of the others?

Mr. Brooke: I am conscious that my hon. Friend has a certain orchestra in mind. That orchestra will remain with the Arts Council. Touring is considered as a separate element.

Mr. John D. Taylor (Strangford): In welcoming the Secretary of State's statement we have to congratulate him on its clarity and the speed with which he made the decisions since his recent appointment.

More than any right hon. or hon. Member, the Secretary of State knows about the vitality of the arts throughout the Province of Northern Ireland. He will know also that we in Northern Ireland, as United Kingdom taxpayers, contribute to the national Exchequer in the same way as other citizens of the United Kingdom, and that therefore, in some respects, we have an interest in the national Arts Council. However, There is a feeling in Northern Ireland that the national arts institutions that tour the United Kingdom do not go to Northern Ireland

to the same extent as they go to other parts of Great Britain. That raises the question whether it is wise to retain a separate arts council in Northern Ireland.

I wish that the Secretary of State had given some attention in his statement to whether it would now be better for Northern Ireland to have a regional arts board, just as other regions in Great Britain have regional arts boards, so that we could have shared more equitably in national institutions' tours of the United Kingdom.

The Secretary of State said that the national lottery might be used to fund the arts. If it is intended to keep the Arts Council in Northern Ireland as a separate institution and not to allow it to become part of the network of regional arts boards, will the national lottery be used to finance the separate Arts Council in Northern Ireland as well as the Arts Council in Great Britain?

Mr. Brooke: The right hon. Gentleman was kind in his initial remark, and asked two specific questions. I have many reasons for regretting that I no longer serve the Province, and the issue of the vitality of the arts in Northern Ireland is one of them. I am greatly encouraged when I go round and see the national companies and touring companies which, perhaps because of my previous tour of service in the Province, know me and show their enthusiasm for touring. I shall do everything that I can to encourage them.

The distributor of funds for the arts will clearly take Northern Ireland into account, but it would be wrong for me to say how that will be done. The matter of the Northern Ireland Arts Council is one for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, and I shall draw his attention to the interest in the matter shown by the right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor).

Dr. Liam Fox (Woodspring): I understand that my right hon. Friend's Department publishes guidelines for client selection. Will he give priority to the touring that he mentioned in his statement? It is important that those in the regions are able to see the well-proven popular shows performed in other parts of the United Kingdom, particularly the cities, that they may not otherwise be able to afford to travel to see. That issue must take priority over funding minority interest events, which not many people would go to see even if they could afford to do so.

Mr. Brooke: I can reassure my hon. Friend that the Arts Council will continue to have particular responsibility for touring. I know that it wants to ensure that we operate a national system.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Does the Minister agree that art reflects society at any given time? The arts of the 1990s will probably reflect the slump throughout the decade. Is the Secretary of State aware of the fact that he cannot rely on business paying too much money into the arts, because every hour of every day, three businesses go under the hammer and bankruptcy proceedings are taken out against them? Is he also aware that, if he uses the national lottery to finance the arts, he will be calling on working-class people in villages where pits are being closed and, with them, brass bands—which are part of the culture of those villages, in some cases, the only art form—to buy national lottery tickets so that other people in the metropolis can go to the ballet and the opera?

Mr. Brooke: The issue of art reflecting society leads on to a larger debate——

Mr. Skinner: It is true.

Mr. Brooke: I acknowledge the hon. Gentleman's main thesis. The amount of money, in real terms, spent on the arts is now 44 per cent. above what it was when the Labour Government left office.

As for business sponsorship of the arts. I reiterate what I said to my hon. Friend the Member for Lewes (Mr. Rathbone) that the amount of sponsorship continues to rise in absolute terms, partly because the network of sponsors is steadily spreading. I have said before from the Dispatch Box that I regard brass bands as part of our national heritage, and have spoken of my interest in their future. However, the decision whether to buy a national lottery ticket is a matter for the individual. The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) is wrong to suggest that the proceeds from the tickets would necessarily go to metropolitan arts. They will be allocated by the distributor, whoever that may be, on a national basis. They are not intended as a substitute for public expenditure.

Mr. Cynog Dafis (Ceredigion and Pembroke, North): The Welsh Arts Council is currently funded directly by the Arts Council of Great Britain, which is an anomaly, as other organisations such as the Welsh tourist board are funded directly from the Welsh Office. During the examination of the structure of the Arts Council of Great Britain, will the possibility of direct Welsh Office funding for the Welsh Arts Council be considered? If that is not the current intention, when is such consideration likely to take place?

Mr. Brooke: The decisions today relate to the balance of responsibility between the arts councils and the regional arts boards. Therefore, they have no direct impact on the Scottish and Welsh arts councils. However, it will be appropriate to consider that issue in future, and I do not rule it out.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): The Secretary of State said that the national lottery was not meant to substitute for Government expenditure on the arts and sports. Will he today give a firm guarantee that there will be no national lottery substitution for public expenditure on arts and sports funding in any way during the course of this Parliament? I want that guarantee today.

Mr. Brooke: I reiterate that the national lottery is not intended——

Mr. Campbell-Savours: That is different. We want a guarantee.

Mr. Brooke: I understand what the hon. Gentleman is saying; he and I have had many gracious exchanges over the years, and I should be grateful if he would allow me to finish my paragraph. The national lottery will not be a substitute for public expenditure——

Mr. Campbell-Savours: In this Parliament?

Mr. Brooke: It will not be a substitute in the next Parliament, either. The clear statement has been made that it is not intended to be a substitute for public expenditure.

[Mr. Brooke]

Therefore, it is important that those who allocate the funds should not do so to recipients normally funded through public expenditure.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): It seems unfortunate that we have lapsed back into the practice of having important arts statements on Fridays. National Heritage questions were held earlier this week, and it seems that today's important statement should have been made then—there is no reason why it should not have been. I notice that the Secretary of State is missing an important event—the Association of Business Sponsorship of the Arts awards at the national theatre. However, he will arrive there in time for a light buffet at 12.30 pm, but the statement means that I shall not get there for either event, so perhaps he will give my apologies to His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, who I know will miss me sorely.

Will there be a period of public consultation on the issue of the organisational changes? Will the Secretary of State give the House a guarantee that he will speak to the Leader of the House so that we may have a full debate on the Floor of the House on today's important statement about the future organisation and funding of the arts in Great Britain? We should not merely have to rely on a statement slipped out on a Friday, which almost leads us to believe that the Secretary of State felt ashamed of what he was saying.

Mr. Brooke: The hon. Gentleman's final observation is totally wrong. By helpfully reminding the House that the ABSA awards are taking place today, which he might have attended, as might the hon. Members for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) and for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd)——

Mr. Skinner: And me.

Mr. Brooke: The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) particularly regrets not being present. That in itself is a sign of how inconvenient it has been to have the statement on a Friday. I acknowledge that inconvenience, but we were determined to have the statement before Christmas. This is not a consultative exercise. The decisions have been announced as decisions; they have been pressed on us for a significant length of time by the interested parties, who have wanted a firm decision to be taken. Of course there will be an opportunity to discuss them; and I should certainly welcome an arts debate, whatever form it took.

Local Government (Overseas Assistance) Bill

Question again proposed, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Dr. Liam Fox: It may help if I reiterate what I was saying before the commercial break. It is all too easy for people in the United Kingdom to ask why they should help the emerging east European countries, given that we are in difficult economic circumstances ourselves. I offered an anecdotal example of a hotel in Prague. Similarly, on a recent visit to Budapest I stayed with some of my hon. Friends at a hotel where we came across what we thought was some sort of fringe, alternative-medicine clinic. It turned out to be a mainstream clinic in the health service of Hungary. It is all too easy for us to take our facilities for granted, but those with experience of east European economies, local government and medical services realise how fortunate we are in the United Kingdom.

Some people say that the east Europeans got themselves into this mess and should get themselves out of it. But the people who are the victims of oppression in eastern Europe cannot be held accountable for the fact that state socialism was the intellectual hiccup of the 20th century. We have a duty to help these people, on whom socialism was imposed by those who came before.

East European nations greatly need our financial help and the expertise that we can give them. They have suffered 80 years of oppression and of violations of their human rights—80 years in which every little bit of their self-reliance was knocked out of them. Some parts of the United Kingdom may exhibit victims of the welfare state mentality; how much more do the victims of the former Soviet Union suffer from that mentality? All their self-reliance was knocked out of them, systematically and over decades.

Unfortunately, we have not been able entirely to eradicate this mentality from Opposition Members, even if we have managed to rescue east European countries from it. Those countries have no experience of democratic institutions. We take our whole culture of democracy for granted: they have no experience of it. It is not a matter of tinkering with their systems to improve them: some of these countries have no system or structure in place to improve upon. If they are to remain stable and to develop economically and politically, they urgently need our help.

Even if we do not help these countries for philanthropic reasons, there are advantages for us in other areas. It will be to out long-term advantage if there is a stable European economy, both east and west. We shall be looking for export markets in these countries, so we might as well help them develop the expertise to move to free markets, by means of our know-how funds and so on. They need the political development which brings political stability.

We are all well aware of what decades of political instability in Europe have meant for defence expenditure and for our fears about security. We should not forget our military security merely because the immediate threat of the cold war has passed. We must not forget that the potential for instability remains. The same number of weapons are still deployed against us, so it is all the more important to maintain the political stability that leads to military security.

There is immense good will towards the United Kingdom on the part of east European countries, middle

eastern and African countries, and former empire countries that are now part of the Commonwealth. We do ourselves down if we believe that we do not have something to offer them, given our historical experience and our expertise.

I caution some hon. Members who talk of imposing our culture on these countries. I believe in the triumph of the west; our values, our market economies and our democratic credentials are being taken over worldwide. But there are dangers in trying to impose our culture on other nations. We must teach them our values, but we must also allow them to develop them in a way compatible with their culture. That is more sustainable in the long term than trying to impose a single model on them—an attempt that has sometimes failed in the past.

What do these countries need? They could do with a little political understanding. The German example is worrying. Parts of the west German political establishment did not exhibit tolerance for the problems of the east for very long. We will not solve the problems of eastern Europe or other developing countries in a short time. The process will require a great deal of patience. In the meantime, we must display our political maturity to the full. Hon. Members and people in the United Kingdom at large would benefit from travelling more widely and learning for themselves how far behind us these countries are.

These countries need financial help. The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development is the institution that has been set up to provide funding. Developing countries also need professional knowledge, and some of our know-how. The environmental aspects of the know-how funds are important. Anyone who has travelled to eastern Europe knows how far behind us its countries are in terms of consideration for the environment. The environmental debate in this country is at a far higher level than in theirs. Environmental horrors are widespread in eastern Europe. We must therefore match our expertise to these countries' needs, and I commend my hon. Friend for attempting to do that by means of this Bill.

There are always risks in Bills of this kind, but they have been well avoided in this case. There is the risk, for instance, of treating town hall officials and politicians as if they are mini-foreign offices running their own foreign policy. Public money has been wasted too often in the past. There have been public interest abuses in local government, and those abuses must be stopped. So the transfer of expertise must be limited to legitimate functions of local Government. This Bill achieves exactly that.

The Bill contains two important safeguards. Clause 2 gives the Secretary of State the final say. All foreign office implications must ultimately be sanctioned by central Government, and local government must not be allowed to use a Bill of this nature to further minority aims. I therefore congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe on clause 2.

Clause 4 makes it quite clear that the process is not about transferring money from the United Kingdom to other structures abroad: it is about transferring expertise. I hope that those listening outside the House will take note of that. It is important to differentiate between the functions of central and local government: the functions of the former include overseas aid for the developing countries of eastern Europe and beyond; the functions of the latter include providing the expertise that local government has built up over many a year.

I congratulate my hon. Friend on introducing this important Bill. It is perfectly in tune with his other contributions to this subject over the years, and I believe that it will be valuable to all who wish to help these developing countries to emerge from a dreadful period of their history to join the free family of nations.

11.49 am

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): It is a pleasure to speak in the debate. Until I came in at 10 o'clock I had no intention of speaking and was not aware that the Bill was being given its Second Reading. For some time I have believed that the hon. Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) should speak from the Dispatch Box for the Government on overseas development because he knows more about that than any other Conservative Member.

The Bill addresses many of the issues that I was able to identify when I was an Opposition Front-Bench spokesman on overseas development. I have since moved to agriculture, but I still follow overseas matters. I had to leave that brief because of the arrangement between the other place and this House in terms of answering questions. If I had remained in that post I would have tried to be on the Standing Committee dealing with this Bill.

The Bill is about overseas development and about how this country can transfer expertise and skills, which we have in abundance, to other local authorities or to simpler bodies in various parts of the world. Some of my colleagues and I prepared a document that revamped and amended Labour's historic approach to overseas development and contained a section dealing with the transfer of skills. We intended to use local authorities in precisely the way the Bill envisages.

That policy initiative resulted from the experience of my hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) and myself in various parts of the world. In many countries we discussed the problems of acquiring the expertise and skills that are necessary to enable local government to be properly managed. We often drew the simple conclusion that if our public health official, housing manager or social services officer responsible for disablement or for elderly care had been available, it could have resulted in a major transformation in the delivery of services. The quality of service might not be as sophisticated as that which is available in the United Kingdom, but delivery could have been transformed. The Bill opens the door to creating such opportunities.

Experience is required in building surveying and in the establishment and enforcement by surveyors of building regulations. Such expertise is required in the most deprived parts of the world and in parts of the former Soviet Union and eastern Europe. Our local authorities have such expertise, especially in building surveying and in the introduction and enforcement of regulations. As we all know, building standards are low in many parts of the world.

Hon. Members have spoken about environmental management, a subject in which Britain is on a learning curve. We have already developed skills in such management which should be transferred, especially to

[Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours]

central Europe where there are major environmental problems and where, perhaps inevitably, there will be an environmental disaster.

There is some criticism in Britain of the management of publicly owned housing, but, in the main, it is about the resources that are available to local authorities. In principle, the systems for local housing management are good, even if the funds are not always there to oil the management arrangements. In many parts of the world where housing projects have been completed under overseas development schemes, we could provide management teams. When I held the development brief I discovered that when the major donors completed projects they did not always leave behind a management system. The schemes often went to rack and ruin because of the lack of a revenue-supported management system.

Perhaps an argument against such a system is that it draws funds away from the original capital project. However, we could approach local authorities in third-world countries to see whether they are prepared to transfer managerial resources to secure continuity in the management of donor schemes. Whether they are British donors is irrelevant.

Direct labour organisations have varying support in the House, but perhaps today we can unite on the principle. Regardless of one's political views about the necessity for DLOs, some local authorities operate them very efficiently. Perhaps some people could be transferred abroad to help establish similar organisations to carry out public works.

The Bill is about a two-way process. I have spoken about what we can give, rather than about transferring large amounts of aid which often, unfortunately, may not reach the targets or the expectation of the local project. The other benefit derives from people leaving the United Kingdom, perhaps on six or 12-month contracts. I have not read the Bill in detail or spoken to the hon. Member for Broxtowe about it, but, if he thinks as I do, he probably envisages people leaving here under contract to carry out a piece of work and then returning. He probably also envisages a flow of people from other countries to the United Kingdom. Perhaps in future we may have a Pole, a Ukrainian, an Estonian and a Lithuanian working in the housing, health or social services departments in Workington or Carlisle or elsewhere in Cumbria. People may be brought in to gain experience of how local authorities can be managed efficiently and to learn about the delivery of quality services. Such an interchange of people will help international relations.

11.59 pm

Mr. Alan Duncan (Rutland and Melton): The House will look kindly on the warm and generous words that the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) had for my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester), which reflected not only on the merits of my hon. Friend's Bill but on him personally.

In an excellent speech, my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South (Mr. Ottaway) referred to some unpronounceable town in Hungary that is twinned with Chorley. That struck a particular note with me. If one drives, as I often do, past Rutland Water and through the small village of Whitwell, one cannot help but notice a large sign proclaiming, "Whitwell—twinned with Paris". One might ask how such a tiny mouse of a town could be twinned with such an elephant of a European capital. That came about because the parish council, which is very internationalist in its outlook, wrote to the mayor of Paris explaining that Whitwell lay at the heart of England and wished to twin with an important capital on the European mainland. The council received no reply. It wrote again, and still no reply came. On the third occasion, the council's letter included a paragraph stating, "If we receive no reply within five weeks, Mr. Mayor, we shall assume that you have agreed to our proposal." The sign was erected in the fifth week and has remained there ever since.

The sense of municipal pride and the effectiveness of our local administration has gone from peak to trough over the past 100 years, but in many respects has reached a peak again. In many of our towns and cities, we can see monuments to the effectiveness of Victorian local government—splendid buildings that were imaginatively designed and planned, well laid out, and of a structure and beauty that have endured more than a century.

In the years after the last war, some of that went horribly sour. Local government became inefficient, and some of its planning and other decisions were detrimental. In the past 10 years or so there has been a dramatic turnround in the quality of local government administration and in the professionalism with which it addresses its tasks. Since the somewhat unconservative reforms of 1973—which attempted to abolish the county of Rutland but have not altogether succeeded—a debate has raged about the future of local government, and its entire detail is now being studied by an excellent royal commission.

During those years, many councils were charged with detailed statutory obligations and developed valuable expertise. In the past 20 years, the House—in the Acts that it has passed—has obliged local government to take on more and more duties. In doing so, local government has developed a professional approach to the conduct of its duties that is exemplary.

At the same time, we have witnessed the collapse of many aspects of government, particularly in what were the iron curtain countries. Our own councils re-examined the way in which they conducted their affairs and—urged by Conservative Administrations—decided to privatise where that was deemed possible, to contract out services, and to bring greater efficiency to the charge payer and greater attentiveness to the sensibilities of those who must pay a local tax.

In the past few years, our Government have urged the former communist countries to adopt our methods of government—to look to a free enterprise system, and to try to copy or mimic the way that we conduct our business. No sooner had we done that than we found that our councils are almost forbidden by law to share their expertise. Those who want to give Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary and other countries the benefit of their experience must take a small step beyond the law.

Nothing could be more galling to those able to offer that expertise. Nothing could be more irresponsible on our part than to have urged all those in the west to share the benefits of our system with the emerging democracies of the east, only to put a barrier in their way as soon as they wanted to do so.

Those aspects of our body politic that have been privatised, such as water companies, are free not only to advise but to invest in the emerging democracies. Regional

water companies and British Gas are very internationalist in their outlook and are lending much expertise to those who are so desperate for the benefits that they can offer.

That cannot be done easily by local government, which is why I welcome my hon. Friend's excellent Bill. The hon. Member for Workington mentioned several of the ways that we can help which I had in mind. For example, many of the emerging democracies have no basis of law in governing the development and ownership of property. British local councillors and council officers who are expert in planning and building control could visit those countries, or invite them to send representatives to our country, to help them at the very start of the long process of redevelopment. Our experts can help them to understand how properly to develop their cities and infrastructure and to establish a proper framework of property ownership and development.

That will be of crucial importance if firms are to be able to invest with certainty and to manage their risk—and not construct a factory only to find that someone else owns it, or that the rules governing the supply of water and electricity and the disposal of sewage are unclear. That is one area in which our councillors and officials, with their great expertise, can be of great use, and I encourage that practice in all respects.

My hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe mentioned the conduct of elections. Nothing can be more important to the emerging domocracies than that democracy should survive, that those who participate in the democratic process should have faith in it, and that the process should endure in a way that enjoys the trust of the electorate.

Every Member of Parliament has witnessed the efficiency with which the voting papers tipped out of the ballot boxes on election night are counted in a way that we fully trust. As the piles mount up, one knows that the votes have been properly counted. The conduct of elections is another area where local government expertise can be applied with great benefit to the emerging democracies of eastern Europe.

Environmental control is another important issue. As the economies of emergent democracies develop and speed up, waste disposal and, where possible, recycling will be of utmost importance. As the economies of eastern Europe began to crumble, many of the safeguards and standards that we take for granted were swept aside. We know from documentary programmes and from our own studies the ease with which waste was poured into beautiful waters. We probably cannot imagine the extent to which other waste may be piling up in areas that we have not yet identified. Waste disposal and recycling are done very well in this country, and our local councils should be free to explain the most modern methods to countries that are desperate for such instruction. The same applies to community care and social services: since the war we have benefited increasingly from a growing welfare state, and the countries that we are discussing will soon be crying out for the same facility.

We are made miserable by watching on our television screens, from the comfort of our armchairs, the suffering of people confined to asylums. We can offer our expertise, however: we can help other countries to care for such people in the best possible way. If we deny those countries our expertise we shall be denying them a basic human right, which would be unforgivable.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, Central (Sir P. Beresford) pointed out earlier, we should not assume that the Bill applies only to eastern Europe. We may not be able to predict where it will be of benefit in the future, but we know that it will allow our councils to travel to any part of the globe—albeit, under the sensible clause 2, with the permission of the Secretary of State, to ensure that the process is properly monitored and does not use public funds when that is inappropriate.

Moreover, the Bill will not be a one-way street. Perhaps we now have the advantage of knowing a bit more than some other countries, and being able to apply our expertise; but, as they visit us and we visit them, we shall gain the ability to benefit from their experience. I commend the Bill, and congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe.

12.11 pm

Mr. Colin Shepherd (Hereford): I join hon. Members on both sides of the House in paying tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester). I am proud to sponsor his Bill; I do so not only through conviction, but because of my deep interest in Commonwealth matters, which is expressed chiefly through my membership of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association.

I viewed today's debate with some trepidation at the beginning of the week, knowing that my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe was besieged in a Bombay hotel. I wondered whether it might be possible for him to arrange to telephone his speech to the House; it was with enormous relief that we received the message that he was able to fly back to London. I echo the tribute paid by the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) to my hon. Friend's contribution to overseas matters during the many years in which he has been a Member of Parliament —years that have passed as quickly as the years that I have spent in the House, and, I trust, as enjoyably. It will be difficult to match my hon. Friend's knowledge and ability in the future.

My hon. Friend has used his privileged position—he came first in the ballot, on which I congratulate him—to clear up a technicality: modest as ever, he used that very phrase. I join other hon. Members in praising him for choosing such an important but low-profile subject, rather than trying to introduce legislation that would make headlines and bring him publicity. The Commonwealth —and, indeed, the Commonwealth of Independent States —will be particularly grateful to him.

My hon. Friend, with his interest in Commonwealth matters, will know that, although Commonwealth parliamentarians range from those who represent a million or more in India to those who represent a hundred or fewer in the Cook islands, and although they have a huge variety of responsibilities and interests, a recurrent theme when they gather is the problem of seeking advice. How, for instance, can a distant country tackle the problem of refuse disposal cited by my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Duncan), or that of coastal defence and protection?

We regularly bend our minds to the question of election monitoring and election structuring, as my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, East (Mr. Atkinson) pointed out. Not having recourse to a direct line of advice leads to a feeling of powerlessness: as my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, Central (Sir P. Beresford) said, in the past we

[Mr. Colin Shepherd]

have had to assist in oblique ways. I am very pleased that we are now seeking to use all our expertise to solve other countries' problems.

My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State may be able to clarify the question of election monitoring. In this country, election monitoring—or election structuring—is carried out by the returning officers, who are part of local government but who do not necessarily include only one local authority in their bailiwick. The returning officer for my constituency, for instance, is responsible for two district councils. Will my hon. Friend confirm that the matters relating to election advice that were mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, East will be covered by the Bill, and that they will not fall between two stools?

Reference has been made to the "export potential" of the Bill, and the possibility of mutual benefit—benefit to the recipient authority in the form of advice, and benefit to this country in the form of possible orders for equipment, software and so forth. We must be proactive in this regard. It is one thing to enable a technicality to be removed; it is another to maximise the opportunities presented by the Bill. Other agencies, apart from the Overseas Development Administration—for instance, the European development fund and various United Nations agencies—can be used at no great expense; but how are they to be harnessed, and how can we ensure that they know what expertise is needed? How is local government to know what opportunities are available?

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe, and I am glad that the House is giving the Bill a fair wind.

12.19 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): On behalf of the official Opposition, I welcome the Bill and say that we shall give it our wholehearted support. I join hon. Members in all parts of the House who have congratulated the hon. Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) on securing pole position in the ballot for private Member's Bills. I say that with more than just a slight twinge of jealousy.

As others have said, the subject is a most appropriate one for the hon. Member for Broxtowe, for he has great interest and knowledge of overseas affairs. My hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) spoke for all my hon. Friends when he said that we should have liked to see the hon. Gentleman speaking on overseas development matters at the Dispatch Box.

The hon. Member for Hereford (Mr. Shepherd) reminded the House that the hon. Member for Broxtowe has just returned from an eventful Commonwealth Parliamentary Association visit to India. According to newspaper reports—which I understand from the hon. Member for Broxtowe became a little lurid in the telling—bricks were thrown at the delegation, thus leading to that classic newspaper headline in this country "MPs stoned in India." That confirmed the very worst suspicions of uncharitable voters about the conduct of Members of Parliament while abroad.

We welcome the Bill. It underlines the great contribution that can be made by British local authorities to development abroad. It is interesting to note that a consensual atmosphere has permeated this Second Reading debate. That atmosphere extends outside the House. The hon. Member for Broxtowe has consulted extensively with various local authority associations, all of which—Conservative dominated and Labour dominated—have welcomed the Bill. Nevertheless, I shall raise later a few worries that they have. I hope that the Minister will be able to reassure them. If he cannot reassure them today, I hope that we shall be able to deal with them in Committee.

The hon. Member for Broxtowe said that local government provides the genuine sinews of democracy. I say "Hear, hear" to that—and "Hear, hear" again. I am a passionate believer in local democracy and local accountability. I served as an elected member of two local authorities from 1970 until 1986. I might have served longer than that if the Conservative Government of the day had not abolished the authority upon which I happened to be serving at that time, the Greater London council, of which I was the chairman.

I have to say, in this consensual atmosphere, that there are those of us on this side of the House who feel that, since 1979, Conservative Administrations, far from welcoming the contribution—both in this country and abroad—that local authorities can make, have been at war with them by restricting their autonomy, by continually undermining their accountability to their local electorate and by limiting their resources, while placing ever more responsibilities, which previously were central Government responsibilities, on local authorities and then denying them adequate funds to carry them out, thus leaving them—it is an old trick but it never fails to work—completely in the firing line when they cannot deliver the standard of services that they would like to provide.

Mr. David Atkinson: May I remind the hon. Gentleman that it was a Labour Secretary of State for the Environment who, speaking about local government finance, said, "The party's over?"

Mr. Banks: We had something to celebrate in those days, I might add. If I remember rightly, at that time the rate support grant was running at around 60 per cent. of local government expenditure. Now it is down to about 40 or 41 per cent. In those days, there was an awful lot for local authorities to be pleased about. I do not suggest to Conservative Members that local government can have complete liberty over its finances. Central Government must always set the broad parameters. Central Government always have done and always will do. What we have seen, however, is the continual change of those parameters and of the duties and responsibilities of local government under Conservative Administrations since 1979.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Robin Squire): I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Gentleman, who is in full flow, but, to put the historic record correct, since he was a local authority member in the 1970s, he may or may not recall that, when it came to detailed capital expenditure, every single detail of large swathes of local authority expenditure had to come to the Department of the Environment to be examined and pored over by accountants, engineers and architects, thus doubling or tripling the work. That includes the time when the hon. Gentleman's party was in government. We did away with that when we came to power in 1979.

Mr. Banks: The Government also did away with a lot of local authorities, which was one way of dealing with it. It is rather like going to the doctor to complain of a headache and getting one's head chopped off. The doctor gets rid of the headache, but such drastic measures do not necessarily commend themselves to people who are suffering from a headache.

The Government have attacked local authorities, and it worries me greatly. I am a very reasonable person. I like to think charitably, even of Conservative Members, although I am continually disappointed in that hope. However, I should like to think that in our system of local government we have something that is worth standing up for and defending, in real terms. Of course there will be political differences between us—that is the stuff of our party political democracy—but the way in which local authorities and councils have been abused by the Government in recent years is, to me, unacceptable.

I do not intend to make a big issue of it, but a number of hon. Members have referred in the debate to local authority junketing and to the fact that we must make sure that the Bill does not lead to even more. It is a bit rich to say things like that in this place when large numbers of overseas fact-finding trips are available to Members. We get very upset when our electors refer to those as junkets.

In the circumstances, it is unwise of us to refer to similar local government activities as junkets. As my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) once memorably said about visits of Members of Parliament abroad, "I notice that they never go fact-finding to Greenland in the winter." *[Interruption.]* No, his passport was stolen. It was obviously one of those plots by central Government to stop him going abroad and telling the truth about what goes on in this country.

Our local government system deserves far more credit from the Government than it has received. I hope—again, it is a faint hope—that today's atmosphere, in our discussions about this measure that affects local authorities, will be a harbinger of future debates and future relations beween central Government and local authorities, although I shall not hold my breath while I wait.

The hon. Members for Beckenham (Mr. Merchant) and for Broxtowe referred to relations with eastern Europe, a matter which should concern all of us. There is a crisis in eastern Europe. There is a particular crisis developing in Russia. One reads the news coming out of Moscow these days with increasing alarm. Economic and social problems are leading to political problems.

I must say to the hon. Member for Beckenham that Britain must do more through local authorities and central Government to assist eastern Europe. Like many others, I believe that we need a latter-day equivalent of a Marshall aid plan for eastern Europe. If conditions deteriorate badly in eastern Europe, particularly in Russia, the political implications for western Europe will be profound.

It could be a tragedy of historic proportions, and it is not good enough for western Governments to stand on one side saying, "We hope that the reforms will work. We are looking very favourably at you. We are keeping our fingers crossed, and we are giving you a little money." That is not enough. We are not responding sufficiently to the enormous changes that are taking place in eastern Europe —changes which are unimaginable in our society. We think that we have problems in Britain, and Labour Members often talk about the problems created by the Government's economic policies, but ours are as nothing in comparison with the problems of eastern Europe, particularly in Russia.

I hope that the Bill will offer the Government a greater incentive to do far more in conjuction with our European partners to assist those people of eastern Europe who are going through such tumultuous changes. The demands on local government for advice and assistance from central and eastern Europe and the third world are enormous, but they represent the desire of communities in those countries to control themselves. Inquiries have already been made of local authorities about, for example, Britain's electoral arrangements.

The hon. Member for Beckenham mentioned Lithuania. I wrote a report for the Council of Europe on Lithuania's application for membership of the Council of Europe. One of the problems that emerged during my two-day visit to Lithuania—I can assure hon. Members that that was no junket!—was how to organise political parties, voting and registration. Our local authorities have great expertise on such matters. Countries such as Lithuania look to us to tell them how to organise free elections. We must respond generously to those requests, and no doubt the Bill will facilitate that.

Such countries are also asking about organising individual services. The hon. Members for Broxtowe and for Beckenham and others mentioned waste disposal, which is an important matter. Many east European countries have no real standards of waste disposal, and one saw how appalling it was when the great security blankets were lifted in countries such as Albania and Romania. When we saw how bad conditions were in eastern Europe, it put all our problems into context.

On one of my visits to the German Democratic Republic I took a close interest in waste disposal, which has always been a matter close to my heart—for many obvious reasons, some uncharitable Conservative Members might think. When I was chairman of the public services committee on Lambeth borough council, it was always a fascinating subject. One pulls the chain or sticks it in the dustbin and tends to forget about it. It is fascinating to know what happens after that. In eastern Europe, when one pulls the chain it does not normally work; it certainly did not do so in Lithuania when I was there recently, but that was a nasty experience on which I do not want to dwell too long.

When I was in the German Democratic Republic, I saw how the west Berlin authorities had taken advantage of the low standards in east Berlin. They had moved their rubbish over for the east Berlin authorities to deal with. The German Democratic Republic authorities were happy to take the hard currency—God knows where it was going —but the irony is that the federal republic has now inherited many of the problems that it helped to create. Our waste disposal authorities are very efficient and have much expertise to offer east European countries, where the standards of environmental protection are abysmally low, to put it mildly.

My hon. Friend the Member for Workington mentioned direct labour organisations, which have come in for a lot of criticism in the House, some of which has been fair but an awful lot of which has been very unfair. It is good to know that the expertise of the remaining direct labour organisations can be effectively transferred to other countries in the east.

Mr. Andrew Miller (Ellesmere Port and Neston): Will my hon. Friend join me in congratulating Ellesmere Port and Neston borough council direct labour organisation whose workers organised convoys to Romania and have adopted an orphanage there, thus creating a link between Romania and the town? That is an example of what a direct labour organisation can do to promote the concept behind the Bill.

Mr. Banks: I certainly join my hon. Friend in offering congratulations. I take the opportunity to say that many organisations in this country, especially voluntary organisations, are doing much to relieve suffering around the world, not only in eastern Europe but in Somalia and elsewhere. The House must always be prepared to pay full tribute to the people who not only contribute financially but often risk their lives in the provision of humanitarian assistance to areas far less fortunate than ours.

I return to the overseas requests to local authorities for their expertise, especially the request about forms of local taxation. I was surprised when I heard of such a request —I assumed that people were getting in touch with local authorities to find out how to avoid the mistake of the poll tax, which I assume we would not wish to export. The Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, the hon. Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire), was a poll tax rebel, and rightly so. I am glad that his rebellion was duly rewarded in the end, although it took a long time, as it did for me. As one rebel to another, it is nice that we have reached a position of junior responsibility, which is wholly unpaid in my case but rather more remuneratively rewarded in the Minister's case.

We can tell other countries about local taxation, if only what to avoid. We can tell them about mechanisms of accountability, which is connected to electoral arrangements. Accountability is very important because local government accountability and democracy underpin parliamentary accountability and democracy. We tamper with them at our peril, and I believe that we have tampered far too much.

Consumers' and citizens' rights are new rights which countries in former totalitarian regions are now seeking to establish for the first time, and not merely by means of constitutions on pieces of paper which set out the most wondrous array of freedoms, none of which applies in reality, but by real consumer rights and citizenship rights. They are the areas of expertise which our local authorities can offer.

Local authorities are the bodies best placed to meet the myriad needs of individuals in their daily lives. The decisions taken by local authorities affect the daily lives of our constituents far more than the Acts passed by central Government. When I walk around Forest Gate, I am regularly seized by constituents—not by the throat, I hasten to add—who ask why, for example, the streets are so dirty. I always say that it is not the councillors who throw around the dirty rubbish but the dirty people who live in the area. They also ask why they cannot get their child into a particular school or get a place in hospital.

Their questions are always about local services—they rarely stop me in Forest Gate to ask about the situation in Bosnia. That does not mean that they are not interested —of course they care—but their daily lives are affected by the actions of their local authorities.

The ability of local authorities to deliver services is very much affected by the decisions made in the House and in the Departments of central Government, so, although we are not directly responsible to the people on the street, we are indirectly responsible, because we decide the resources that will be available to local authorities for the discharge of their responsibilities.

The list of those responsibilities is vast—it includes homes, safety in those homes through the fire services and the police, safety in the streets, transport, education, social security, leisure, arts, sports, heritage and jobs and training through the fostering of economic development.

Many local authorities have economic development units which are doing a grand job in trying to mitigate the worst excesses of central Government economic policies. Other local government services include encouragement of and funding for the voluntary sector, environmental health, acting as a consumer watchdog, planning the physical environment, waste collection, waste disposal and licensing, including recycling, and the control of building standards.

All those services have an impact on our constituents in their daily lives; hence local authorities are very much in the firing line. The Minister and Conservative Members have made the lives of local councillors pretty miserable these days. I find it strange—not wondrous strange, but still strange—that people want to stand for their local authority any more. They get abused by local newspapers and national newspapers. Their range of duties is continually prescribed by central Government. The resources available to them are limited by central Government. They are denounced by Conservative Members. Often if they are Labour councillors, they are attacked by their own local parties. They are asked, "Why is the council carrying out the cuts imposed by this lousy Conservative Government? Why are you doing the Tories' dirty work? You are nothing more than the running dogs of British imperialism." That is the sort of language one expects to hear in my general committee these days.

In London, many councillors simply stand down because they are not prepared to carry on trying to run services with the inadequate resources provided by central Government. It is not only Labour councillors who think in those terms. Harrow council, a true blue Conservative council, made similar noises recently when it considered its standard spending assessment and the budgets with which it would have to deal. If the Minister is spreading such discontent in true blue areas such as Harrow, one can imagine the problems he is creating in good, solid socialist areas such as Newham. Although he is probably not very worried about the latter, he should be a little more concerned about the former.

Local authorities are grappling with some of the most pressing contemporary problems, especially in inner-city areas and areas that have been affected by industrial decline. The problem of homelessness is appalling. At my advice surgery tonight, 60 per cent. of all the cases will be about homelessness. It is a crisis. I know that that word is overused in politics, but it is true that homelessness is a crisis in London and elsewhere, as evidenced by the number of people who are sleeping rough on the streets.

At this time of year, everyone is concerned about the homeless, but that concern should not be confined to the run-up to Christmas. It may give us a feeling of having done something when we see Crisis at Christmas open up warehouses—there are many empty warehouses in London and elsewhere—and we see the homeless getting a bit of Christmas cheer. That may relieve our consciences,

but it should not. The problem of homelessness should stay uppermost in our minds all the time. It is unacceptable in the latter part of the 20th century to have so many thousands of unemployed construction workers while so many thousands of people are homeless. Surely it cannot be beyond the wit of even this Government to bring those two together to provide the decent homes which are so necessary.

Before Conservative Members ask about empty local authority properties, I point out that no local authority deliberately keeps its properties empty. I assure hon. Members that in Newham, local Members of Parliament have regular meetings with housing officials to ensure that such a criticism can never be validly levelled at the borough. It would give me no satisfaction, and it would weaken my argument in criticising the Government, if I knew that the local authority for which I have some responsibility and to which I have some accountability was failing to fill its voids as fast as possible.

Local authorities have to deal with other issues, such as illiteracy, environmental improvement and the problem of drugs. Drugs are a tremendous problem in London. In recent discussions, Scotland Yard said how worrying the drugs problem had become. Other local authority services include job creation, job training and crime prevention. They are all matters with which we are having to deal in this country at the moment, but our problems pale into insignificance in comparison with those of eastern Europe, where there has been an enormous increase in the supply of drugs, in crime on the streets and in homelessness.

Many people in eastern Europe must be wondering what they have let themselves in for. We must think carefully about that because if, in comparison with what is happening at the moment, Mr. Brezhnev's presidency should start to look like the halcyon days, or Joseph Stalin like a kindly old gentleman who knew how to provide decent services, we should be in trouble, too. The east Europeans will be in more trouble than us, but we will also be in trouble. We must recognise our shared responsibility. As we battle against homelessness, illiteracy and drug-related crime and drug provision, we have things that we can tell and expertise that we can pass on to those grappling with those problems openly for the first time.

The concept of the community governing itself within the laws of the country concerned is similar to the principle of subsidiarity as it should be applied within the member states of the European Community. I find it rather depressing—perhaps I ought also to find it strange—that the Government bang on about subsidiarity in the EC when what is needed is a bit more subsidiarity in the relationship between central and local government. At the moment, local authorities are faced with a great centralising Government, whatever the Minister may protest to the contrary. Centralisation was the natural instinct of the previous Prime Minister. I hope that it may gradually abate in the few years that the present Prime Minister has left to him. It would certainly be a great improvement if he recognised that we need to devolve more powers to local communities rather than taking powers away from them.

Dr. Liam Fox: In view of the hon. Gentleman's dislike of centralisation, I look forward to hearing him welcome the opting out and local management of schools and fund-holding practices.

Mr. Banks: I do not welcome them, because they do not give more power to local communities. Although they may give the appearance of more local autonomy, they are in fact centralising measures. What opting out and LMS mean is that the Department for Education funds schools and so decides what goes on. Those who have hold of the purse strings decide what happens. It is the same with central Government's approach to local government, and it is an old trick: one simply restricts funding and lets local authorities take the blame for the failure to deliver adequate services.

Sir Paul Beresford: I have been struggling to work out how the hon. Gentleman's remarks come within the scope of what we are discussing. I now realise that we are talking about overseas aid in reverse. The delegation and freedom of schools works very successfully in a number of Commonwealth countries, and perhaps we have learnt from them.

Mr. Banks: The hon. Member for Croydon, Central (Sir P. Beresford) need not worry too much about the extent to which my remarks come within the context of the Bill, because he is not in the Chair. I have not been called to order by the occupant of the Chair and therefore consider my remarks to be in order. It is the approbation of the occupant of the Chair and not that of the hon. Gentleman which I desire.

The problem that Britain faces is that the Government have continually attacked local authority services. It is somewhat ironic that other countries should be seeking advice from the United Kingdom on a whole range of matters in connection with which the ability of our local authorities has become increasingly limited by central Government policies.

As I said, United Kingdom local government has a long and proud record, not least in innovations subsequently adopted nationally—in public health and basic utilities in the 19th century, and in equal opportunities and recruitment in the 20th. Many of those innovations were disparaged by national politicians in this place but subsequently adopted in legislation. United Kingdom local authorities remain vital bodies with a willingness to experiment and they remain in close touch with their communities. However, as I have said, increasingly in a unitary and already centralised state without a written constitution, central Government have sought to control and even stamp out many local government activities.

There have been no fewer than 144 Acts of Parliament since 1979 on local government. Not very many of those were particularly helpful. That information was provided by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, the hon. Member for Hornchurch.

Of the 144 Acts, 51 must be regarded as major and their results are well known: the virtual removal of budgetary discretion by capping and now effective capping in advance through publishing the criteria and thereby forcing authorities to budget in accordance with them; the reduction of local revenue to an average of 15 per cent. of local spending; the abolition of key authorities; the transfer of key services such as further education; compulsory competitive tendering; national control of teachers' pay; imposition of housing action trusts—initially without ballots until defeated in another place; encouragement of estate transfers to private landlords; refusal even now to allow the majority of capital receipts

[Mr. Banks]

to be spent on regeneration and central prescription, for example, in education. Therefore, it sits ill on the lips of Conservative Members to talk about the advice that we can give other countries about democracy, democratic accountability and the maintenance of an effective local government system.

Sir Paul Beresford: Central Government's drive to get local government to produce value for money and standards has, over recent years, generated the expertise in dealing with the private sector to get that sector to work for local government. It has produced the information and knowledge that countries overseas seek and pay for.

Mr. Banks: It is a normal political ploy to take the credit for anything that looks good and blame everything that has gone wrong on someone else. The Minister cannot pin a partisan approach on this matter on me. It would be a very stupid politician—and I am certainly not one of those—who claimed that everything done by one side is bad and everything done by the other side is good. That is absolute nonsense. That is the very thing that I am complaining about.

Some reforms have been useful. I cannot actually think of one at the moment, but no doubt a Conservative Member could assist me. Let me be charitable in this season of goodwill: the Conservative Government must have done something good in local government. However, I object to the peculiar attitude on the Conservative Benches that a Conservative local authority must mean good and a Labour local authority must mean bad. That is nonsense and it does no service to the House. It certainly does a grave disservice to local authorities.

I have always been prepared to support any and every local authority. I have been prepared to criticise authorities where necessary—both my own and Conservative authorities. However, I have always been prepared to pay tribute where necessary. I thanked the Minister for Housing and Planning when he visited Newham recently and said some very nice things and, much more importantly, gave us some extra resources. I welcome that kind of thing. That is the kind of spirit in which I hope we would go forward in terms of local and central government in the context of the Bill.

I want to refer specifically to concerns that the local authority associations have with regard to the Bill. Everyone has welcomed the prior consultation. The hon. Member for Broxtowe has done a magnificent job in consulting everyone. All local authority associations—Conservative and Labour dominated—have appreciated that.

However, there are some concerns. The first involves the requirement for consent. The associations see no need in principle to import a requirement for the Secretary of State to give his consent to individual schemes. Local authorities are responsible bodies which act within the law. They are accountable to their electors and subject to increasing tight ministerial control on their overall expenditure. The associations understand that Ministers are unlikely to want the requirement to be dropped, but welcome indications that a general authorisation is likely to be given under clause 1(2).

Secondly, there are concerns about the "without prejudice" clause. It would have been preferable if the Bill had included a clause that made it clear that the new power had no effect on any existing power to provide technical assistance to bodies outside the United Kingdom.

The reason for that is that the new provision is likely to overlap with existing activities that are undertaken in conjunction with activities covered by other specific powers—for example, the promotion of economic development under section 33 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 or under general discretionary powers such as section 137, as amended, of the Local Government Act 1972. General powers are intended to be used only where no more specific powers exist. Therefore, in practice, activities would come to be undertaken increasingly under the new powers as set out in the Bill, and thereby impose a consent requirement where none applied before and further limiting local authorities' discretion.

Thirdly, there is the de minimis exclusion. I understand that an announcement is expected of a de minimis threshold below which consent would not be required. That is likely to take the form of an expenditure limit determined by the size of the resident population of the relevant authority's area, and will be issued under a general authorisation after enactment. The recognition of the need for a de minimis arrangement is welcomed by local authority associations, although they consider that a more buoyant mechanism would avoid the need for regular updating of the fixed amount against inflation. There might be difficulties if a relatively inflexible range of fixed amounts were applied to very large authorities. I understand that Strathclyde regional council and Birmingham city council are particularly active in that respect.

It will be important to establish whether the proposed limit would include the notional cost of officer time. An initial visit by officers might be necessary to assess a project before any decision is made on funding. It will be preferable to exclude altogether initial expenditure on the development of unfunded projects. It is hoped that the thresholds will be established to take account of those concerns.

Fourthly, I refer to the scope of the Bill. Clause 1(1) covers the provision

"of advice and assistance . . . to a body engaged in local government outside the United Kingdom."

That is a fairly limited form of wording. The associations have pointed to possible difficulties in assisting bodies setting up local government and public agencies which might provide services which, in the United Kingdom, are functions of local authorities. That is an important point, and I hope that the Minister will be able to address it. I trust that, if he cannot do so now, the matter will be reviewed in Committee.

Fifthly, certain local authorities choose to channel advice and assistance through consultants. Such firms have frequently been engaged by the United Kingdom Government to act as go-betweens with institutions overseas. The associations will wish to seek assurances that the wording of clause 1(1) does not preclude such arrangements from continuing.

Sixthly, clause 1(4) excludes from the new power the provision of grants, loans or other financial assistance. There is concern that that could be taken to cover the provision of equipment, expertise and joint work on projects. As a practical example, fire authorities have been encouraged to donate fire appliances on replacement to the

new democracies of central and eastern Europe. Such vehicles and equipment clearly have a book value, and it seems possible that clause 1(4) would prevent the exercise of the power in that respect. I am sure that the Minister will be able to clear up that matter.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: It has just dawned on me that there should be monitoring of the expenditure that local authorities entertain under the Bill, because it might be taken into account in the annual allocation of overseas aid. What are the sums involved?

Mr. Robin Squire: They might be very small.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The Minister says that they might be very small, but we do not know how the scheme will develop over years. It might become the central vehicle in the delivery of skills and information about skills.

Mr. Banks: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. Those matters are best kept for the Committee, although no doubt the Minister will say something about them. There must not be any charge for any of those services, however they are provided to local charge payers. That clearly must not follow. Although there is much good will within hard-pressed local communities for dealing with problems overseas, it can ruin the exercise if local electors—local taxpayers—feel that they are losing services and losing out through local authority activity overseas.

Clearly, everything must be self-funding. When the arcane mechanisms for calculating revenue support grant and standard spending assessment are being considered at the Department of the Environment, I hope that it will be possible—to take up the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Workington—to monitor which local authorities are becoming involved. I am sure that the Bill will shortly become an Act, and the local authorities should be monitored to see how they are discharging their responsibilities and carrying out their functions under the new Act, and to what extent that will impact on the provision of local services.

I know what the hon. Member for Broxtowe means in the Bill, which states that its provisions will be self-funding. However, it will be virtually impossible to ensure that it is completely watertight: there will be some leakage. I hope that that fact will be taken into account. To put it crudely, there is no such thing as a free lunch, even for Conservative Members. Therefore, where there may be some leakage, I hope that local authorities will not be penalised, providing that it has arisen accidentally and not because those authorities have flouted the Bill's provisions.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Broxtowe on introducing an exceedingly necessary Bill to give powers where we thought they already existed but found they did not. It has been described as a modest Bill, but I do not think it so—it is a useful and important Bill. The Opposition welcome it and will work hard in Committee to raise various issues and obtain from the Minister assurances on and solutions to a few minor problems raised by the local authority associations. I thank the hon. Gentleman for introducing the Bill and I wish it well.

1.1 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Robin Squire): It seems an appropriate time for me to set out the Government's position on the Bill and deal with some of the queries raised by earlier speakers. I shall start, predictably, by congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester). The Bill encapsulates two of the characteristics that he brings to the House. There has been wide reference to one of them: his knowledge of developing countries. The Bill goes straight to the heart of that expertise, and it is particularly appropriate that my hon. Friend should be introducing it. Secondly, as my hon. Friend reminded us in his speech, like me he is a former chairman of finance of a local authority. The combination of those two qualities makes his introduction of the Bill most appropriate. I warmly congratulate him on doing so and express my relief that he has returned safely from his interesting trips abroad.

I shall first dispose of the only discordant note introduced in this morning's proceedings, by the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks). I assure him that it is commonplace for myself and other Ministers travelling around the country to give credit where it is due to local authorities, regardless of the nature of their political control. To make an obvious point, in recent months we have specifically recognised the work of a number of Labour authorities in relation to city challenge. We recognised the plans that they proposed, and duly acknowledged their merit in the award of city challenge.

If I dare say it to such a trendy Member, the hon. Member for Newham, North-West is in danger of being a little out of touch. We consulted and listened to local government on the important issue of whether a staff commission for new authorities is needed, possibly under the local government commission. We listened, acted and announced a staff commission. On the further development of compulsory competitive tendering in the white collar sections, we have listened to the concerns raised by local authorities across the country and responded to them. The local authorities have recognised and welcomed the steps that we have taken. Above all, the introduction of the council tax from next April has been effected hand in hand with local authorities to ensure that there are no problems.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-West may turn up here with a modern hairstyle modelled on Jonathan Ross's, but his views are stuck in the 1970s or early 1980s. He must get up to date. He need not hold his breath; he can carry on breathing easily. We are in a good partnership and it is working well.

The Bill has the strong support of the Government. I am pleased to see that it seems to command the support of all sections of the House. Before dealing with its detail and how we envisage its operating, I might usefully go into the background for the benefit of the House and explain how we have arrived at this point.

We start with that often misunderstood idea, town twinning. There are those—the few, as ever—who have given it a bad name. The phrase "junketing on the rates" has been mentioned more than once this morning, first by my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, Central (Sir P. Beresford), who brings considerable expertise—not to junketing on the rates but from running a very efficient local authority in Wandsworth which sets an example to authorities here and abroad.

These stories of junketing have been helped along by the tabloid press, but I think that they are very much the exception. They belong much more to the past, when scrutiny of local expenditure was not as vigorous.

The town twinning movement took off after the second world war, representing the genuine wish of people

[Mr. Robin Squire]

throughout Europe to reach out the hand of friendship and to build bridges of understanding so that never again would bigots or fanatics be able to come to power on a tide of ignorance and suspicion and lead our continent into tragedy.

Town twinning is a small-scale, grassroots activity, consisting of exchanges of school children, sports teams, artistic groups and the like. Sometimes it has been extended to co-operation on technical matters. In recent years, that has increasingly happened when British authorities have been twinned with authorities in less-developed countries, but such assistance has inevitably been small scale.

Although there is no single or specific piece of legislation giving power for town twinning, a number of powers exist which, together, allow for all the educational and cultural activities understood to come under traditional town twinning.

The position on technical twinning—technical assistance to a twinned overseas authority—has always been more uncertain, with lawyers working for individual authorities and the Local Government International Bureau concluding that, on balance—how else would lawyers conclude?—sufficient powers could be inferred to allow authorities to undertake such work. It was certainly understood that there would be no legal problem if the cost of such assistance were paid from central Government grant.

Following the collapse of communism in central and eastern Europe in 1989 there was keen interest among Ministers at the Department of the Environment and in the local government community in assisting the setting up of stable and efficient systems of local government in these newly democratic countries. That was seen as having the potential to make a major contribution to the achievement of political stability and economic recovery there.

The interest and enthusiasm were not confined to the United Kingdom. Within weeks of the fall of communism in the first of the east European dominoes, Poland, Senator Regulski, the Polish Minister charged with setting up democratic local government from scratch, was in London asking for our help. Delegations from Hungary and Czechoslovakia followed.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales, when he was Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities, led a mission to Poland in February 1990, and the value that the Poles and other east Europeans placed on our local government experience and expertise was made very clear to him.

Why us? It is clear that the east Europeans value our long tradition of democratic local government and our tendency to gradual evolution to meet new challenges. They also appreciate that in terms of their size, their budgets, the scope of their activities and their provision of local services our local authorities are probably unsurpassed in Europe and have a great deal to offer in terms of nuts and bolts experience and advice.

Visitors to this country are usually more than a little surprised to discover how much autonomy local government in Britain has. European local authorities have much smaller budgets. Visitors are taken aback when we explain that there is no general system of supervision of local authorities by the state, that local government has no hierarchy and no prefect or commissioner or voivode with whom everything has to be agreed. There is no Government rule book setting out how an authority should transact every aspect of its business. That is the reality in Britain. We could ask any French mayor about the reality in France, but it would be advisable to do so when he is well out of earshot of his prefect.

Dr. Liam Fox: We have many lessons to teach local government overseas, but perhaps we could learn from our own mistakes and tell those authorities about the dangers and pitfalls of over-regulation which affects not only local government but many parts of our national life.

Mr. Squire: I have considerable sympathy with my hon. Friend's view. He will remember that when we took power in 1979 one of our first acts was to sweep away more than 300 controls governing the minutiae of the way in which local government conducted its business. I am sure that there will always be opportunities for further gains in that area.

The result of what I have been outlining was a series of Foreign and Commonwealth Office-sponsored assistance programmes for local government in Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria. The second initiative was the technical links scheme which was set up by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Local Government International Bureau in June 1991. It is a joint central-local government initiative financed by a £700,000 per annum allocation from the know-how fund. Its purpose is to contribute to the growth and management of local democracy in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Albania and the Commonwealth of Independent States by supporting specifically targeted technical projects to be carried out jointly by a United Kingdom local authority and a local authority in one of those countries to help the east European authority develop its capacity and skills. Projects aim to deal with urgent technical difficulties such as, for example, environmental, public health, infrastructure or service delivery problems. Through achievement in those areas, the efficiency and effectiveness of east European local authorities can be improved and local democracy strengthened. Local economic and social reconstruction will also benefit.

Local authorities showed a strong initial interest in the scheme and nine projects were approved in November 1991. However, by last December doubts had begun to arise over local authorities' powers to do such work. A court case on another matter dealt with the scope of section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972, on which, I believe, local authorities may have been relying for power to give technical assistance, and may have strengthened those doubts. The Audit Commission, which strongly supports the objectives of the technical links scheme, received legal advice to the effect that there were serious doubts about authorities' powers to carry out such work outside the United Kingdom.

It is for the courts to interpret the law and for individual local authorities to satisfy themselves about their powers, and some have continued to be satisfied that they have sufficient powers. My Department did not dissent from the Audit Commission's view. The doubts rapidly cast a shadow over technical twinning and the technical links scheme. Authorities felt inhibited and I think it fair to say that the scheme was put on ice for a time.

It was clear that, unless we could take action to remedy these legal doubts, we risked losing an extremely effective scheme for getting assistance to eastern Europe. We looked in vain for alternative powers, but the situation could be remedied only by primary legislation.

The possibility of an amendment to last year's two Department of the Environment local government Bills was investigated, but would have widened their scope to an unacceptable extent. Therefore, I am extremely pleased that my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe, who was successful in the ballot, chose this Bill. By doing so he has made it possible to save this initiative and British local government's capacity to use its expertise to help eastern Europe.

We have taken two steps to help local authorities in the period before my hon. Friend's Bill comes into force, assuming that it will. The first is that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office has agreed that all significant direct costs incurred by local authorities in carrying out a project under the technical links scheme will be met from the know-how funds. Previously, most staff costs were met by the authority.

Secondly, we have made it known that the Secretary of State is prepared to sanction under section 19 of the Local Government Finance Act 1982 local authority expenditure under the technical links scheme. That power is one which the Secretary of State may exercise only in special circumstances—for example, in anticipation of new legislation that has been announced and is not expected to be controversial and will authorise the type of expenditure in question; in other words, where it is probable that a sanction will be required for only a limited period of time.

Where a sanction is granted, the auditor has no power to apply to the court for a declaration that the expenditure is contrary to law. We informed the Audit Commission and the local authority associations that, in the unlikely event of expenditure under the scheme being challenged by an auditor, we are prepared to offer a sanction.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe explained, the purpose of the Bill is to provide local authorities with a power to provide advice or assistance, on any matter in which they have skill or experience, to bodies engaged in local government outside the United Kingdom, subject to the consent of the Secretary of State.

Like my hon. Friend, the Government intend to ensure that local authorities have, more or less, the powers that they thought they had until doubts set in last December. I say "more or less" quite deliberately. It is true that if my hon. Friend's Bill is enacted we shall have a requirement for the Secretary of State's consent that we have not had before. On the other hand, we shall also have a clear and definite power to provide overseas technical assistance where before we had only "inferred or implied" powers, uncertainty, and a reliance on a liberal interpretation of the law—some might say wishful thinking. I am clear that on balance local government will be in a stronger position after this Bill is enacted than it was in prior to the arising of the present "doubts".

Ever since my hon. Friend took on this Bill, both he and my Department have been at pains to consult representatives of local government on the way in which we should deal with the legal problem. Last summer, my officials circulated copies of the first draft of the Bill to the local authority associations and to others in local government who are prominent in the provision of assistance overseas. Subsequently, my hon. Friend and my officials had two full meetings with the associations and others. We tried to take on board their concerns as far as we were able, and I know that that was welcomed by the associations, who have made clear their strong support for the Bill—as was echoed this morning by the hon. Member for Newham, North-West.

We shall stay in close contact with local government throughout the proceedings on the Bill. It is an enabling Bill for local government, and we want to enable it to do a good job overseas—but there must be safeguards, and that brings us to the consent requirement. That is not meant in any way as a heavy-handed control, but as a means of ensuring that the good name of the many, sensible authorities doing a valuable job overseas is not overshadowed by the well-publicised misdeeds or excesses of the occasional crackpot authority.

The consent requirement will ensure also that no significant cost arising from overseas technical assistance falls on the local council tax payer. We support such assistance, but it is not appropriate for significant costs to be met out of local taxation—it is not a function or service of local government.

However, as I say, we have no intention of being heavy handed and I do not envisage the need for many individual consent applications. We intend to issue general authorisations, which will cover most work of that type.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State intends to give general authorisations for work under approved Government, EC, or other international agency schemes. Those authorisations will cover also de minimis expenditure, being expenditure below approved thresholds related, as was suggested by the hon. Member for Newham, North-West, to authorities' resident population, and work carried out where there is no net expenditure —that is, where grant or other income matches the amount of expenditure.

We also intend that the general authorisations will cover small-scale expenditure on advice and assistance arising out of, and incidental to, town twinning links, provided that it does not exceed twice the spending in the previous financial year. That will allow authorities to continue to undertake small-scale work of that type without having to seek specific consents.

My hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe and my officials will be discussing the details of these proposed general authorisations with the local authority associations in the new year and I will write to the chairmen of the associations before the Committee stage of the Bill, with a model general authorisation covering those matters. If I have not already conveyed this from the Dispatch Box, I can confirm that my approach is to be very open minded, and I expect to satisfy the authorities in due course in respect of some of the smaller points made by the hon. Member for Newham, North-West.

I turn to specific points raised in today's debate. There was a marvellous balance between the significant number of excellent speeches made by my hon. Friends. I know that they will understand, however, if I begin by dealing with what was said by the hon. Member for Newham, North-West. He asked me whether officer time would be included in the provision for de minimis limits. I am open to suggestion; we shall await representations from local authorities.

I cannot accept that a "without prejudice" clause would be appropriate. The argument for such a clause is that by providing a specific power enabling overseas technical

[Mr. Squire]

assistance to be given, the Bill will remove local authorities' existing ability to do such work on the basis of general discretionary powers—such as section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972—or specific powers such as section 33 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, which promotes economic development.

The central point, however, is the serious doubt about the legitimacy of using the existing powers. The Audit Commission's lawyers take the view that there are no existing powers for technical assistance: that, indeed, is why the Bill has been presented. It is difficult to see the purpose of a "without prejudice" clause in respect of powers that are not thought to exist. Nevertheless, to meet the local authorities' concern that small-scale technical assistance work arising out of town-twining activity should not require a consent under the Bill, the Secretary of State will give a general authorisation for such work.

As the hon. Member for Newham, North-West said, local authority associations have asked my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe to amend the Bill to allow local authorities to assist bodies—such as consultancies—that help overseas authorities. I am advised that the Bill, as drafted, would allow a council to provide an overseas authority with advice and assistance, in conjunction with consultants; if the legal position varies, I shall await further representations.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-West mentioned the reference to financial assistance in clause 1(4). That is intended simply to prevent local authorities from providing overseas authorities with such assistance, such as grants or loans. The question has now arisen whether the provision also excludes other financial assistance, such as the provision of equipment. The hon. Gentleman mentioned the possibility of fire authorities' donating fire appliances that have been replaced. My hon. Friend and my officials will discuss such matters with the local authority associations before the Committee stage, and I am sure that we shall be able to resolve them.

I shall write to the hon. Gentleman about any outstanding matters.

Mr. Tony Banks: The Minister has not yet mentioned the scope of clause 1(1), which refers to

"a body engaged in local government".

Mr. Squire: The Bill, as drafted, covers the provision of assistance to

"a body engaged in local government outside the United Kingdom".

Associations have pointed out to my hon. Friend that that wording would not permit assistance for bodies setting up local government or public agencies to provide services that, in the United Kingdom, are functions of local authorities. I understand that my hon. Friend therefore proposes, immediately after the debate, to table an instruction to the Committee to widen the Bill's scope to allow local authorities to assist all bodies engaged outside the United Kingdom in activities that are the equivalent of, or comparable to, activities carried on by local authorities in any part of Great Britain. Such an instruction would have the Government's full support.

My hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham (Mr. Merchant)—who was surprised to find himself opening the batting this morning—made several good points. In particular, he emphasised the efficiency of his local council, the London borough of Bromley. Like Wandsworth, which I mentioned earlier, Bromley is an efficient authority from which others, in this country and abroad, could learn a great deal.

Like me, my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, Central is a member of the former council leaders' club, and he speaks with the benefit of considerable expertise. He rightly pointed out that many of the countries that we are discussing have none of the basic institutions on which they should be able to build; the Bill will play a significant part in helping them to learn from our experience. Similarly, my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South (Mr. Ottaway), who has apologised to me for being unable to stay to the end of the debate as he has a constituency engagement, stressed that the Bill will bridge the gap between east and west. In particular, he rightly underlined how the nuts and bolts exercise can be so helpful to so many authorities abroad.

My hon. Friend the Member for Lewes (Mr. Rathbone) reminded us of the established links that he and many other hon. Members already have with representatives of other countries already—in his particular case with Lithuania and Czechoslovakia—and also of the culture change now being faced in central and eastern Europe. He believes, and I share his views completely, that the Bill will help them. That is another reason for welcoming it.

In a strong speech, my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, East (Mr. Atkinson) made the very important point about the holding of proper elections which, in some countries at least, is still something of a novelty. The experience of our local authority officers in running elections will be of substantial assistance to them at local government and national level. My hon. Friend also pointed out that he is chairman of the relevant Council of Europe committee. These are exciting times for him. I am sure that the House wishes him well in furthering good relations between all the countries of Europe. As he said, there has never been a better time for local government to influence the rest of Europe.

In an excellent speech, my hon. Friend the Member for Woodspring (Dr. Fox) stressed the need to help various countries. He mentioned Poland and Czechoslovakia and spelt out precisely why that assistance is important and is in our own interests—an important point which sometimes can be overlooked—as they move towards full and free markets and democratic systems. He was also surely right to utter a cautionary note about there being no specific single model of local authority organisation towards which these countries should move.

I enjoyed in particular the speech of the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours). I am glad that he is still in the Chamber, although I know that he has other engagements. I am grateful that he has stayed until the end of the debate. He spelt out several helpful practical examples of housing management and social services. They will be of assistance to those countries. He also painted an interesting and attractive picture of the interchange of people within Europe in general.

My hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Duncan) reminded us, in a memorable comment, that when it comes to twinning—in his case between Whitwell and Paris—twins do not necessarily have to be identical. He, too, highlighted our expertise not just in running elections but in waste disposal. I am not sure that there is a direct connection between the two, though I am sure that if I think about it for long enough I shall find one.

Lastly, my hon. Friend the Member for Hereford (Mr. Shepherd) rightly praised the expertise of my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe and asked me specifically to confirm that no restraint should be placed on election advice when electoral registration officers cover two or more authorities. I can confirm that, according to my information, there should be no problem over electoral registration officers being able to provide advice on the organisation of elections.

I hope that hon. Members feel that I have endeavoured to summarise the debate in a relatively short speech. The Bill has the strong support of the Government. We are keen for British local government to provide vitally needed technical advice to local government in central and eastern Europe, to the Commonwealth of Independent States and elsewhere and to demonstrate its competence and expertise. We must, at the same time, protect the local taxpayer. It is not appropriate for significant cost, arising from such assistance, to fall on the council tax payer. That is why we have the technical links scheme, under which all significant direct costs involved in undertaking this work are met by the know-how fund.

The Bill has the support not just of central Government but of local government. The co-operation between the two sides over the Bill has been an excellent example of the progress that has been made in building a more constructive partnership and relationship and gives the lie to the picture of permanent central Government-local government conflict. I have great pleasure in urging the House to support the Bill.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee, pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

Ordered,

That it be an Instruction to the Committee on the Local Government (Overseas Assistance) Bill that it have power to make provision in the Bill for the bodies to which advice and assistance may be given by local authorities to include all bodies engaged outside the United Kingdom in the carrying on of activities which are the equivalent of, or are comparable to, activities carried on in any part of Great Britain by local authorities.—*[Mr. Lester.]*

Road Traffic (Driving Instruction by Disabled Persons) Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

1.29 pm

Sir John Hannam (Exeter): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

I am grateful to have time to debate the Bill. This is the second time in my parliamentary career that I have been fortunate enough to have the opportunity of introducing a private Member's Bill. The first time was in 1986 with the Corneal Tissue Bill, which successfully completed its stages in Parliament. I hope that I can make it a brace of successes with this Bill.

The Bill seeks to amend the Road Traffic Act 1988 to enable physically disabled people to give paid instruction in the driving of motor cars in specified circumstances. It has the support of the Department of Transport and I should like to thank all the staff of its disability unit who have helped so much with it.

The Bill is welcomed by many disabled people and organisations that represent the interests of disabled people and, at this early stage, I should like to quote messages of support that I have received from two of the leading disability organisations. The first is from the national vice-chairman of the Disabled Drivers Association, John Hennessey, who says:

"It is many years since one of our members from Coventry was denied the opportunity to become a driving instructor and become gainfully employed, because she only had a licence to drive cars with automatic transmission. The 'Disabled Drivers Association' warmly welcomes this Bill which will remove the present discrimination against disabled drivers and enable those who wish to work as driving instructors to do so. This measure is of vital importance and the need for it is overwhelming."

The other message came from Bert Massey, director of the Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation. He writes:

"RADAR warmly welcomes this Bill, which if passed, will enable disabled drivers to become driving instructors. The Bill will affect a small number of disabled people, but removes a barrier to them becoming 'economically active' and assisting other disabled people to become 'independently mobile'. We very much hope the House will grant it a Second Reading."

The Bill is sponsored by Members from four parties in the House, so it is truly an all-party Bill, and most of them are active in the all-party disablement group, which also supports the Bill.

Our proceedings began this morning with the presentation of a large petition calling for anti-discrimination legislation for disabled people. It is in that context that I present the Bill. We all know that disabled people face many obstacles in their daily lives in education, housing, transport, employment and many other areas. Significant progress has been made in removing the barriers in recent years, but much more remains to be done. I hope that the Bill will contribute by making provision for disabled people to become approved driving instructors, thus allowing those who qualify as such to have greater financial independence.

When we think about the range of problems facing disabled people we think of the difficulties of gaining access to buildings such as theatres and cinemas and of the problems on the educational front with grant-maintained schools and the need to ensure that proper provision is

[Sir John Hannam]

made for those with special educational needs, but they also face difficulties with transport that must be tackled, for example by using lower-access buses. Disabled people suffer from discrimination in a whole range of areas and the Bill seeks to tackle that.

The demand for the Bill is certainly well established. Over the years, the Department of Transport and the disability organisations have received representations from would-be driving instructors who are excluded from that source of employment. The Bill aims to rectify that problem and to open up new employment opportunities for disabled people as driving instructors approved by the Department of Transport.

Why is there a need to amend existing legislation? At the moment, someone who wants to become an approved driving instructor must be able to give tuition in the driving of cars with a manual gear box. That prevents disabled people, who are restricted by their driving licences to cars with automatic transmission, from becoming approved driving instructors and thereby giving paid tuition. The Bill would therefore deal with discrimination against disabled people in one aspect of employment. Until we have general anti-discrimination laws, I believe that it is the correct way to try to remove discrimination piece by piece.

In presenting the Bill, I am mindful of the need to ensure that it will not undermine road safety. A key feature of the Bill is the requirement for a disabled person who wants to become an approved driving instructor to satisfy an assessor appointed by the Secretary of State for Transport that he or she could exercise control in an emergency while giving instruction. Essentially, the assessment will be on the basis of the ability to exercise emergency control in a car fitted with automatic transmission with or without additional modifications to the vehicle, as the assessor may consider necessary.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): Could my hon. Friend enlarge on that? Would he recommend that the assessor should be requested to forecast the capacity of the candidate to become a driving instructor over a prescribed interval such as one year or two years in case someone with a debilitating progressive disease might get worse in the period after the assessment has been made?

Sir John Hannam: My hon. Friend raises a crucial point with which I am about to deal in detail. It is the safety factor which will concern most people in allowing a new group of people to become driving instructors.

The Bill would require a satisfactory assessment of the ability to exercise control, which would lead to the issuing of an emergency control certificate. The certificate would detail any modifications to the vehicle that the assessor may consider necessary. The important point is that the assessor may include a recommendation that the candidate should undergo a further emergency control assessment at the end of a period specified on the certificate. In other words, the assessor may consider the candidate's type of disability and define a period after which a further assessment must be made. I believe that that answers my hon. Friend's question.

The registrar of approved driving instructors will require the production of a current emergency control certificate before a disabled person's name can be entered in the register. In practice, I suspect that disabled people who want to become approved driving instructors would obtain the emergency control certificate before spending time and money taking the qualifying theoretical examination and practical test of driving and instruction ability which must be passed before entry in the register is possible. The Bill mirrors for a group of disabled drivers the requirements laid down for non-disabled drivers.

As an added road safety measure, the Bill contains powers for an emergency control certificate to be revoked in the event of a disabled person no longer being able to meet the emergency control requirements. It would be an offence to continue to give paid instruction without a current emergency control certificate. The Bill contains a number of safeguards around the issue raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel).

It would also be an offence if a disabled approved driving instructor or trainee instructor failed to inform the registrar of approved driving instructors of any worsening of his or her disability or failed to disclose a disability that had not been previously notified. Thus, the registrar can ensure that a person should return within a given time for further assessment and the prospective driving instructor is required to disclose any disability that had not previously been notified. He or she must notify the registrar if there is a worsening of the disability.

Dr. Liam Fox (Woodspring): May I take my hon. Friend further on that point? Given that the assessor can pre-determine the timing of a subsequent examination in certain conditions, would not it be an idea to have regular retesting? That would also avoid the need for individuals to report a worsening in their condition, which would necessarily sometimes be a subjective decision.

Sir John Hannam: The provisions of the certificate detail the time at which a further application should be made. A condition may improve rather than worsen, and a prospective disabled driving instructor who has been denied a certificate could come back for a reassessment. There is a duty on the disabled person to inform the registrar if his or her condition worsens. A disabled person can also ask for reassessment if the condition improves.

The introduction of the concept of the emergency control certificate is the key safeguard for road safety. Although it is necessary for road safety purposes that an additional requirement should be placed on disabled people, it should not act as an disincentive to disabled people who want to qualify as improved driving instructors; nor is it proposed that there should be any financial penalty for disabled people. With the agreement of my hon. Friend the Minister for Roads and Traffic, it is intended that no charge should be made for the issue of the emergency control assessment certificate.

A disabled person who holds a valid emergency control certificate, and who has passed the necessary written and practical qualifying tests, just as non-disabled people have to qualify, will be able to have his or her name entered in the register of approved driving instructors. That would enable a disabled person to give paid driving instruction, although he or she would be restricted to cars with automatic transmission and with any other special modifications that might be specified in the emergency control certificate.

Technology is developing so quickly that in the past 10 or 20 years, we have seen a range of adaptations and

modifications to allow people with very severe disabilities to be able to drive cars. One can imagine that in the foreseeable future, technology will go even further, to a point at which one would press a few buttons and programme a computer that would drive the car and even navigate it. Such a computer would be extremely useful for my wife, as navigation is not her strongest point. I look forward very much to such developments.

I will run briefly through the main features of the seven clauses. Clause 1 sets out the conditions that must be satisfied if a disabled person is to be registered as an approved driving instructor.

Mr. Matthew Carrington (Fulham): The interesting proposal for emergency control certificates is important for disabled driving instructors in terms of road safety. It also has interesting implications for non-disabled driving instructors. Does my hon. Friend think that there is a potential for widening the scope of the certificates so that all driving instructors would eventually need to have them, given the difficulty for anybody, whether disabled or not, in controlling motor cars in an emergency?

Sir John Hannam: It is certainly the case that the certificate is a prime requirement for all drivers when they are assessed for introduction to the register. The non-disabled driver has to show clearly that he or she can take control of a vehicle in an emergency. In the case of disabled drivers, whose cars have automatic transmission and other modifications, it becomes a more complex requirement. That is why the special advice centre set up by the Department of Transport will be responsible for providing an assessor who will look carefully at that requirement and at a certificate showing that a disabled driver is equally able to gain immediate control of a vehicle in an emergency. We can consider carefully in Committee whether the same degree of certification should apply to non-disabled drivers.

Clause 1 contains provisions to ensure that the disabled person can satisfy requirements that mirror those set out in part V—section 125—of the Road Traffic Act 1988. The disabled person who wanted to apply to the registrar to have his name included in the register of approved driving instructors would need to satisfy three conditions as a first step: first, he would have to suffer from a relevant disability or a prospective disability; secondly, he would have to hold a current restricted driving licence; and, thirdly, he would have to hold an emergency control certificate.

The disability or prospective disability would be a physical condition, whose relevance would depend on whether it was likely to hinder the safe and proper control of a motor car and, as such, be a source of danger to the public. In practice, potential disabled approved driving instructors will have shown their ability to drive safely —otherwise they would not possess the limited restricted licence required under the second of the three conditions. The Bill recognises, however, that some people suffer from intermittent or progressive physical disabilities—hence the inclusion of the term "prospective disability".

The possession of a limited driving licence required under the second of the three conditions refers to a licence limited to certain classes of motor car by reason of a person's disability. In practice, that generally means that the licence restricts the holder to driving cars with automatic transmission, with or without all the additional suitable modifications such as a hand-operated throttle and brakes.

The third requirement—that a disabled person possess an emergency control certificate—is a crucial element in the Bill.

Clause 1 also specifies the duty, which I have mentioned, to disclose to the registrar of approved driving instructors any worsening of the physical disability of the candidate instructor, and also the duty to disclose any disability not previously mentioned.

The clause also provides for the registrar to order a reassessment of emergency control ability and—again, mirroring the existing legislation—for the registrar to provide periodic tests of continued ability to give instruction, re-emphasising the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Fulham (Mr. Carrington).

Clause 1 also requires that, before entry to the register of approved driving instructors, a disabled person must first pass the necessary written and practical tests of ability. Clause 2 amends section 129 of the Road Traffic Act 1988 to enable disabled people to hold a trainee licence and to give paid instruction if so desired. A trainee licence is not a requirement under the existing legislation, and I do not propose to change that position.

To hold a trainee licence, a disabled person would first need to have passed the first two parts of the three-part qualifying examination—the written theory test and the test of driving ability. A trainee licence would enable a potential approved driving instructor to get practical experience and to instruct for payment before taking the practical test of ability to instruct. As with the legislation governing existing trainee licence holders, the Bill provides for regulations to be made limiting the period during which a disabled person may hold a trainee licence. The existing regulations governing such licences restrict the period to six months and I would envisage the same period applying to disabled trainee licence holders. It is interesting that, under existing legislation, prospective driving instructors are given a six-month period during which they can gain experience before doing the final practical test and be paid for it.

Clause 3 provides for the assessment of a disabled person's ability to control a motor car in an emergency so that that person may be granted the necessary emergency control certificate. The clause is a vital part of the Bill.

As I have said, the assessment would be undertaken by an assessor appointed by the Secretary of State for Transport. The disabled person would need to satisfy the assessor that he or she would be able to take emergency control while giving instruction. The assessment would be made on the basic ability to exercise emergency control of a vehicle fitted with automatic transmission with any special modifications that may be necessary.

The clause provides that the certificate will specify the class of motor car with any necessary modifications. The certificate may include a recommendation that the person should undergo further assessments at the end of such periods as may be specified. The assessor has control over the length of time before further assessments are necessary.

Mr. Jessel: Does the Bill state whether the assessor must be medically qualified or at least a medical auxiliary?

Sir John Hannam: The Bill does not define that specifically. Appointments are made by the Department of

[Sir John Hannam]

Transport centre responsible for supervising and helping to advise and develop modifications of vehicles for disabled people. The assessor appointed to deal specifically with emergency certificates will, of course, have to be fully qualified to do that. The degree of medical expertise is something which I would have to examine further. However, that is a very important point and I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham.

Clause 3 provides that the emergency control certificate will specify the particular class of motor vehicle and the further assessments needed at the end of any periods specified in the certificate. With regard to further assessments, it would be open to a disabled person to apply for a reassessment to enable him or her to instruct in a class of car not covered by the existing emergency control certificate. Alternatively, the registrar may require a reassessment if he believes that there are grounds for that.

The clause also provides that a period of time should elapse before a disabled person can apply for a reassessment. That period could be six months or another specified period. That is generally the case with such provisions as attendance allowance, where a period of time is set before a reapplication can be made after an earlier decision.

Clause 4 imposes a duty whereby a disabled person who is an approved driving instructor will be required to disclose to the registrar any previously undisclosed physical disability or worsening of a disclosed disability.

Clause 5 makes it an offence to give paid instruction in a vehicle not covered by an emergency control certificate. It also makes it an offence to give paid instruction without a valid emergency control certificate. The registrar of approved driving instructors will have no power to suspend disabled people from the register. Therefore, several months could elapse between the revocation of an emergency control certificate and the removal of the name from the register.

In the meantime, that person could give instruction without the ability to intervene in an emergency. I recognise that that would have very serious road safety implications; hence the need to create that offence to cover someone who continues to give paid instruction without a current emergency control certificate, even if that person's name was still on the register.

Clause 6 introduces a long and detailed schedule of related and consequential amendments necessary to the Road Traffic Act 1988 and the Road Traffic Offenders Act 1988. Clause 7 provides the short title of the Act if the Bill is enacted and it also provides for commencement, which would be by order of the Secretary of State for Transport. It also excludes Northern Ireland from the extent of the legislation.

I hope that the House will share my view that the Bill offers a new opportunity for disabled people, while ensuring that road safety principles are not compromised. I believe that my Bill will ensure that, as approved driving instructors, that same group of drivers will be able to provide an effective and safe service to other would-be drivers.

1.53 pm

Ms. Liz Lynne (Rochdale): I thank the hon. Member for Exeter (Sir J. Hannam) for introducing the Bill and for his excellent work in the all-party disablement group. I also thank the Home Office for consenting to those parts of the Bill relating to offences. I hope that that indicates the Government's general support for the Bill.

My party wholeheartedly supports the Bill, which is important for two reasons. First, it opens a sphere of employment that is currently barred to disabled people. Secondly, by providing for disabled instructors, it will make it possible for more people with disabilities to learn to drive and to gain the extra freedom that the rest of us take for granted.

Unfortunately, at the moment there is a shortage of driving instructors who are willing to teach disabled people. Clearly, that is unacceptable. The current situation also means that people with disabilities who do get taught to drive will be taught by people who may not have an adequate understanding of their needs or the particular skills required for driving some specially adapted cars.

Furthermore, it seems obvious to me that in most cases disabled people would prefer to be taught by disabled instructors. However, in supporting the Bill, we must not forget the many other transport problems that disabled people face. I have recently received complaints regarding the orange badge scheme for disabled drivers and regarding disabled access to the London underground.

Measures such as the Bill, which enable people with disabilities to extend their freedom of travel and access, should be supported, and I hope that all hon. Members will so do.

1.56 pm

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): The whole House and the country are indebted to my hon. Friend the Member for Exeter (Sir J. Hannam) for having brought forward this excellent Bill. For many years, my hon. Friend has been renowned for his work for the disabled. He himself is far from disabled—he has captained the Lords and Commons skiers against the Swiss Parliament, and he has played tennis for the House of Commons against the French. My hon. Friend's remarkable and compassionate concern for the disabled is shown in the Bill. Only a small number of people are affected by the Bill, but a principle is involved—a matter of fairness so that people who are disabled but who would be capable of making good driving instructors can carry out that employment and derive a livelihood from it.

Of course physical capacity matters. I am glad that my hon. Friend went so carefully into what would be needed to check physical capacity. Arms and legs matter in that connection. It is important for anyone driving a car to be able to react quickly and jam on the brake with a sharp movement in an emergency. An instructor needs to be able to show a learner driver how to do that. My hon. Friend referred to the need for driving instructors to obtain quick access to the hand brake or to seize the steering wheel and turn it in an emergency. Those points matter greatly.

There is also manoeuvrability. I have noticed many drivers proceed perfectly safely along a highway and avoid accidents when driving forward but be hopelessly incompetent when it comes to backing into a confined space or carrying out a three-point turn. The three-point turn used to feature largely in driving tests and in driving

instruction. Of course, it is useful for country drivers to be able to carry out a three-point turn, as they might overwise have to travel a mile or two before they find a turning space. For urban and suburban drivers, such as those in my constituency, the need is less marked. Normally, one can drive round a block and have to travel only 200 or 300 yds further. It is useful for a driver to be able to carry out three-point turns, which need some force as well as skill in the use of the steering wheel. It is important for an instructor to be able to give instructions on that function and on reversing into a confined space, which some drivers do so badly. Such drivers do not seem to have a sense of the size of their car in relation to the size of the space or how to back into it with reasonable efficiency. I should like to know that disabled drivers will be able to give instruction on those functions. I should also like to know that it will be safe for disabled instructors to drive on motorways.

When my hon. Friend the Minister replies, will he make it clear that within the European Community the principle of subsidiarity will apply to the legislation? I hope that there will be no question of our legislating today at the risk of having the Act overruled by the common market later.

2 pm

Mr. Matthew Carrington (Fulham): I am grateful for the opportunity to speak. My hon. Friend the Member for Exeter (Sir J. Hannam) is to be congratulated on introducing the measure. It is a scandal, which has been going on for far too long, that disabled people who are perfectly entitled and, indeed, licensed to drive their cars on the streets, have not been entitled to be instructors provided that they meet the necessary criteria to enable them to teach.

The purpose of the Bill is to be greatly welcomed and, when we look back once the Bill is on the statute book, we will wonder how the original legislation on driving instructors ever excluded disabled people. An extraordinary perversion of the legislative framework meant that it ignored the rights of disabled people. If disabled people can carry out the functions necessary to be able to drive, they should be able to teach others how to drive.

As has already been said by the hon. Member for Rochdale (Ms. Lynne), it is undoubtedly true that someone who is disabled, and is able to manage a car and understand the constraints imposed on them when safely driving and manoeuvring a car, will have a much clearer understanding of the problems faced by a disabled person who is learning to drive and who suffers similar disabilities. Disabled instructors will be able to understand the intricacies of handling cars that are adapted for disabled people.

Therefore, the Bill is not merely about the justice of a disabled person being able to say, "This is another skill that I can have to add to my existing skills", but will improve the instruction of disabled people learning to drive. That will mean that disabled people will be safer and better drivers, which will benefit us all. Therefore, the purpose of the Bill is to be greatly welcomed and I congratulate my hon. Friend on introducing it.

Necessary safeguards are required. There are people whose disabilities will, at times, make it difficult for them to be able to control a car in a crisis. Undoubtedly, crises arise during driving lessons that do not arise when someone is driving alone, whether or not he is disabled. Therefore, it is right that the Bill should include a requirement that the disabled driving instructor should have to fulfil to ensure that he can gain control of the car in an emergency.

Why, though, if a disabled driving instructor has to prove that he can regain control of a car in a crisis, do we take it for granted that someone who is not disabled always can? After all, it is not obviously true. When he qualifies, an instructor may have quick reactions and great manual dexterity and may be able to regain control of the car in which he teaches, but, as the years go by, reactions slow down and people cease to be as agile as some of us were in our youth. It is conceivable that able-bodied people might then find it difficult to regain control. To introduce a requirement of this nature for all driving instructors is perhaps beyond the scope of the Bill, but it should be considered. If the certification works for disabled drivers, as I believe that it will, perhaps the principle should be extended to all driving instructors—

Mr. Alan Duncan (Rutland and Melton): The purpose of the emergency control certificate is to prove that those whose ability to stop a vehicle may be in doubt can do so. Surely the ability of able-bodied people to stop a vehicle is never in doubt, so there is no need to extend the certification process to them.

Mr. Carrington: I suspect that that may often be true, but the difficulty is that it may not be true of some people. As my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) said, some people who are not disabled have great trouble reversing, doing three-point turns and backing into narrow spaces, even though the vast majority do not. The difficulty is to know who can and who cannot. Some driving instructors will be able to regain control of cars throughout their careers, but others, with less dexterity and slower reactions, will not.

This is rather like the hoary problem of whom advertising affects. Most of the money spent on it is wasted, just as I suspect most of these certificates will be wasted. The problem lies in distinguishing. In matters of road safety it is always wise to veer on the side of caution.

I hope that the Bill reaches the statute book quickly. It will right a great wrong that has lasted for too long. I congratulate my hon. Friend for Exeter and wish him godspeed for the Bill.

2.7 pm

Ms. Joan Walley (Stoke-on-Trent, North): We welcome this Bill, and I am pleased that the hon. Member for Exeter (Sir J. Hannam) has introduced it to the House. It is good that he has used his luck in the draw to bring in a Bill which will benefit disabled people. I am well aware, not least because of my working relationship with Lord Ashley, of the work that the hon. Gentleman has done in the all-party parliamentary group on disabled people and through his membership of the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee, established under the Road Traffic (Production of Documents) Act 1985.

This is a new area of work for me and I should like to put it on the record that I look forward to a close working relationship with all who are disabled or who are working for greater access for disabled people. I know how much the Bill means to many people throughout the country. Access for the disabled is important and should be far higher on the Government's priority list. For evidence of

[Ms. Joan Walley]

the problem, we need look no further than access for the disabled to the Palace of Westminster. I attended a meeting last week at which evidence was given in private to a Select Committee. During that meeting mention was made of the problem of access for the disabled in the Palace. I hope that speeding the Bill on its way will lead to greater willingness by all Members to look at ways of improving access for people here, thereby setting an example, and throughout the country. I understand that the Government support the Bill. I hope that it will be a reminder that the transport and employment needs of the disabled need to be addressed urgently and that that will start in the Palace of Westminster.

The Bill takes one small but important step towards addressing issues of transport and employment. Disabled people who want to be driving instructors and are able and qualified to do the job currently face legalised discrimination. By ensuring that such people can be registered and employed as instructors, we are removing one further piece of discrimination. I welcome that.

We have heard in some detail about the technical aspects of the Bill and I do not intend to repeat those. I am confident that the Bill's proposals will work well and will not jeopardise road safety in any way. Obviously, road safety is high on my agenda. I welcome the role of the Department of Transport's mobility advice and vehicle information service, but I do not understand why that service is not referred to directly in the Bill. Perhaps the Minister will clarify that in his winding-up speech. The service, which is known as MAVIS, has the full confidence of disabled people and their organisations. It is the country's top centre for assessing whether disabled people are able to drive and it has many cars fitted with different types of controls. I am aware of the Transport Research Laboratory test tracks in Berkshire. I hope that this aspect of the Department of Transport's work is safe from the Government's privatisation plans and that they have no intention of doing away with the mobility and vehicle information service.

I am entirely satisfied with the Bill's technical aspects and its built-in safeguards. The Opposition know how much pressure many disabled people have had to apply to advance the Bill. For the sake of people who wish to become driving instructors and those who have supported the Bill, I hope that its provisions will be properly enacted. People know that this form of employment is properly suitable for disabled people, and I have no doubts about that.

I appreciate that the number of disabled people who wish to become driving instructors is quite small. It is perhaps no more than about 12 a year at the moment, although that could change. There is an important point of principle involved. I welcome the fact that disabled instructors will be able to provide instruction for the disabled and the able-bodied. The Bill will help to deal with the current shortage of instructors prepared to teach disabled people to drive. There are about 500,000 disabled drivers and, increasingly, people—especially the elderly who have had strokes—wish to be re-instructed so that they can carry on driving.

The Bill will create an enormous number of opportunities and could lead the way to a wider public campaign for improved access by the disabled to all modes of transport. I hope that the Minister is listening, because I would apply that to public transport in particular. I hope that the Bill will allow for changes inside planning departments and highway authorities so that access for the disabled will know no limits and I am delighted to give this short Bill of seven clauses the Opposition's full support.

2.14 pm

The Minister for Roads and Traffic (Mr. Kenneth Carlisle): It gives me great pleasure to wind up this short debate on a useful and effective Bill. I am particularly delighted that my hon. Friend the Member for Exeter (Sir J. Hannam) should be the person to bring in the Bill. He has a record of distinction above any in the House in the service of the disabled. On the Second Reading of this useful Bill, it is right to remind the House of the extent of that record.

When my hon. Friend became the Member for Exeter in 1974, his first move was to become secretary of the all-party disablement group. He has served that cause for more than 20 years, and is now joint chairman. He was also a member of the Snowdon working party on the integration of the disabled and of many other organisations working for the disabled.

As my hon. Friend said, in 1986 he presented another private Member's Bill. Most of us feel lucky if we manage to present one during our time in Parliament. That earlier Bill was also dedicated to people in need. My hon. Friend successfully steered through that Bill on cornea transplants. In a wider field, he is also international vice-chairman of the British committee of Rehabilitation International.

My hon. Friend provides a clear example of the way that a Member of Parliament can pursue a worthwhile issue, when something needs to be accomplished. For many years, he has been tenacious, resourceful, and very wise in his efforts to help the disabled. He has accumulated great knowledge of the subject, and has served as an example to us all of how to embrace a cause and, even more important, to endure with that cause and see it through to many successes. It could not give me more pleasure today than to pay the greatest tribute to my hon. Friend for bringing his Bill before the House and for his proven record over many years.

The Bill is worth while and will give employment opportunities to the disabled, who can fill a useful niche in the market for those who want to instruct and to help to train people in how to drive certain types of cars. In Committee, we will have a considerable opportunity to debate various aspects of concern to many, but I will address one or two of them now.

Although everyone welcomes the Bill, many have something to say about safety. It is most important that any measure does not put anyone else on the road at risk. The Bill addresses that point well. Anyone who is to obtain an emergency control certificate must pass various steps and show beyond doubt that he or she has the ability to control and to stop a car. A satisfactory assessment of the ability to exercise control will have to be made before an emergency control certificate can be issued. The certificate will give details of any modifications to the vehicle that the assessor considers necessary; it may also include a recommendation that the driver undergo a further emergency control assessment at the end of the period specified in the certificate.

The Bill also provides for the revocation of certificates if it is felt that the disabled person can no longer meet the emergency control requirements. As my hon. Friend pointed out, it would be an offence to continue to give paid instruction without holding a current certificate. It would also be an offence for an approved disabled driving instructor, or trainee instructor, to fail to inform the registrar of approved driving instructors of any worsening of his or her disability. The same applies to failure to disclose a disability of which the registrar had not been notified previously.

My hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel)—who, incidentally, is a distinguished member of the parliamentary skiing team; his style alone gives us much cause for admiration—asked about the assessor. Let me assure him that the assessor will be an approved driving instructor with particular knowledge of the needs of disabled drivers. He will also have a full understanding of the special modifications that are available to help disabled people control their vehicles while giving instruction. It will, of course, be open to the assessor to take medical advice from suitably qualified people.

My hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham also asked about instructors generally. We do not propose to require non-disabled driving instructors to hold emergency control certificates. It is important for safety reasons for disabled drivers to be able to exercise emergency control while giving instruction, and that may require special modifications to their vehicles. My hon. Friend asked about the common market: I know of no European Community legislation that would prevent the enactment of this Bill, and any such legislation could in any event be dealt with by means of a statutory instrument.

The hon. Member for Rochdale (Ms. Lynne) expressed support for the Bill. We are delighted to observe that it has received all-party support; my hon. Friend the Member for Exeter has been sensible in securing such support, which generally gives a private Member's Bill an excellent chance of being passed.

We are grateful to the Opposition parties for their support. As the hon. Lady rightly said, the Bill will provide employment opportunities for disabled people, which is another welcome feature. As technology develops, the employment opportunities will grow. An increasing number of cars will have automatic transmission and we shall become more used to driving them. There are far more cars with automatic transmission in the United States, so over the next few decades the opportunities will grow for disabled people to become driving instructors and to perform a useful and worthwhile role.

The Department of Transport pays great attention to helping people with disabilities. I am glad that in 1985 the Department set up what it calls the mobility advice and vehicle information service—known to her friends as MAVIS! I hope that the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms. Walley) accepts that the Department of Transport takes these matters very seriously indeed. It may help the House if I outlined some of the admirable characteristics of MAVIS.

MAVIS, which is based at the Transport Research Laboratory, has a fleet of some 25 production cars fitted with a wide range of equipment and adaptations, from the simplest low-cost steering wheel knob, to make it easier to turn the wheel, to the highly sophisticated four-way joystick which enables a very severely disabled person driving from a wheelchair to control a vehicle in complete safety. MAVIS also has expert driving advisers who can help disabled people, first, to decide whether they are likely to be able to reach driving test standard and, secondly, and very important, what type of vehicle and adaptation is most likely to suit their needs.

MAVIS is currently providing assessment to some 400 disabled people every year and is giving advice and information in writing and by telephone to many thousands. In addition, MAVIS employs a second driving adviser, supported by the regional health authorities, whose job is to work with health authorities, local authorities and voluntary groups around the country, to promote the setting up of similar centres elsewhere.

In addition to basic advice on driving and car choice, MAVIS provides a wide range of additional information on vital aspects of motoring, such as insurance, parking concessions, and so on. MAVIS is, I think we can all accept, a remarkable lady who shows that the Department of Transport cares about helping people with disabilities. I am responsible, for example, for the orange badge scheme. It is important that it should work well. We are in contact with disability groups to make it effective and practical. There is pressure to extend the orange badge scheme, but if we were to extend it, local authorities would find that there were not enough parking places. The orange badge scheme would then fall into disrepute and the truly disabled would suffer. Therefore, we have to ensure that the orange badge scheme is practical.

I am glad that the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North supports this useful Bill. I take issue with her view that we do not do enough for disabled people. Of course we could do more, but I am proud that my hon. Friend the Member for Exeter is on this side of the House, because, by his actions, he has shown that he cares for disabled people. It therefore gives me great pleasure to support the Bill and his admirable efforts.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee, pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

Private Members' Bills

OCCUPATIONAL PENSIONS BILL

Order for Second reading read.

Mr. Alan Miller (Ellesmere Port and Neston): I beg to move, That the Question be now put.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham) *rose——*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. Is it a point of order?

Mr. Jessel: Yes. Is it in order for the promoter of a Bill to seek to put the Question immediately if hon. Members wish to speak to the Bill?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman was still speaking at 2.30 pm, so the question is, Second Reading what day?

Mr. Miller: Now, Sir.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: No.

Mr. Miller: 15 January

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It was a brave attempt.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Has not a mistake been made? If my hon. Friend the Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Mr. Miller) had risen to move the Second Reading of the Occupational Pensions Bill and was on his feet at 2.30 pm, surely the question of continued debate should be adjourned to another day rather than a new day being requested for a Second Reading debate.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: No. The question had not been proposed from the Chair, so the procedures are entirely in order.

Mr. Corbyn: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The Clerk had quite properly read the title of the Bill and you asked the promoter to speak to his Bill. He stood and moved that the Bill be now read a Second time, and 2.30 pm arrived; quite properly, you then intervened. If he was on his feet at 2.30 pm, surely the Second Reading is adjourned to another day rather than a new day being named, when the Bill will be lower down the list.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: No. It is not an adjourned debate I had not proposed the Question from the Chair.

Mr. Corbyn: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If you had not proposed the Question from the Chair, what was my hon. Friend doing moving the Bill?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Mr. Miller) was making a speech, or just starting to do so.

REFORM OF THE HOUSE OF LORDS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 22 January.

WRITTEN CONSTITUTION BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day? No day named.

HUMAN RIGHTS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 22 January.

COMMONWEALTH OF EUROPE BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 22 January.

DISABLED PERSONS (SERVICES) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 15 January.

NATIONAL SCHOOL HEALTH SERVICE BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 22 January.

SEXUAL OFFENCES (AMENDMENT) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 22 January.

ELIMINATION OF POVERTY IN RETIREMENT BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 15 January.

PRIVATISATION OF GIPSY SITES BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 15 January.

UNADOPTED ROADS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 22 January.

ADOPTION OF ROADS (COMPULSORY PROCEDURES) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 22 January.

FIREARMS (AMENDMENT) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 22 January.

PRIVATE SECURITY (REGISTRATION) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 22 January.

IMMUNITY CERTIFICATES BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 22 January.

EMPLOYMENT (AGE LIMITS) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 22 January.

DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM FOR THE DISABLED BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day? No day named.

FUEL COST CREDITS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 22 January.

COMMERCIAL DEBT SETTLEMENT BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day? No day named.

HOSPITAL SECURITY BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 22 January.

AIRPORTS (TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 22 January.

GAS (EXEMPT SUPPLIES) BILL *[Lords]*

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 15 January.

DAMAGES (SCOTLAND) (No. 2) BILL *[Lords]*

Read a Second time

Mr. Miller: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As you will appreciate, the intricacies of procedure are especially difficult for new Members, and, as we have seen, even for Members of longer standing. I have sat here at length today, following correspondence on the Occupational Pensions Bill which I was hoping to move this morning——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am afraid that the Chair is not responsible for any correspondence, discussions or communications with the Government. The Chair is here merely to rule on the debates in the Chamber. I therefore cannot accept the point of order.

Mr. Corbyn: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This is a fairly new Parliament, but already I see old habits recurring.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs (Mr. Neil Hamilton): How shocking.

Mr. Corbyn: Yes, it is shocking. Hon. Members have made great efforts to introduce legislation under the ten-minute rule. I understand the procedure, but are you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, able to discuss with Madam Speaker the question of the allocation of time so that serious debates can be held on a range of issues raised by Back Benchers, to give them an opportunity to introduce legislation affecting large numbers of people—for instance, my Bill, which would affect 9 million pensioners?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is a matter to be taken up with the Leader of the House rather than with Madam Speaker.

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House. *—[Mr. Cohen.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Committee, what day?

Mr. Cohen: Now, Sir.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: This is a most unusual procedure. Are there any objections?

Committee upon Friday 15 January.

LIAISON

Ordered,

That Sir Peter Emery, Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith, Sir Fergus Montgomery and Mr. James Pawsey be added to the Liaison Committee.*—[Mr. MacKay.]*

FINANCE AND SERVICES COMMITTEE

Ordered,

That Mr. Paul Channon, Mr. Don Dixon, Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory, Mr. Archy Kirkwood, Mr. Michael J. Martin, Mr. Tony Newton, Mr. Ray Powell, Mr. Colin Shepherd and Mr. Gary Waller be members of the Finance and Services Committee.*—[Mr. MacKay.]*

Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation Centres

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. MacKay.]*

Mr. Andrew Miller (Ellesmere Port and Neston): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I apologise for taking up the time of the House—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. I request all hon. Members to cease speaking. I point out that time spent now is taken out of the Adjournment debate.

Mr. Miller: As you will appreciate, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe that the Occupational Pensions Bill is a most important measure. I am confused and I should be grateful for your guidance. I have received correspondence from one Minister which expressed positive interest in the Bill, yet another Minister——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The Chair cannot give procedural advice. I ask the hon. Gentleman to talk to the Clerks. I am sure that they will give him proper advice on these matters.

2.40 pm

Mr. Alan Milburn (Darlington): I am grateful for the opportunity to debate the important issue of the future of drug and alcohol rehabilitation centres, not least because the issue has some genuine cross-party support. I believe that there is a consensus of concern which I hope the Minister will be able to address. He will have seen the early-day motion that I tabled which was supported by more than 100 hon. Members of all parties.

Drug and alcohol centres face an immediate funding crisis. Discussions over the past few days suggest that a number of the 140 drug and alcohol rehabilitation centres in England and Wales face an immediate crisis in the new year when they will have to consider sending out redundancy notices to their staff. I know that other hon. Members want to contribute to the debate, so I shall use my short speech to make an 11th hour plea to the Minister to think again and to provide some breathing space for these vitally needed centres.

The Minister will know that there are 140 registered homes in England and Wales that provide expert help for people with severe drug and alcohol problems. He may know that there are two such centres in my own region of the north-east. Carousel is based in Middlesbrough and Turning Point is based in Whitley Bay. Between them, they see 450 clients each year. I am told that the number of clients knocking on their doors is increasing day by day. To confirm that, I recently spoke to the excellent drug and alcohol addiction service run by my health authority in Darlington. Workers there told me that the number of clients they had seen this year had increased by 50 per cent. compared with last year's figure.

Thankfully, the Government recognise the scale of the drug and alcohol problem. The commitments given in the White Paper, "The Health of the Nation", on tackling drug and alcohol problems achieved a great deal of support from hon. Members of all parties. I hope that, in the light of the need to tackle those problems, the Minister can give some assurances about the important and continuing role of drug and alcohol centres.

The Minister knows that those centres play a vital role not only in treating people with serious problems, but in ensuring that they are rehabilitated so that they can play a full role in their communities. He will also know that there is a national network which provides a variety of care and specialist services for all manner of people with drug and alcohol problems.

The Minister will also know that the centres operate an open-door policy. In the financial year 1989-90, the centres saw 5,000 clients. Unfortunately, a further 15,000 could not be admitted for treatment or for rehabilitation, because there was a shortage of beds. It is a national problem: quite simply, there are too few resources and we should seek to preserve what resources we have.

The bulk of the funding for the 140 centres comes, at present, from Department of Social Security payments. As part of the community care arrangements, from 1 April, that money will be transferred to local authorities, leaving the centres with a shortfall of between £100 and £200 per bed space per week. During the passage of the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1989, the Government recognised the special nature of the clientele with whom the centres deal and provided for a specific grant that would ring fence the £20 million paid out in DSS payments for the direct use of those centres.

The withdrawal of that commitment in October this year will force each of the centres to approach the home local authority of the client to obtain the funds required. Usually, that means dealing with betweeen 40 and 50 local authorities. I hope that the Minister will acknowledge that that will ensnare the centres in a mountain of red tape. He has created a bureaucratic nightmare with which those centres will be unable to cope because they lack the necessary resources. I suspect that administrative problems will divert the attention of the centres—if they survive—away from their essential role of looking after people with severe drug and alcohol problems.

The system that the Minister envisages is simply unmanageable because it does not recognise the nature of the client group. Often, the home local authority cannot be established because people with drug and alcohol problems form part of a dislocated population. Many of them are homeless and have no community base whatever. Nor is the local authority under any direct legal obligation to provide treatment or funding for people with drug or alcohol problems. Hon. Members will be aware that, because of that situation, each of the 140 centres now faces the very real threat of closure.

None of that need happen if the Minister gives an assurance today that the transitional provisions agreed during the passage of the National Health Service and Community Care Act will be enacted. Under the present proposals, the money will be lost in the general community care pool. The buck has been passed to local authorities with centres in their areas, which will be asked to fund those centres. I am told that 87·5 per cent. of the clientele of Turning Point, one of the centres in the north-east, comes from outside the North Tyneside local authority area. It is surely unfair to ask North Tyneside council to pay for a service that is not even serving the population of its area.

People with drug and alcohol problems often deliberately go to other local authority areas for help, to escape the environment that has nurtured their addiction in the first place. Local authorities with centres in their area will not subsidise the costs of treatment for clients from other areas, especially as local authorities across the political spectrum claim that the overall community care

budget is underfunded to the tune of between £150 million and £200 million. Nor is it particularly likely that any local authority will pay for any client allocated to it by a centre without a thorough assessment. Any assessment will be costly and time consuming and will require expertise that many local authorities do not have.

As the Minister must recognise, under the community care budget, local authorities will increasingly be forced to choose between providing services for the elderly, for people with disabilities or for those with drug and alcohol problems. Most hon. Members recognise that a pecking order has been established. I am afraid that people with drug and alcohol problems will be at the bottom of that order. They will be de-prioritised and, as a result, services will go down the tube.

The special nature of the services provided by the 140 centres has been partially recognised by the Minister. In a recent announcement, he provided for a new fast-track assessment procedure and he said that further guidance would be sent to local authorities and that a monitoring system would be established to assess how the system will work after 1 April.

However, I am afraid that that announcement is too little, too late.

Monitoring after April 1993 will occur after many centres have issued redundancy notices to staff in order to comply with the Charities Act 1992 and their legal obligations under the Companies Act 1989. The costs of closure will be incalculable. Each year, 5,000 people will be denied the opportunity to put behind them their alcohol and drug misuse. Immediately, they will face the prospect of being thrown out on to the streets because, quite simply, there will be nowhare else for them to go in the short term.

Closure of the 140 centres will also undermine the Government's health and social policies. It is well known that the majority of hardened drug users finance their habit by illegal means. They do that by theft, dealing in drugs and, in some cases, by prostitution. Society will end up paying a very hefty price if those centres go under. I am not alone in believing that that is not a price worth paying.

In 1990, the Government came up with a solution that satisfied service providers and purchasers. The ring-fencing solution would have worked. It would have given centres a three-year breathing space to develop more appropriate, long-term funding arrangments. I ask the Minister for some breathing space to allow those centres to adapt to the new community care arrangments that will apply from 1 April.

It is not good enough to replace a positive commitment given two years ago with a limp advice note to local authorities which the Minister must know will be ignored by them. I know that the Minister does not want the centres to close. However, they need more than ministerial assurances if they are to survive. They need protection and support. The best way to achieve that is to provide guaranteed, ring-fenced funding for the next three years.

2.52 pm

Mr. Tim Rathbone (Lewes): I am grateful to the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Milburn) and to the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health, my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo) for allowing me to add a few words to this important debate speaking, as I do, with the entire support of the all-party drugs misuse group.

The hon. Member for Darlington expressed genuine concerns. They are not scaremongering as my hon. Friend the Minister for Health suggested in recent correspondence in *The Guardian*. Those concerns have been raised from the inception of the plan by every agency and individual concerned with the problems of alcohol and drugs misuse.

The concerns stem from the fact that alcohol and drug services are different, in respect of the kind of recipient, the needs of the recipient and the mobility of the recipient, from the services provided under other aspects of care in the community. Because of that difference we must plead for more time for the agencies that do such good work to readjust under the new rules of care in the community, which are welcome changes.

Drug and alcohol misuse is a tragically expanding problem. It must receive from the Government firmer attention, increased worry and a greater contribution in terms of direct funding than, unfortunately, the plans indicate. I hope that, at her meeting with the various agencies next Tuesday, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will take the opportunity to consider the points that have been raised this afternoon, to listen to the agencies' opinions and concerns, and to readjust the Government's plans. Perhaps my hon. Friend the Minister could give an inkling of such thinking right now.

2.55 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Tim Yeo): I congratulate the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Milburn) on gaining the opportunity to raise this important subject and on giving me the chance to explain just how much importance the Government attach to tackling the problems associated with alcohol and drug misuse.

I welcome my hon. Friend the Member for Lewes (Mr. Rathbone), the chairman of the all-party group, to the debate. As he said, next week my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I will meet a number of others who are concerned mainly as providers of treatment services to discuss proposals and to explain the Government's up-to-date thinking. I have already had several meetings in the past two months on that subject. I hope to explain just why the hon. Gentleman's rather alarmist scenario is without foundation.

The inclusion of targets for alcohol and drug misuse in the Government's White Paper, "The Health of the Nation", is just one reflection of the importance that we attach to this important issue. The White Paper also emphasised that the Government, local authorities and health authorities all have a role to play in ensuring that the needs of alcohol and drug misusers are properly met.

Health authorities provide resources from their general allocations to support alcohol treatment services, and since 1986 they have received additional allocations for the expansion of treatment and rehabilitation services for drug misusers. Since 1987, they have also received further sums from the AIDS allocations. The total sums earmarked specifically for drug misuse services amounted to nearly £19 million in 1992-93.

I am delighted to be able to announce that there will be a 23 per cent. increase in part of the drugs budget which provides for the expansion of treatment and rehabilitation

[Mr. Tim Yeo]

services for drug misusers. In 1993-94 the amount will increase from £6·8 million to £8·2 million. There will also be additional moneys available from the AIDS allocation.

Mr. Milburn: Given that the Department has set out the targets in "The Health of the Nation", would the Minister be prepared to accord the same statutory rights to drug and alcohol abusers as are accorded to other groups in society who are provided for under community care—I am thinking of people with disabilities and of the elderly, for example—to enable local authorities to have a direct statutory obligation to provide services to people with alcohol and drug problems?

Mr. Yeo: That the targets have been set in "The Health of the Nation" is an indication of the importance that we attach to those groups and of our wish that local authorities and health authorities should reflect the same priorities in their purchasing strategies. Under the community care arrangements, local authorities have a duty to assess the needs, regardless of age or disability, of people who might need social services. Once that assessment has been carried out, they must decide how needs will be met.

Alcohol and drug rehabilitation centres are an important component of service provision. As the hon. Gentleman said, there are about 2,000 bed spaces in residential centres. Rehabilitation programmes vary, but the average length of stay is about 19 weeks. Nearly all the services are provided by the voluntary sector, and the Government recognise and value that sector's contribution to service provision.

The arrangements for funding residential care change in April next year—from then, local authorities will be responsible for assessing people who may be in need of care and, where appropriate, for making placements and funding the social care costs of residential care. Residents will be able to claim basic income support and a residential allowance, and from that and any other resources that they have they will pay a charge to the local authority.

The community care special transitional grant, announced on 2 October, will be available for local authorities in 1993-94 for implementation of the community care policies. That money—£539 million for England—will be ring-fenced for use by local authorities for that purpose, including the purchase of services for alcohol and drug misusers.

The £539 million is made up of a £399 million transfer from the Department of Social Security, which reflects what would have been available if the existing income support arrangements had continued. We have increased that figure by a further 35 per cent.—an extra £140 million—over and above the social security transfer for additional services, administrative work and assessments. Therefore, there should be no additional administrative burden on individual establishments. On top of the £539 million, there will be a further £26 million for the independent living fund arrangements.

All those funds are in addition to the 20 per cent. increase in real terms in the personal social services standard spending assessments during the past three years. If one adds to that the special transitional grant, it means that resources made available by the Government to local authorities for social services have increased by a massive 34 per cent. in real terms over the past three years.

In the county of the hon. Member for Darlington—Durham—the special transitional grant will be £7·125 million next year, and a small addition will soon be made to that figure in respect of the independent living fund. The social services standard spending assessment for Durham has risen during the past three years by £12·5 million to £54 million—an increase of 13·6 per cent. in real terms. The policy is incredibly generously resourced. If the special transitional grant for Durham is added to its standard spending assessment, the increase in real terms of resources available in Durham is more than one third.

Mr. Milburn: I cannot let the Minister get away with that—at least he had the good grace to smile as he was telling me how well off county Durham social services are. He will also be aware that in Durham the local authority has been forced to close a succession of homes for the elderly precisely because of the inadequacies of its SSA assessment. More generally, given all the complaints coming from all local authority associations and individual local councils, regardless of their political make-up, will the Minister today agree to review the basis of the statistics for SSA settlements? He should do so because of the frequency and depth of the complaints.

Mr. Yeo: I do not want to get drawn into the wider subject of the system of local government finance. The SSAs are ultimately a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. Not all the local authority associations have expressed dismay over the finding of community care. The Association of County Councils is extremely satisfied with the generous resourcing basis.

I should like to deal with the specific issues raised by the hon. Member for Darlington, about which my hon. Friend the Member for Lewes was also concerned. The proposal to ring-fence the community care transfer was made subsequently to the consultation document issued in January. In the light of the new conditions, we concluded that it would not be right to have a separate ring fence for alcohol and drug misusers as that would have perpetuated the existing pattern of services based on an historical pattern, rather than on an assessment of the needs of local people. It would also have tended to produce a bias against domiciliary services by guaranteeing automatic funding for residential provision and, most importantly, it would have undermined the principle that all those who may be in need of community care should be individually assessed by local authorities to determine the appropriate services. The specific grants might also have been seen as a ceiling rather than a floor for expenditure. Therefore, we decided against having a separate ring fence within the overall ring fence.

However, the Government do not believe that what is now proposed will be any less beneficial for people needing access to residential services for treatment of alcohol and drug misuse. Indeed, the new arrangements will give alcohol and drug misusers the wider benefits of all the community care policies. They will ensure that when people come forward for help—whether to a local authority, or to a voluntary agency—they will receive a comprehensive assessment of their needs. Local authority responsibilities will not necessarily end when the period of

rehabilitation ends. Indeed, people can expect that they will continue to be able to obtain support in the community from the local authority, if their needs are assessed in that way.

Mr. Milburn: I understand the background, but the Minister will also understand that the decision to withdraw the ring-fencing commitment came with only six months to go before the time when all the agencies had assumed that their funding would indeed be ring-fenced. By the time the advice notes are sent out from the Department the agencies will have only three months left in which to plan how to cope with the new state of affairs. Will the Minister put on hold the arrangements that he is putting in place, so as to allow for a planned and steady provision of continuing services? If he will not, it is not scaremongering to say that some of these centres face closure.

Mr. Yeo: The decision not to ring-fence the money for alcohol and drug misusers was taken after we had ring-fenced the much larger sum of money. Guidance is being issued in draft form. We are consulting local authorities and voluntary providers. I hope to issue the final guidance shortly to all local authorities, advising them of the importance that they should attach in their purchasing to the needs of this client group.

Having decided on this larger ring-fencing of around £539 million it would have been difficult for us to produce an inner ring-fence. That would have given rise to demands from other groups—severely handicapped adults, frail and mentally ill elderly people, perhaps—for similar arrangements. I recognise that there are some special characteristics among drug misusers, and we intend to deal with those in a variety of ways.

We have announced that we will promote a dialogue between the local authorities and the independent providers to deal with the problem that the hon. Gentleman identified of deciding which local authority will be responsible for financing a person's treatment. The lifestyles of many of the people who need this kind of treatment can sometimes make it difficult to identify which authority should be responsible, but the advantage of having one responsible authority is that it has a continuing duty to assess the needs of a person even after a successful rehabilitation programme. By looking at some specific cases coming up before 31 March for this sort of treatment with the voluntary organisations, it should be possible to determine how we can identify which authority is responsible by tracing a person's history.

Mr. Rathbone: The new guidelines have been produced in a great rush. They were distributed on 8 December, comments were required by 14 December and the Minister has said that he hopes to issue the guidance shortly—by 18 December, I believe. That is not the way to tap wisdom out there in the working world.

Mr. Yeo: We have proceeded with such speed and urgency because of the representations that we have received. I have had meetings during the past few weeks with local authority associations and with representatives of the voluntary sector providers of this sort of treatment. I have had about five meetings on the subject; my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has also had some; and we are both holding another one next week.

The issues are so familiar to everyone who has debated the subject that the compressed time should not give rise to worry. We are trying to find the right sort of solution so that the valuable treatment provided by these centres can be preserved. I have had no time to mention our wish to achieve a fast-track assessment procedure, but we also attach importance to that because we realise that it will be necessary to assess the needs of alcohol and drug misusers who may be willing to have treatment the day after tomorrow, as it were. Elderly people coming out of hospital may perhaps be subject to a more leisurely process of assessment.

We have initiated discussions of how to identify which authority is responsible. I believe that any residential treatment centre offering good services for this client group has nothing to fear, given that we are telling all local authorities that we expect them to continue sponsoring clients to obtain this treatment.

Mr. Milburn: Would the Minister——

The motion having been made after half-past Two o'clock, and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at nine minutes past Three o'clock.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 30 November 1992

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Iraq

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information Her Majesty's Government possess on the current operational status of *(a)* the Al-Qaim uranium processing factory, *(b)* the Qa Qaa explosives factory and *(c)* Samarra factory 10, in Iraq.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Al-Qaim was badly damaged during the Gulf conflict and has not been repaired. The Qa Qaa explosives plant is part of the Al Qa Qaa state establishment. This is a vast enterprise covering aspects of explosives, propellant and primer production. Much of its work is not prohibited under the terms of Security Council resolution 687. The facility was extensively bombed during the Gulf conflict. Reconstruction has been taking place at the establishment which has been visited by UN inspectors on several occasions. It is believed that part of the explosives and ammunition plant was severely damaged by an explosion in late October. The Government are not aware of any facility known as Samarra factory 10.

Ozone Depletion

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will implement a refrigerant recycling and reclaim policy covering all departmental equipment currently using chlorofluorocarbons and hydrochlorofluorocarbons; if he will publish targets for departmental reuse and recycling; if he will implement an equipment conversion and replacement programme for all departmental uses of CFCs and HCFCs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office already has a policy on its use of ozone-depleting substances. It commits the Department to eliminating the use of such substances where they are non-essential and where acceptable alternatives offering value for money are available. It also stipulates that when such substances are replaced they should be recycled in products where no alternatives are available.

Further policy measures, including targets for the reuse and recycling of ozone-depleting substances, will be introduced following completion of an environmental audit of the Department now being carried out by our environmental management consultants.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will introduce a leakage prevention programme for all refrigeration and air conditioning equipment owned and operated by his Department; if he will publish targets for reductions in leakages; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office has already taken the necessary steps to prevent leakages of ozone-depleting substances by introducing a programme of regular inspection and servicing of refrigeration and air conditioning equipment. In the event that such equipment was no longer serviceable, or there was a risk of leakage, the refrigerants would be extracted and returned for recycling.

Kosovo

Sir Russell Johnston: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether authorisation for further United Nations monitors in Kosovo has been sought; and how many of these are British.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No. The monitors now in Kosovo are under the auspices of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe. None is British.

Sir Russell Johnston: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many United Nations monitors are in place in Kosovo; and from which countries.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: None. The monitors now in Kosovo are under the auspices of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe. The mission is led by a Norwegian ambassador, with four monitors from Canada, Switzerland, France and Greece.

Mr. George Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will place restrictions on the export of armaments from the United Kingdom which might end up in Kosovo.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The United Nations arms embargo, in place since 25 September 1991, prohibits the delivery of weapons and military equipment to former Yugoslavia. Defence exports to other destinations are considered case by case. All considerations, including the risk of diversion to prohibited destinations, are taken into account.

EC Committee of the Regions

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many members the United Kingdom will have on the proposed European Community committee of the regions; and how many of these will represent *(a)* Wales, *(b)* Scotland and *(c)* Northern Ireland.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Article 198a of the Maastricht treaty allocates 24 seats on the committee of the regions to the United Kingdom. Twenty-four alternate members will also need to be appointed. The treaty makes it clear that it is for Governments of member states to nominate national candidates to the committee and to decide how seats should be allocated. No decision has yet been made about how the United Kingdom seats will be divided between the regions of the United Kingdom.

Bosnia

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has received from the United Nations or from the United Nations Protection Force concerning violations of the no-fly zone in Bosnia; and when that information was received.

Mr. Douglas-Hogg: We have received from the United Nations, through the various sources available to that organisation, reports of the following numbers of unauthorised flights:

24 from 22 October to 4 November;
34 from 5 to 12 November;
73 from 13 to 19 November.

There is no evidence that any of these have been combat flights.

Macedonia

Sir Russell Johnston: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans the European Community has to render economic assistance to the state of Macedonia; and what further consideration is being given to formal recognition of Macedonia by European Community members.

Mr. Douglas-Hogg: The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia already benefits from humanitarian and technical assistance under the EC's PHARE programme and also receives a share of the EC's humanitarian assistance for the former Yugoslavia as a whole. Mr. Robin O'Neill, as the Foreign Secretary's personal representative, has regularly visited Athens and Skopje in his mission to establish how the republic might be recognised in conformity with the terms of the Lisbon declaration of 27 June. He will shortly report to the Foreign Secretary.

Falkland Islands

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the declaration by the Falkland Islands Government on whale and dolphin sanctuaries within their waters.

Mr. Garel-Jones: On 5 June the Falklands Legislative Council passed the Marine Mammals Ordinance—No. 8 of 1992—which

"prohibits the killing, wounding or taking of marine mammals on land or in the internal waters, territorial sea or fishery waters of the Falkland Islands".

This protects all cetaceans, including whales and dolphins, within the 200-mile exclusive fisheries zones of the Falklands waters.

Passports

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what advice is being issued to British overseas posts regarding the requirements, from January 1993, on British citizens, and non-EC nationals settled in the United Kingdom, to present passports on entry to EC states, other than Denmark and Eire; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Immigration procedures are a matter for the individual member states concerned. We have not been informed of any forthcoming changes in such procedures. It follows that travellers to those countries should continue to have passports, with visas where applicable for non-EC nationals, available for checking as they do now.

Albania

Mr. George Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to refuse any applications for export of British armaments to Albania; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Applications for exports of British Armaments are considered case by case. All relevant considerations are taken into account. In the case of Albania, a major consideration is that it remains a proscribed destination under the rules of the co-ordinating committee on multilateral strategic export controls—COCOM.

Ascension Island (Feral Cats)

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made on the eradication of feral cats on Ascension Island.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Feral cat culling programmes continue. An eradication programme may lead to an increased bird population. We wish to assess a survey carried out in 1992 by the United States Air Force bird strike team on the likely effect of this on aircraft activity. Once we have received the team's report we shall discuss the conclusions with the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and other interested parties.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Women (Treatment in Law)

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received for establishing a royal commission on the treatment of women in law.

Mr. Jack: To date we have received no such representations.

Underground Facilities

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the uses currently being made of the underground facilities pending their disposal as a result of the ending of the cold war.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The sites had one function only and are not put to other uses.

Fire Cover, Windsor

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what alterations in fire cover including fire-fighting personnel, appliances and response time have been made in the town of Windsor over the past 10 years.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The table shows alterations to the establishment of the Royal Berkshire fire and rescue service based at Windsor fire station over the past 10 years:

	Wholetime			Retained (part-time)		
	Firefighters	Pumping appliances	Special appliances	Firefighters	Pumping appliances	Special appliances
1 January 1982	29	1	—	12	1	—
6 April 1983[1]	37	1	1	12	1	—
1 July 1985[2]	41	1	1	12	1	—
1 February 1987[3]	29	1	—	12	1	—
31 March 1988	29	1	—	—	—	—
1 January 1992	29	1	—	—	—	—

[1] Turnable ladder and crew transferred from Langley fire station to Windsor fire station.
[2] Improvement to the crew available to mobilise the turntable ladder.
[3] Turntable ladder and crew transferred from Windsor fire station to Slough fire station.

999 Calls

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what aproaches and representations he has received from the emergency services and police authorities over the future management of 999 calls.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) on Wednesday 25 November at cols *648-49*.

Squatting

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to introduce a Bill to make squatting illegal; and what proposals he will make to rehouse those thereby displaced.

Mr. Jack: The Government are committed to strengthening the protection which the law gives to people whose property is occupied by squatters. We are currently considering how best this should be done, in the light of the responses received to a discussion paper on this subject. It is not possible to say, at this stage, when legislation might be brought before the House.

Policy relating to the rehousing of those displaced as a result of changes in the law is a matter for the Department of the Environment. But consideration of individual cases will fall to be carried out in exactly the same way as those who are evicted under the law as it stands.

HM Inspector of Constabulary

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether it is the practice of his Department to publish all reports of Her Majesty's inspector of constabulary as soon as practical after any inspection has taken place; and in under what circumstances no report would be issued following an inspection by Her Majesty's inspector of constabulary.

Mr. Charles Wardle: It is the practice to publish all reports of inspections in England and Wales by HM inspectorate of constabulary except for any which are withheld on security grounds. The reports are made public as soon as possible after the inspection.

Ozone Depletion

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will implement a refrigerant recycling and reclaim policy covering all departmental equipment currently using chlorofluorocarbons and hydrochlorofluorocarbons; if he will publish targets for departmental reuse and recycling; if he will implement an equipment conversion and replacement programme for all departmental uses of CFCs and HCFCs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: In accordance with the principles set out in the White Paper "This Common Inheritance", Cm. 1200, my right hon. and learned Friend has set in hand a review of the Department's policy on the purchase and use of ozone-depleting chemicals and of goods manufactured with these substances. The Department does not presently have sufficient information to publish targets for reuse and recycling.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce a leakage prevention programme for all refrigeration and air conditioning equipment owned and operated by his Department; if he will publish targets for reductions in leakages; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Department already seeks to prevent leakages of ozone depleting refrigerants through the regular servicing of its refrigeration and air conditioning equipment.

Concealed Weapons (Searches)

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will bring forward proposals to reduce restrictions on conducting random searches for concealed weapons.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave her on 19 November at column *347*.

Betting Offices

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consideration is being given to allowing betting offices *(a)* to open during evening hours and *(b)* to issue and receive pools coupons.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We have been considering the options for evening opening of licensed betting offices following the consultation document issued last year and will announce our conclusions as soon as possible. Proposals to amend the law on the distribution and collection of pools coupons are now being considered in the light of representations received in response to the Government's White Paper, "A National Lottery Raising Money for Good Causes", Cm. 1861.

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans there are to allow betting offices to install amusement machines with prizes on the premises.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We have no present plans to amend the law to allow amusement-with-prizes machines to be installed in licensed betting offices.

Joyriding

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people were *(a)* injured and *(b)* killed by joyriding in 1991-92.

Mr. Jack: The term "joyriding" is generally taken to relate to the aggravated offences created by the Aggravated Vehicle-Taking Act 1992. This includes circumstances in which, following the taking and driving of a vehicle, an accident occurs causing death or injury of any person. Between the commencement of the Act on 1 April 1992 and June, police records show that three people have been killed as a result of accidents occurring in such circumstances. No information is held centrally on the number of persons injured in such circumstances. Full information about prosecutions resulting from the Aggravated Vehicle-Taking Act 1992 will become available in the autumn of 1993.

Minority Languages

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will place in the Library copies of all submissions made by the United Kingdom delegation to the Ministers Deputies conference of the Council of Europe on the subject of the European convention on minority languages.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No written submissions were made to the meeting of Ministers' Deputies on 29 June 1992 which considered the convention on regional and minority languages.

"Summer Time" (Consultation Document)

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consultations have taken place since the responses to the Green Paper "Summer Time-A Consultation Document", Cm. 722, 1990; and when it is intended to bring forward proposals on this matter.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Green Paper consulted on certain options for future summer time arrangements, and revealed deep differences of opinion on them; national consultation on those options has not been repeated. As I explained in the Standing Committee debate on the draft Summer Time Order 1992 on 7 July, the European Commission is reviewing its position on summer time and that may affect the options. We shall bring forward our own proposals when the Commission's approach is clear.

Channel Islands

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 6 November, *Official Report*, column *528*, when he will be making a statement regarding his Department's records relating to the wartime Nazi occupation of the Channel Islands.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke *[holding answer 27 November 1992]:* The review of files relating to this period has been completed and most of the files will now be opened to public scrutiny. The Ministry of Defence will continue to hold a small number of files on extended closure under section 5(1) of the Public Record Act 1958 on the grounds of personal sensitivity. The Home Office will also hold a few records on extended closures. Other records being released by the Home Office will be available for public inspection at the Public Record Office, Kew, from Tuesday, 1 December.

Female Prisoners

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the country of origin of foreign female prisoners in British prisons.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 17 November 1992]:* Countries of birth outside the British Isles are no longer separately identified. The only information readily available, which relates to nationality, is given in the table.

Female population[1] of Prison Service establishments in England and Wales on 30 June 1992: by nationality

Number of persons

Nationals of	*Number*
Colombia	19
Ghana	12
India	10
Irish Republic	14
Jamaica	50
Netherlands	10
Nigeria	77
United Kingdom	1,053
United States of America	13
Other[2]	78
Nationality not recorded	200
All nationalities	1,536

[1] Provisional figures.
[2] With fewer than five prisoners.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of foreign women prisoners are convicted for *(a)* drugs importation and *(b)* other drug related offences.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 17 November 1992]:* Information by type of drug offence is not readily available separately for foreign women prisoners. The available information for foreign women prisoners is given in the table. Out of a total of 300 female prisoners on 30 June 1990 who had been sentenced for drugs offences, it is estimated that 250 had been sentenced for unlawful import-export.

Sentenced females[1] in Prison Service establishments in England and Wales on 30 June 1992: by nationality and type of offence

	Nationality							
	United Kingdom		*Foreign*		*Not recorded*		*All*	
Offence	*Number*	*Percentage*	*Number*	*Percentage*	*Number*	*Percentage*	*Number*	*Percentage*
Drugs offences	120	15	125	57	13	9	258	22
Other offences	570	70	85	38	60	42	715	61
Offences not recorded	120	15	11	5	71	49	202	17

Offence	Nationality: United Kingdom Number	United Kingdom Percentage	Foreign Number	Foreign Percentage	Not recorded Number	Not recorded Percentage	All Number	All Percentage
All offences	810	100	221	100	144	100	1,175	100

[1] Including those committed to custody in default of payment of a fine. Provisional figures.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many foreign women are held *(a)* on remand and *(b)* as convicted prisoners in British prisons at the latest available date; and how many were held in each category for each of the last three years.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 17 November 1992]:* The readily available information is given in the table.

Female population[1] in Prison Service establishments in England and Wales on 30 June: by type of prisoner and nationality, 1989-92

Type of prisoner and nationality	1989	1990	1991	1992[2]
Untried:				
United Kingdom[3]	—	—	184	171
Foreign[3]	—	—	57	51
Not recorded[3]	—	—	45	44
All nationalities	378	280	286	266
Convicted unsentenced:				
United Kingdom[3]	—	—	79	70
Foreign[3]	—	—	7	9
Not recorded[3]	—	—	15	14
All nationalities	98	77	101	93
Sentenced:[4]				
United Kingdom	876	784	719	810
Foreign	269	291	257	221
Not recorded	134	178	172	144
All nationalities	1,279	1,253	1,148	1,175

[1] Excluding two non-criminal prisoners.
[2] Provisional figures.
[3] Nationality was not recorded for untried and convicted unsentenced prisoners prior to 1991.
[4] Including those committed to custody in default of payment of a fine.

TRANSPORT

Deregulation

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the main measures increasing regulation in any area of which his Department has responsibility, which his Department has caused to be put into effect since the last general election.

Mr. Norris: Since 9 April 1992, my Department has caused a number of regulations to be put into effect. Many of these consolidate or update existing regulation.

The main areas in which new regulations have been made include emission standards for new vehicles; changes in axle and gross weights for heavy goods vehicles; the introduction of new drink and drugs offences relating to railways, tramways and prescribed systems of guided transport; the introduction of the extended driving test for certain disqualified drivers; and the packaging of some categories of dangerous goods. Four sets of regulations have been introduced following recommendations in the marine accident investigation branch report into the loss of the Marchioness, setting out requirements for improved standards of bridge visibility, stability and construction, life-saving appliances and fire protection on passenger craft.

Local Safety Schemes

Mr. Peter Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the level of funding for local road safety schemes for 1992-93.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The sum of £42·7 million was allocated to local safety schemes for 1992-93 as part of the transport supplementary grant settlement announced to Parliament on 19 December 1991 by the Secretary of State for Transport.

This represents an increase of 38 per cent. in the amount of £31·2 million earmarked for such schemes for 1991-92 and reflects the importance which the Government attach to their target of reducing road casualties by a third by the year 2000, and their belief that local safety schemes can make a significant contribution to achieving this.

Ozone Depletion

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what measures have been taken to ensure that only chemicals that cause the least depletion to the earth's ozone layer are used in the cooling system of the channel tunnel; and if he will intervene to halt the use of hydrochlorofluorocarbons for this purpose.

Mr. Freeman: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) on 24 November at column 562.

British Rail Timetables

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what estimate he has made of the effects on British Rail timetables of *(a)* the reductions to the railway maintenance programme recently announced and *(b)* the citizens charter.

Mr. Freeman: The Government have provided BR with an extra £239 million external finance over the next two years. Allocation to specific programmes, including maintenance, is for BR, although I understand no final decisions have been made. It will doubtless take due account of any implications its decisions might have for its timetable.

The standards and compensation provisions set out in the charter give BR a greater incentive to deliver the published service.

Freight Transport

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what specific targets have been set by his Department to modify the rail infrastructure to ensure that continental gauge freight traffic can be transported through the United Kingdom rail network; and if he will make a statement on the progress to date.

Mr. Freeman: British Rail is currently upgrading its lines between the channel tunnel and nine regional freight terminals. This work will enable over 90 per cent of European containers and all standard European swap-bodies to be carried between the tunnel and the regional terminals.

The Department has recently produced a paper "Moving Freight By Rail: Loading Gauge" which sets out the practical and other problems associated with further upgrading. Copies are available in the House Library.

British Rail (Employees' Facilities)

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to ensure that existing pension rights and travel facilities will be protected for employees and former employees after British Rail is privatised.

Mr. Freeman: Detailed arrangements to implement the policy in the White Paper "New Opportunities for the Railways", Cm 2012, on pension rights and travel facilities are currently under consideration. A consultation paper on pension arrangements will be published soon.

Midland Metro

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what response he has made to the representations received from the Labour and Conservative leaders of the West Midlands passenger transport authority concerning funding for an early go-ahead for the midland metro line 1 project.

Mr. Freeman: I will reply to these representations shortly.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Church Commissioners (Female Staff)

35. **Mr. Dickens:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners what proportion of the Church Commissioners are women; and what plans there are for more women to be appointed to senior staff positions.

Mr. Alison: Excluding clergy and ex-officio commissioners, six out of 25 elected or appointed commissioners are women. Promotion of the commissioners' staff is based on merit and I am pleased to say that women currently hold grades up to and including grade 6 (senior principal).

Women Priests

36. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners what is the latest estimate of the sum of money earmarked as compensation for clergy and others who resign following the General Synod's decision on the ordination of women; and if he will make a statement.

38. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners what estimate he has made of the financial effects of changes in clergy numbers resulting from the General Synod's decision on ordination of women.

Mr. Alison: I refer my hon. Friends to the answer I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland).

Pensions

37. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners what provision the Commissioners have made for early retirement in the pension arrangements for incumbents.

Mr. Alison: The clergy scheme makes provision for early retirement with an immediate pension in two situations. First, clergy may take voluntary early retirement up to five years before the minimum normal pension age of 65, with benefits based on actual service but reduced for early commencement. Secondly, clergy may take ill health retirement at any age, subject to medical evidence, with benefits based on actual plus prospective service.

Baptismal Certificates (Fees)

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners what is the percentage increase in the income of stipendaries' fees for baptismal certificates in the last five years.

Mr. Alison: The fee payable to the incumbent for a certificate of baptism has risen from £2·50 in 1987 to £4 in 1992, an increase of 60 per cent.

ENVIRONMENT

Council Tax

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce legislation to alter the council tax multiplier to 3/6 at band A, 6/6 at band D and 18/6 at band H.

Mr. Robin Squire: No.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce legislation to provide for an A1 band for council tax for properties worth less than £30,000, in areas where 50 per cent. of properties are in band A.

Mr. Robin Squire: No.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many appeals against valuation banding are expected or planned for after 1 April; how quickly appeals will be heard after 1 April by the Inland Revenue; and what is the expected wait for a hearing on average.

Mr. Robin Squire: Appeals against council tax banding will start life as proposals to alter banding lists. It is impossible to predict the number of such proposals which will be made after 1 April 1993, and it is therefore pointless to speculate on the length of time it will take to deal with them.

We have, however, made administrative plans to deal with the eventuality of up to 950,000 initial proposals (5 per cent. of domestic properties), earmarking sufficient funds for this purpose in the recent public expenditure survey. We will review our plans when we have a clearer view of the likely workload.

Ms. Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the effect the proposed council tax levy on nursing and residential care homes will have on residents of these homes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: The council tax bills faced by care home owners will generally be modest, especially when compared to the total running costs of such homes. They will benefit from the banding arrangements, which mean that the council tax bill for the most expensive dwelling is limited to twice that for a band D home in the same area. Many care home owners will also receive reductions for disabilities, 50 per cent. personal discounts and transitional reductions. Taking account of all these reductions, the council tax is likely to add only a few tens of pence a week per resident to the costs of running a home —a tiny fraction of total costs.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when his office will produce details of *(a)* national average council tax band D equivalent, *(b)* the percentage of winners and losers in each region, *(c)* council tax benefit tapers and *(d)* the transitional relief scheme.

Mr. Robin Squire *[holding answer 26 November 1992]:* The answer to (a) can only be calculated after local authorities have set their council tax for 1993-94 next spring. We have no intention of making any predictions of national average council taxes. Similarly, on (b), we shall be making no predictions of winners and losers in each region.

On (c), the Secretary of State for Social Security announced the details of the council tax benefit scheme on 28 November 1991. The scheme includes a taper of 20 per cent. which means that for those with income above their appropriate applicable amount, council tax benefit will be reduced by 20p for every £1 of excess income.

On (d), the details of the transitional relief scheme were announced in the statement my right hon. and learned Friend made on 26 November.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how single person households will be better off under the council tax, ignoring transitional relief, than under the poll tax.

Mr. Robin Squire *[holding answer 26 November 1992]:* This will depend on the council taxes which local authorities set in the spring. Local taxes are a matter for local authorities to determine in the light of their local circumstances.

Urban Programme

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much funding Leicester has received under the urban programme at 1992 prices for each of the last three years; how many projects have been supported; and how many people have been employed by them in jobs and in training schemes.

Mr. Robin Squire: The information requested on Leicester's urban programme is as follows:

	1990-91	*1991-92*	*1992-93*
UP funding (£ million) 1992-93 prices	5·74	5·34	4·70
Projects supported[1]	122	138	112
Jobs created/preserved[1]	190	164	154
Training places supported[1]	1,540	3,494	1,875

[1] Sources: Leicester UP annual report 1990-91 and Leicester UP submissions 1991-92 and 1992-93.

UP funding for 1990-91 and 1991-92 are actuals, adjusted by GDP deflator indices. UP funding for 1992-93 is the current allocation.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of people who were employed in each of the last three years by schemes funded by the urban programme in *(a)* jobs and *(b)* training schemes; and what was the number of people whose employment depended indirectly on the existence of these schemes, in each of the last three years.

Mr. Robin Squire: The information requested is as follows:

Number of people employed by schemes funded by Urban Programme

	[1] *Jobs*	[1] *Training Schemes*
1990-91	29,660	86,528
1991-92	34,242	68,551
1992-93	33,973	74,097

[1] *Sources:* Annual reports 1990-91 and urban programme submissions 1991-92 and 1992-93.

Information is not held on the number of people whose employment depended indirectly on the existence of these schemes.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total number of schemes funded by the urban programme for each of the last three years; and what was the total funding at 1992 prices for each of the last three years.

Mr. Robin Squire: The information requested on the urban programme is as follows:

	UP funding (£ million) 1992-93 prices	[1]Total number of schemes funded
1990-91	271·4	9,855
1991-92	258·4	6,911
1992-93	237·2	8,782

[1] *Sources:* Urban programme annual report 1991 and urban programme submissions 1991-92 and 1992-93.

Urban programme funding for 1990-91 and 1991-92 are actuals, adjusted by GDP deflator indices. Urban programme funding for 1992-93 is the initial allocation, excluding district health authority projects.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consultations he has had before deciding to abolish the urban programme.

Mr. Robin Squire: The urban programme has not been abolished. We have made provision of £176 million for the urban programme in 1993-94 which will enable existing commitments to be honoured and approved projects to continue. In addition, some £20 million in uncommitted urban programme resources for 1993-94 will be available in urban programme areas to promote urban regeneration through the urban partnership fund. The urban partnership fund will complement the extra power to spend capital receipts which local authorities will enjoy following the announcement made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment on 13 November 1992.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on what provisions are being made for consideration of schemes currently funded by the urban programme when their funding comes up for renewal.

Mr. Robin Squire: It is for local authorities and project managers to consider in the normal way how to fund projects when their period of urban programme support expires.

Business Rates

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has about the accepted length of time before appeals lodged now with the Salford valuation office regarding business rates are heard.

Mr. Robin Squire: An appeal about business rates starts life as a proposal to alter an entry in a non-domestic rating list, made to the local valuation office. If the matter is not resolved within six months, it is automatically referred to a valuation tribunal as an appeal. Those proposals lodged with the Salford valuation office are referred as appeals to the Manchester, South valuation tribunal.

Valuation tribunals are independent bodies and the priority and timing of cases is a matter for them.

Following the non-domestic revaluation on 1 April 1990, Manchester South valuation tribunal initially received about 15,800 substantive appeals. Most of these were received towards the end of that financial year. By the end of September 1992, some 18 months later, 9,300 appeals had been cleared. This is consistent with the national plan to clear original list appeals within three years of their receipt.

Unitary Status

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the Local Government Commission will examine requests from areas within existing metropolitan districts for unitary status; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: We intend to ask the Local Government Commission to look at boundary issues in the metropolitan counties when it has completed its programme of reviews in the shires. If the commission finds evidence that metropolitan district boundaries need to be looked at before then, my right hon. Friend can consider this in relation to the commission's programme.

Local Government Review

Mr. Patrick Thompson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what relationship or link there is between the review of local government and the work of the Parliamentary Boundary Commission.

Mr. Robin Squire *[holding answer 27 November 1992]:* So far as practicable, the Boundary Commission for England should avoid recommending constituencies which cross county or London borough boundaries. The Commission is due to submit its next report to my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary by 31 December 1994 on the basis of the local government boundaries effective at 1 June 1994. We hope to implement the first changes following reviews by the Local Government Commission for England of local government structure, boundaries and electoral arrangements on 1 April 1994. The Local Government Commission is required to consult the boundary commission on its draft recommendations.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Ministerial Visits

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many nights each Minister of his Department stayed in Northern Ireland in each of the months of May, June, July, August, September and October.

Mr. Mates: The information is:

Month	Secretary of State	Mr. Atkins	Mr. Mates	Lord Arran	Mr. Hanley	Total
May	14	9	11	13	16	63
June	8	11	10	13	12	54
July	11	10	11	10	9	51
August	7	3	13	10	5	38
September	13	9	10	9	11	52
October	17	8	9	11	11	56
Total	70	50	64	66	64	314

Public Interest Immunity Certificates

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how many public interest immunity certificates were issued by him or his predecessors in relation to court cases in Northern Ireland since 1972;

(2) how many public interest immunity certificates were issued by him or his predecessors in relation to coroners' inquests in Northern Ireland since 1972.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: No central record is held of public interest immunity certificates issued in relation to court cases or coroners' inquests in Northern Ireland since 1972.

Glen Road Travellers' Site

Dr. Hendron: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how much money has been spent by the Department of the Environment (NI) on the upkeep of the unauthorised Glen road travellers' site over the past five years;

(2) how much money has been spent by the Belfast city council on the upkeep of the unauthorised Glen road travellers' site over the last five years.

Mr. Atkins: I understand that Belfast city council has spent approximately £50,000 and the Department of the Environment has not spent any money on the upkeep of the unauthorised site in the last five years.

Dr. Hendron: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much money has been spent by Belfast city council on the provision and maintenance of the official travellers' site at Glen road.

Mr. Atkins: I understand that provision of the official travellers site at Glen road has cost Belfast city council £915,000 to date, which will be reimbursed by the Department of the Environment, and that approximately £9,000 has been spent by the council on maintenance.

Dr. Hendron: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what effect on the timetable for the provision of Northern Ireland Housing Executive houses is being caused by the presence of the travellers on the unauthorised Glen road site.

Mr. Atkins: I understand from the Housing Executive that no delay has been caused on the timetable for provision of houses by the executive.

Dr. Hendron: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are the immediate plans for the unauthorised site at Glen road and the travellers currently camped there.

Mr. Atkins: Belfast city council proposes to move the travellers from the unauthorised site to an interim site on Glen road. The site will then be secured. In the longer term these travellers will be reallocated permanent sites planned by Belfast city council.

Dr. Hendron: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the estimated cost of their future plans for the Glen road site.

Mr. Atkins: Future capital spend on the Glen road travellers site is estimated by Belfast city council as £90,000.

The estimated cost of the first phase of the Housing Executive's public housing scheme at Glen road is £2 million.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Legal Training

45. **Ms. Hoey:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department when the Lord Chancellor next intends to meet the Council for Legal Education to discuss the training in the legal profession.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor has no plans to meet the Council for Legal Education at present.

Judges

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will bring forward proposals to establish a review panel in order to monitor the performance of judges.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor has no plans to do so.

Magistrates Courts, Wales

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many magistrates courts have been closed in each of the counties of Wales in each of the last three years; how many are scheduled for closure; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: This information is not collected centrally. The decision to close a magistrates courthouse is a local decision for the magistrates courts committee concerned after consulting with its local paying authority. There is no requirement for my Department to be kept informed of closures unless a paying authority appeals to the Lord Chancellor against a magistrates courts committee's decision. A magistrates courthouse is usually owned by the paying authority, not my Department.

Divorce Law Reform

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will bring forward legislation to implement in full the Law Commission's proposals on reforms of the divorce law.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor is considering the Law Commission's recommendations for reform of divorce law. He has no immediate plans for legislation but he welcomes any views on the appropriate response to these recommendations.

Family Mediation

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will make it his policy to establish and fund a United Kingdom-wide network of family mediation services.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor is considering the role and funding of family mediation services in England and Wales as part of the wider review of family law announced earlier this year and has no immediate plans to establish and fund a national network of such services.

Meanwhile, local family mediation services in England and Wales are funded by the voluntary and private sectors with assistance in some areas from the probation service and local authorities. Separate arrangements operate in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Legal Aid, Wales

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many legal aid certificates which were valid up to and including trial were issued in each of the counties of Wales for each of the last six years.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Legal Aid Board publishes statistics on the number of certificates issued in respect of civil proceedings in its annual reports (Tables "Civil 6" and "Civil 7" on pages 52 and 53 of the 1991-92 report). The number of defendants and appellants receiving legal aid in the Crown court are itemised in the Department's annual publication "Judicial Statistics" (Table 10-6 of the 1991 edition). In neither instance is it possible to distinguish between assisted persons residing in Wales or England.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department (1) what is his estimate of the amount of legal aid moneys granted in magistrates courts in Wales in the years 1990-91 and 1991-92:

(2) what is his estimate of the amount of the legal aid budget expended in Wales for each of the last four years.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Legal Aid Board records statistics on legal aid expenditure by reference to its area offices. Wales is served by two Legal Aid Board area offices, which are situated in Cardiff and Chester respectively. The Chester area office also serves parts of north-west England and the west midlands. It is not therefore possible to assess what proportion of legal aid expenditure, either generally or in relation to magistrates' courts, is attributable to assisted persons residing in Wales.

PRIME MINISTER

Commercial Whaling

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Prime Minister whether he discussed Norway's decision to resume commercial whaling with Mrs. Gro Harlem Brundtland; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I made quite clear to the Norwegian Prime Minister our views on commercial whaling. I set out the position in the Community on whaling and the trade in whale products. We would expect Norway to apply existing Community legislation should she accede to the Community.

Home Rule, Scotland

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Prime Minister when he expects to reply to the letter from the hon. Member for East Lothian dated 23 October concerning the case for subsidiary home rule for Scotland.

The Prime Minister: I will reply to the hon. Member's correspondence shortly.

Matrix Churchill

Mr. George Robertson: To ask the Prime Minister when he was first informed that Matrix Churchill was involved in the exports of machine tools to Iraq.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 23 November 1992]:* As I said in my letter to the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) on 23 November, which has been placed in the Library, I first became aware of the investigation into Matrix Churchill in October 1990.

Some other papers in connection with Matrix Churchill were copied to my office at the Treasury in June and July of that year. Treasury records do not indicate whether I saw those documents, but I have no recollection of doing so. A meeting of Ministers under the chairmanship of the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs was held on 19 July 1990 to discuss defence sales policy to Iran and Iraq. That meeting was attended from the Treasury by my right hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Norfolk (Mr. Ryder). The public expenditure Cabinet was held on the same day and would have been my principal preoccupation at the time.

At the beginning of August 1990, following the invasion of Kuwait, I did see a copy of a minute about the implications of the invasion for trade with Iraq, which referred to Matrix Churchill as one company with potential exports that would need to be prevented.

SCOTLAND

Sport

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his answer of 16 June, *Official Report*, column *516*, what is the division of responsibility between his Department and the Department of National Heritage in respect of sport in Scotland; and what further decisions and changes have been made in respect of the relationship between the two departments since June.

Sir Hector Monro: While my right hon. Friend is responsible for all matters relating to sport in Scotland, the Department of National Heritage takes the lead on United Kingdom and international sports matters. My right hon. Friend is responsible also for the built heritage in Scotland, but the funding and sponsorship of the National Heritage Memorial Fund, which operates on a United Kingdom basis, is a matter for the Department of National Heritage. As with arts and broadcasting, to which my answer of 16 June 1992 referred, my right hon. Friend's responsibilities for sport and the heritage were not affected by the creation of the Department of National Heritage and none of these responsibilities has been changed subsequently. The Scottish Office continues to liaise closely with the Department of National Heritage on all matters of common interest.

Nature Reserves

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what amount of public money was spent by the Nature Conservancy Council for Scotland or Scottish Natural Heritage for the purchase of national nature reserves in 1991-92; and what is the expected spend for 1992-93.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 25 November 1992]:* The amount spent by the Nature Conservancy Council for

Scotland for the purchase of national nature reserves in 1991-92 was £124,275. It is estimated that the expenditure by Scottish Natural Heritage for this purpose in 1992-93 will be £62,350.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what amount of grant was made by the Nature Conservancy Council for Scotland or Scottish Natural Heritage under section 38 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 to voluntary conservation bodies for the purposes of land purchase in 1991-92; and what is the expected spend for 1992-93.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 25 November 1992]:* The provisions of section 38 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 have been replaced in turn by section 134 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and, in respect of Scotland, section 9 of the Natural Heritage (Scotland) Act 1991. The amount spent by the Nature Conservancy Council for Scotland for these purposes in 1991-92 was £106,592. It is estimated that the expenditure in 1992-93 by Scottish Natural Heritage on such grants will be £175,000.

Holyroodhouse

Mr. Macklaay: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if sprinkler systems are installed throughout Holyroodhouse;

(2) if he will review fire precautions at Holyroodhouse.

Sir Hector Monro: Extensive fire precautions are in place in the Palace of Holyroodhouse which are kept under constant review and are updated from time to time. These do not include a sprinkler system. On 23 November, the chief executive of Historic Scotland, which is responsible for the fabric of Holyroodhouse, commissioned a review of the fire precautions which will take account of the Windsor castle fire.

Drugs

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has on the misuse or abuse of prescribed drugs in Scotland; what studies are currently being undertaken; what plans he has to introduce measures to reduce the illegal sale and use of prescribed drugs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 27 November 1992]:* The misuse of prescribed drugs is a significant problem in Scotland. The Scottish drug misuse database bulletin for the year ending 31 March 1992, a copy of which is in the Library, shows that of 2,652 drug misusers seen for the first time by a range of services, 1,439 were misusing benzodiazepines and 957 were misusing buprenorphine —Temgesic. Many of those seen were misusing a number of different drugs.

Action is being taken on a number of fronts. In particular the police are continuing their efforts to identify those who traffic unlawfully in prescribed drugs; we published a description of the harmful effects of misusing prescribed drugs in the booklet "Drugs: A Guide for Young People in Scotland", which was issued as part of the public education material in connection with European Drug Prevention Week; and the chief medical officer in Scotland has drawn the problem to the attention of health board chief administrative medical officers. The Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs is also considering whether further measures should be recommended in respect of Temazepam, which is the most frequently misused of the benzodiazepine drugs.

Bathing Water

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will announce the results of the current year's bathing water quality monitoring for Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 26 November 1992]:* The bathing water monitoring results for the 1992 season and for earlier seasons are reproduced in the table. A detailed report is being prepared by my Department and will be placed in the House of Commons Library as soon as it is available.

Bathing Waters Directive
Scottish Results

	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992
Nairn (East Beach)	Pass	Fail	Pass	Fail	Pass	Pass
Cullen	Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass
Fraserburgh	Pass	Fail	Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass
Aberdeen	Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass
Montrose	Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass
Arbroath	Pass	Fail	Fail	Fail	Fail	Pass
Carnoustie	Pass	Pass	Fail	Pass	Fail	Pass
St. Andrews (West Sands)	Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass
Kinghorn (Pettycur)	Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass	Fail	Fail
Aberdour (Silversands)	Pass	Pass	Pass	Fail	Fail	Fail
Gullane	Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass
Yellowcraigs	Pass	Pass	Pass	Fail	Pass	Pass
North Berwick (Milsey Bay)	Pass	Fail	Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass
Dunbar (Belhaven)	Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass
Pease Bay	Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass
Sandyhills	Pass	Pass	Pass	Fail	Pass	Pass
Girvan	Fail	Fail	Pass	Fail	Pass	Fail
Turnberry	Fail	Fail	Fail	Fail	Fail	Fail
Ayr (South Beach)	Fail	Fail	Fail	Fail	Fail	Fail
Prestwick	Pass	Fail	Fail	Fail	Fail	Fail
Troon (South Beach)	Pass	Fail	Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass
Irvine-Gailes (New Town)	Fail	Fail	Fail	Fail	Fail	Fail
Saltcoats/Ardrossan (South Beach)	Pass	Fail	Fail	Fail	Pass	Fail

Hospital Beds

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the current theoretical projections used as target figures for the total numbers of acute beds for *(a)* orthopaedic surgery, *(b)* general surgery and *(c)* general medicine (i) for each Scottish health board and (ii) in total for Scotland for 2001.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 26 November 1992]:* Projected bed requirements for all surgical and medical specialties are decided by individual health boards and there is no agreed formula for calculating them. Health boards take account of local needs and priorities when formulating their planning assumptions. The total estimated requirement for Scotland in these specialties in 2001, allowing for potential increases in the use of day surgery and other developments in medical practices, is set out in the table.

	Number
Orthopaedic surgery	2,000
General surgery	2,500
General medicine	4,000

Wildlife Incident Investigation Scheme

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was (i) the total cost, adjusted to 1992 prices, of the wildlife incident investigation scheme for Scotland and (ii) the proportion of the total cost contributed by the agrochemical industry levy, in each of the last five years.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 26 November 1992]:* Prior to 1990 figures for the cost of the wildlife incident investigation scheme for Scotland were included in those provided by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

The information for subsequent years is set out in the table.

	£000 at 1992 prices
1990-91 (covering 15 month period)	186
1991-92	166
1992-93 (forecast)	152

The major part of the cost is borne by the industry. The cost of other work, particularly the time of departmental staff in investigating incidents is not readily available.

Seals

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many headless bodies of seals have been recovered in Scotland during the past 12 months; what investigations have been carried out; and with what results.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 27 November 1992]:* Between 1 January 1992 and 31 October 1992 there were 29 confirmed reports of decapitated seals. Only three of these have occurred since July. Police investigations included joint surveillance with the Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. There have been no prosecutions to date.

Environmental Education

Mr. Wil Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about the funding provided by Government Departments for the support of information services for environmental education.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 27 November 1992]:* Information services for environmental education are supported by the Scottish Office in a number of ways; the Scottish Office provides information directly; funding support is given to non-departmental public bodies with an environmental education remit; and grant aid is provided to voluntary environmental organisations. Specific funding for information services is not separately identified.

A working group on environmental education has been established by the Secretary of State, and it has considered the provision of information services for environmental education. The working group is due to report shortly and my right hon. Friend will carefully consider its recommendations.

Drug Trafficking

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing for each police authority area *(a)* the number of arrests for drug trafficking, *(b)* the number of cautions issued for minor forms of drug trafficking and *(c)* the number of convictions for drug trafficking in each of the past four years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 16 November 1992]:* Information on the number of arrests is not collected centrally. In Scotland the police have no power to issue cautions. The information requested on convictions for drug trafficking offences, based on returns from police forces to the Home Office, is set out in the table.

Number of convictions in Scotland where at least one charge was drug trafficking[1]

Police authority area	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*
Central	12	21	26	16
Dumfries and Galloway	7	7	6	13
Fife	14	22	19	25
Grampian	23	32	39	47
Lothian and Borders	61	42	80	107
Northern	7	6	14	13
Strathclyde	179	238	296	351
Tayside	36	29	50	53
Other authorities[2]	1	2	1	0
HM Customs and Excise	17	17	19	15
Total	357	416	550	640

[1] Unlawful import or export, unlawful production (excluding cannabis), and being concerned in unlawful supply and possession with intent to supply unlawfully.

[2] Includes offenders dealt with by British Transport Police and British Airports Authority.

WALES

Deregulation

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will list the main measures increasing regulation in any area for which his Department has responsibility, which his Department has caused to be put into effect since 9 April;

(2) if he will list the main measures of deregulation, or simplification of regulation, which his Department has carried out, or caused to be carried out, since 9 April.

Mr. David Hunt: No such measures have been introduced by the Welsh Office since the last general election. Regulation and deregulation measures introduced by other Government Departments are usually applicable in both England and Wales.

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales which Minister in his Department is responsible for the oversight of deregulation of regulatory matters which fall within the responsibility of his Department.

Mr. David Hunt: My right hon. Friend the Minister of State.

Young People Leaving Care

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales which local authorities in Wales have established independent units for 16 and 17-year-olds leaving care; and how many young people can be accommodated in each unit.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Young people who leave care, and who do not return to their family, are generally accommodated in a range of accommodation from bedsits to supported lodging and council accommodation. It is for individual authorities to determine the scale and range of such services and information about such provision is not held centrally.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of Wales if he will list the local authorities in Wales which *(a)* employ a named person to assist young people leaving care and *(b)* have established telephone help-lines to assist such young people.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Those young people who leave care usually remain the responsibility of the social worker who had responsibility while there were in care. This is normal procedure in each authority in Wales. The Department is not aware of any telephone help-lines set up specifically to assist young people leaving care in Wales.

GATT Agreement

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what is the consequence of the GATT agreement for his set-aside proposals in Wales;

(2) what is the consequence of the GATT agreement for creameries and the dairy industry in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: The EC has not yet tabled its revised sector-by-sector GATT offer; however, the Commission has firmly stated that the EC-US GATT deal is compatible with the reforms to CAP regimes agreed earlier this year.

Housing Management Tendering

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to delay the full introduction of compulsory competitive tendering in housing management until all pilot surveys are completed and their results fully evaluated.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: No.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to delay the introduction of competitive tendering in housing management until the new shadow unitary authorities are fully established and elected.

Mr. David Hunt: I shall be making an announcement in due course.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his current timetable for the implementation of the four new environmentally sensitive areas that he announced earlier this year.

Mr. David Hunt: I shall be making an announcement on the timetable as soon as possible.

Farmers (Conservation Advice)

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has to charge farmers for conservation advice tendered by the Agricultural Development Advisory Service or by the Welsh Office agriculture department.

Mr. David Hunt: ADAS provides general conservation advice to farmers free of charge. During 1992-93 I have provided some £296,000 to meet the cost of such ADAS free conservation advice to farmers in Wales. I am considering what provision should be made for such free advice in 1993-94. Farmers obtain detailed and specific advice from a number of sources, including ADAS, at a price negotiated between the parties concerned. Advice provided to farmers directly by WOAD is free of charge.

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will issue guidelines to training and enterprise councils ensuring an early declaration of moneys to be made available to training agencies with which the councils have made annual contracts.

Mr. David Hunt: My right hon. Friend the Minister of State has already indicated to the training and enterprise councils in Wales an important new development under which they will be guaranteed a minimum level of funding for 1994-95 and 1995-96 for training for work and business and enterprise support. This will be introduced next year and should facilitate TECs' longer-term planning with training and enterprise support providers. Negotiation of the prices which the Government will pay TECs for training and enterprise support in 1993-94 will begin next month.

Valleys Initiative

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 19 November *Official Report*, columns 323-24, if he will specify what proportion of the

annual departmental expenditure on printing costs is accounted for by the cost of pamphlets, leaflets and publicity material in relation to the valleys initiative; and in which financial year or years this expenditure falls.

Mr. David Hunt: The proportion of printing costs detailed in my answer of 19 November accounted for by the programme for the valleys is as follows:

Year	*Proportion per cent.*
1988-89	Approximately 5·0
1989-90	Nil
1990-91	Approximately 3·0
1991-92	Approximately 0·5

Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowance

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he proposes to announce the findings of the 1992 hill livestock compensatory allowance review.

Mr. David Hunt: The outcome of the review together with the HLCA payment arrangements to apply from 1 January 1993 will be announced as soon as possible.

Training

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the average amount of time spent by applications for *(a)* youth training and *(b)* employment training awaiting placement on training programmes within each training and enterprise council area in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Information on average waiting times is not collected because, with the importance of placing young people and adults in training which suits their individual needs, the speed at which a place is made available will naturally vary from case to case.

Dairy Crest Factory, Marchwiel

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make an official visit to the Dairy Crest factory at Marchwiel, Clwyd.

Mr. David Hunt: I have no current plans to do so.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what amounts of Government money and EC money have been made available for the construction and the development of the Dairycrest factory, Marchwiel, Clwyd.

Mr. David Hunt: Regional development grant amounting to £74,815 was paid to the company in respect of a project at its Marchwiel factory in March 1989. No EC funds have been provided.

Job Creation

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures he is taking to create jobs for unemployed craftsmen; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: The Welsh Office and agencies operate a range of measures to increase employment opportunities. Increasingly, these are being targeted on better quality opportunities which will improve employment prospects for skilled workers in engineering industries. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer included in his autumn statement a series of measures to promote recovery in the construction sector. As a result, an additional £38 million is available for housing in Wales in this financial year, of which I have allocated £35 million for spending by housing associations. I expect them to secure additional private finance of around £15 million, taking the total value of this initiative to about £50 million.

Hill Farming

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his assessment of the prospects for hill farming in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: I am currently reviewing the economic conditions and prospects for our less-favoured area farmers as part of the hill livestock compensatory allowance autumn review and as part of this process I have met representatives from the National Farmers Union (Wales) and the Farmers Union of Wales. The outcome of this review and the HLCA payment arrangements to apply from 1 January 1993 will be announced as soon as possible.

Dairy Industry

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the number of people working in creameries and cheese factories in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: According to the latest available estimates, for September 1989, there were 2,300 people employed in the milk and milk products industry, which includes creameries and cheese factories.

Milk Marketing Board

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the impact upon dairy farming of the reform of the Milk Marketing Board; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: The ending of the present milk marketing scheme will mean that producers will be free to make their own arrangements for selling milk and to seek outlets which best suit their business requirements.

Acquired Rights Directive

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will place a copy in the Library of the guidance letter dated 9 November sent to all national health service unit managers in relation to the impact of the EC acquired rights directive on compulsory competitive tendering; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: A copy of the Department's letter has been placed in the Library of the House. The Department is continuing to examine the legal implications.

Cardiff Bay Barrage

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the Cardiff Bay development corporation concerning the employment of Bechtel Corporation as liaison consultants in relation to the construction contract on the proposed barrage.

Mr. David Hunt: Cardiff Bay development corporation has kept my officials informed on its plans to let a project management consultancy for the proposed barrage.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the Cardiff Bay development corporation regarding the date of issuing invitations to tender for the construction of the proposed barrage; what indicative price will be specified in the invitations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: I understand that the Cardiff Bay development corporation intends to issue invitations to tender for the construction of the proposed barrage in the new year. The tender documents will make it clear that the award of the contract is dependent, amongst other things, on Royal Assent for the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill. The development corporation does not propose to include an indicative price.

Primary Schoolchildren

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the number of children of primary age being taught by one teacher in classes of (i) up to 30 pupils, (ii) 31 to 35 pupils, (iii) 36 to 40 pupils, and (iv) over 40 pupils for each year since 1986.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The information requested is not held centrally. Information on the size of registered classes in primary schools in Wales is available in the Welsh Office publication "Statistics of Education in Wales: Schools", a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

North East Wales TEC

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 17 November, *Official Report*, column *144*, if he will give details of the operational surpluses that the North East Wales TEC has accrued.

Mr. David Hunt: I will write to the hon. Gentleman and place a copy of my letter in the Library of the House.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Companies House

Mr. Morgan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 19 October, *Official Report*, column *232*, if he will give the name and business address and the directors of the successful bidders for the Companies House future operations and role consultants.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 23 November 1992]:* The consultants appointed to study the future operations and role of Companies house are SRU Limited, 70-80 St. John street, London EC1M 4HR. The directors are P. B. Askew, J. Carr, N. J. Cross, C. W. Fisher, C. E. M. Gray, J. F. Krelle, Lord McIntosh of Haringey, H. D. Stevenson CBE, P. R. Wallis and R. C. Watson.

Fast Reactor Programme

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what specifically allocated financial contributions have been made in 1991-92 to 1992-93 by British Nuclear Fuels plc, Scottish Nuclear and Nuclear Electric to the fast reactor programme.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 24 November 1992]:* The three companies support work for the European fast reactor collaboration. The level and nature of their contribution is a matter for the companies themselves.

RECHAR

Mr. Illsley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether the successful bids for money from the European Community's RECHAR programme made by publicly funded bodies will result in a future reduction of their funds as a consequence.

Mr. Salisbury: I refer the hon. Gentleman to my answer of 30 June 1992 at columns *525-26*.

Foreign Investors

Mr. Peter Atkinson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what percentage of United States and Japanese investment in EC countries is currently vested in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* the north-east.

Mr. Salisbury: In 1991 the United Kingdom had 41 per cent. by value of the stock of Japanese investment in the EC (source: Japanese Finance Ministry) and 36 per cent. by value of the stock of United States investment in the EC (source: United States Department of Commerce). It is not possible to say how much is vested by value in the north-east, however, figures from my Department's Invest in Britain Bureau show that by number rather than value since 1981 the north-east has had 53 inward investment projects from Japan from a United Kingdom total of 302 (17·5 per cent.) and 80 projects from the United States against a United Kingdom total of 1,274 (6·3 per cent).

The IBB figures given above are based on information provided by the companies to the Invest in Britain Bureau at the time of the announcement of the decision to invest and take no account of subsequent developments.

Mr. Peter Atkinson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) how many direct investment projects by foreign companies in *(a)* Britain and *(b)* the north east are currently in existence; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will list the total number of jobs both directly and indirectly dependent on inward investment in the north-east; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Salisbury: According to figures produced by my Department's Invest in Britain Bureau, 3,106 projects from foreign-owned companies have come to the United Kingdom since 1981, of which 285 are in the north-east creating or safeguarding 38,158 jobs for the area. The number of jobs created indirectly is unavailable.

The figures given above are based on information provided by the companies to the Invest in Britain Bureau at the time of the announcement of the decision to invest and takes no account of subsequent developments. The number of known closures in the last few years is extremely small.

Partnerships

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will review the law with regard to partnerships so as to require accounts to be audited and registered for public reference; and if he will make a statement on the level of fraud arising from defaulting partners *(a)* among solicitors and *(b)* otherwise.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Disclosure of accounts is regarded as part of the price of limited liability, and I therefore have no plans to require such disclosures for the majority of partnerships in which the partners jointly and severally have unlimited liability. As regards partnerships where all the members are limited liability companies, I refer my hon. Friend to the consultative document on the EC partnerships directive which my Department issued on 10 November. Questions about solicitors are a matter for my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department. I have no information about levels of fraud committed by members of partnerships.

Retex Initiative

Mr. Pike: To ask the President of the Board of Trade which areas of the country his Department proposes should benefit from the Retex initiative.

Mr. Salisbury: The European Commission has decided that grants under the Retex initiative should be available only within areas designated for objective 1, 2 and 5(b) of the structural funds. Many of the United Kingdom's textile-dependent areas are not objective 1, 2 or 5(b) areas.

We intend that applications for grants will be invited from textile areas in all eligible regions. Because of the limited funds available, only the best projects can expect to be successful.

Scott Inquiry

Mr. Winnick: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how long he expects Lord Justice Scott to be away from his normal duties while carrying out the current inquiry.

Mr. Heseltine: Lord Justice Scott will be away from his normal duties for however long it takes to complete his inquiry.

Gas and Oil Structures

Mr. David Porter: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on his plans for removal of gas and oil structures from the southern and northern sectors of the North sea in the next 50 years.

Mr. Eggar: On the assumption that current practice continues over the period envisaged by my hon. Friend, the then Secretary of State will, pursuant to his powers under the Petroleum Act 1987, require an abandonment programme to be submitted to him in respect of each UKCS oil and/or gas installation as it approaches the end of its useful life.

Programmes will be considered on a case-by-case basis, in the light of the circumstances at the time and taking account of consultations with relevant interested parties, including environmental and fishing interests.

Our requirements will be consistent with the guidelines and standards for the abandonment of disused offshore installations and structures adopted by the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) in October 1989. These provide that the norm in water depths less than 75 m will be entire removal of all installations weighing less than 4,000 tonnes. After 1 January 1998 that requirement is extended to installations in up to 100 m of water. For installations standing in deeper water, partial removal is an option, subject to 55 m of clear water being left above any submerged remains.

Application of the IMO guidelines and standards to the UKCS is likely to result in entire removal of all shallow water southern basin platforms. In the central North sea, the decision whether or not to permit partial removal to 55 m below the surface will be taken on the merits of each case. The same case-by-case approach will be applied to installations in the deeper waters further north, but in the interests of safety of navigation of the large submarines operating in that area a minimum clearance of 75 m above any remains will be required.

Oil Refining

Mr. Miller: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his policy on the oil refining sector.

Mr. Eggar: My policy toward the oil refining sector, as for other business sectors, is to maintain a close liaison and dialogue with the sector and thus acquire an awareness of its needs and of the influences upon its competitiveness from both at home and abroad. I aim to ensure that those needs are taken into account by Government and within the European Community. I shall continue to encourage the maintenance of open markets in the trading of oil and oil products.

While I expect the oil refining sector to respond effectively to environmental developments, I shall ensure that the Government's environmental policies take proper account of their impact on the sector. The European Energy Council, under the United Kingdom presidency, has today invited the Commission to consult the industry fully and at an early stage in the development of environmental measures, particularly on the cost implications.

Mr. Miller: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assistance his Department has given to the oil refining sector in *(a)* Cheshire and *(b)* the rest of the United Kingdom in each of the last three years.

Mr. Eggar: There has been no financial assistance from my Department to the oil refining industry in *(a)* Cheshire and *(b)* the rest of the United Kingdom in the past three years.

Telephone Cloning

Mr. Burns: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what consideration has been given to the need to introduce new criminal legislation to cover the fraudulent cloning of mobile and car telephones; and if he will make a statement on the current position.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 4 November 1992]:* I am not persuaded that new legislation is necessary. The police have made several arrests this year in connection with cloning offences. The mobile telephone industry is taking its own steps to reduce and minimise the practice of fraudulent cloning, and Oftel is also examining whether further action is justified.

Power Station, Staythorpe

Mr. Tipping: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he intends to announce his decision on the inspector's report following the public inquiry into a new gas-fired power station at Staythorpe, Nottinghamshire.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 26 November 1992]:* My right hon. Friend informed the House on 21 October that,

as part of the wider Government review into the coal industry, he would review the use of his consent powers under section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989. Until the review of the use of his consent powers is completed, my right hon. Friend proposes to defer his decisions on outstanding applications for his consent under section 36 for new power stations.

LINK Scheme

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many programmes have been approved under the LINK scheme since its establishment; if he will list the organisations involved; what the expenditure was for 1991-92; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 26 November 1992]:* Thirty programmes have been announced so far under the LINK initiative; a further two have been approved by the LINK steering group and await announcement. There are over 400 companies and 200 academic research groups involved in the 315 projects under way or completed; it is not possible to list these organisations individually as the information is commercially confidential. Total Government expenditure on LINK in the financial year 1991-92 was £18 million; industry would have spent at least a similar amount as Government meets 50 per cent. of the costs of LINK projects.

EUREKA Programme

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many new projects were authorised under the EUREKA programme in 1991-92 in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* the European Community as a whole; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 26 November 1992]:* A total of 43 new EUREKA projects with United Kingdom participation were authorised in the EUREKA year 1991-92.

This compares with an overall total of 90 new projects involving EUREKA members from the European Community and with 102 new projects in EUREKA as a whole.

Electricity

Mr. Hardy: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will introduce legislation to alter the electricity generation regime to provide that electricity produced from new gas-fired stations is sold through the non-franchise market and to prevent favoured access to the base load of the national electricity supply by those gas-fired power stations which produce at higher prices than 2·8 pence per therm.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 26 November 1992]:* The coal review is presently considering the market prospects for coal and the relative costs of coal and gas-fired generation. It would be wrong to prejudge the outcome of that review.

Fossil Fuel Levy

Mr. Hardy: To ask the President of the Board of Trade for what purposes the fossil fuel levy has been used since it was introduced; and what sums have been spent upon each of these purposes.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 26 November 1992]:* The fossil fuel levy has been used to finance the above-market element of the price paid by the regional electricity companies for electricity purchased from generators contracted under the non-fossil fuel obligation. The levy receipts paid to nuclear and renewable generators have been as follows:

(£ cash basis)

	1990-91	*1991-92*
Nuclear	1,218	1,284
Renewables	6	15

Electricity Imports

Mr. Hardy: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will refer to the appropriate regulatory authority the matter of pricing of electricity imported from France.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 27 November 1992]:* Enforcement of regulatory obligations is a matter for the Director General of Electricity Supply.

Orimulsion

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what quantities of orimulsion have been imported in the last available year; and where it is consumed.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 27 November 1992]:* Imports of orimulsion in 1991 were 465,000 tonnes and in 1992 to date (January to October) were 1,039,000 tonnes. Orimulsion is currently burnt at Ince B (Cheshire) and Richborough (Kent) power stations.

Collieries

Mr. Hanson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the collieries that were assessed as being viable in the Boyd report.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 27 November 1992]:* The Boyd report prepared for my Department earlier this year did not assess the viability of individual collieries. It looked at the scope for productivity improvements and cost reductions in a group of representative collieries chosen by British Coal.

Point of Ayr Colliery

Mr. Hanson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will issue a direction to British Coal to grant access to Oakes and Associates to assess the viability of the Point of Ayr colliery on behalf of Clwyd county council.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 27 November 1992]:* My right hon. Friend has no powers to issue such a direction.

Plutonium

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 18 November, *Official Report*, column *223*, if he will set out the information on fresh nuclear fuel pins in each sections *(e)* and *(f)* of the question, which is not published in the annual plutonium figures.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 27 November 1992]:* Information on the imports and exports of civil plutonium in the form of fresh nuclear fuel pins is currently included under separated plutonium in the annual figures.

EDUCATION

English (Key Stage 3)

Ms. Estelle Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) how many schools are involved in the pilot scheme for the assessment of English at key stage 3;

(2) what is the timetable for the announcement of the detailed nature of testing of key stage 3 English;

(3) what consultation will take place following the completion of pilot tests for key stage 3 English, before a final decision on the design of the tests is announced;

(4) who is responsible for making the decision about the nature of testing of English at key stage 3; who has acted as advisers to those making the decision; and what evidence is being used to support the decision;

(5) what consultation has taken place on the assessment and testing of key stage 3 English;

(6) how responses to the pilot tests of assessment of English at key stage 3 are to be collected; and what part those responses will play in determining the final shape of the tests.

Mr. Forth: The first national tests of English for 14-year-olds will take place in June 1993. The decision on the exact content of those tests rests with my right hon. Friend. In making his decision he will be drawing on advice from the School Examinations and Assessment Council (SEAC) under its chairman, Lord Griffiths of Fforestfach.

Under the direction of SEAC, pilot tests were conducted in schools in 1990, 1991, and 1992. At each stage there has been careful evaluation with the views of teachers being taken into account. The lessons learned have fed into further improvement and refinement.

This month SEAC tried out the 1993 test materials in 32 schools involving approximately 3,000 pupils. A second trial will be held in January 1993. A full evaluation of these trials, including the comments of the schools themselves, will inform the content of the national tests.

Preliminary guidance on the 1993 tests was issued by SEAC to schools in September. Further and more detailed guidance for teachers about the nature and format of next year's tests is being distributed. More information will be sent to schools as early as possible next year.

Examination Results

Ms. Estelle Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how the A-level results for students registered with one school but taught at another school under a consortium arrangement are recorded for the purposes of the publication of the examination league table.

Mr. Forth: All examination results for individual pupils should be credited to the school at which the pupil is registered, regardless of where they were taught. Clear instructions were given to schools as to how the results of candidates on roll at one school but taking examinations at another could be claimed back by the school at which they were on roll. Some schools seem none the less to have encountered particular difficulties in doing this in this first year of the new arrangements. We shall be examining the position to see whether it can be made easier for schools in this position to claim back their candidates' results in future.

Schools (Concern)

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list by local education authority the number of schools which Her Majesty's inspectors have identified as causing concern.

Mr. Forth: Since HMI has never inspected all schools on a regular basis, it would be invidious to identify particular local education authorities in which there are schools known to HMI which give cause for concern. The system of regular inspections arranged by OFSTED, which come into operation from September 1993, will ensure that schools failing, or likely to fail, to give their pupils an acceptable standard of education are identified in reports published on all maintained schools every four years.

Primary Classes

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the number of children of primary age being taught by one teacher in classes of (i) up to 30 pupils, (ii) 31 to 35 pupils, (iii) 36 to 40 pupils and (iv) over 40 pupils in *(a)* inner-London boroughs, *(b)* outer-London boroughs, *(c)* metropolitan districts and *(d)* county councils, for each year from 1986.

Mr. Forth: The table shows the number of pupils taught by one teacher in classes of sizes one to 30, 31 to 35, 36 to 40 and 41 and over in maintained primary schools in England for the categories requested, for each year 1986 to 1991, the latest date for which information is available.

Pupils in one teacher classes in maintained primary schools in England by size of class

	Classes of size:			
	up to 30	*31-35*	*36-40*	*41 and over*
January 1986				
Inner London Boroughs[1]	120,505	3,554	36	147
Outer London Boroughs	240,912	56,950	4,444	508
Metropolitan Districts	665,406	171,742	17,664	2,899
County Councils	1,481,240	564,750	59,172	4,847
All England	2,508,063	796,996	81,316	8,401
January 1987				
Inner London Boroughs[1]	124,900	3,159	0	0
Outer London Boroughs	246,163	53,952	2,746	372
Metropolitan Districts	676,861	169,260	16,808	3,745
County Councils	1,523,464	542,902	52,216	3,800

	Classes of size:			
	up to 30	*31-35*	*36-40*	*41 and over*
All England	2,571,388	769,273	71,770	7,917
January 1988				
Inner London Boroughs[1]	124,567	3,089	36	97
Outer London Boroughs	249,191	50,060	2,584	355
Metropolitan Districts	684,268	158,734	15,860	2,634
County Councils	1,558,813	524,199	43,212	3,615
All England	2,616,839	736,082	61,692	6,701
January 1989				
Inner London Boroughs[1]	125,997	4,316	112	0
Outer London Boroughs	248,284	54,495	2,541	822
Metropolitan Districts	685,710	167,894	15,645	2,742
County Councils	1,598,245	596,597	44,851	3,867
All England	2,658,236	733,302	63,149	7,431
January 1990				
Inner London Boroughs[1]	123,101	5,819	150	86
Outer London Boroughs	253,494	49,685	2,490	417
Metropolitan Districts	683,311	191,698	18,328	3,284
County Councils	1,616,673	521,370	41,903	4,235
All England	2,676,579	768,572	62,871	8,022
January 1991				
Inner London Boroughs	131,063	5,757	267	142
Outer London Boroughs	248,749	64,703	2,248	492
Metropolitan Districts	681,304	201,725	21,837	3,926
County Councils	1,605,189	559,036	46,514	4,571
All England	2,666,305	831,221	70,866	9,131

[1]Inner London Education Authority until 1 April 1990.

Class Sizes

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the average class size of primary and secondary schools in the United Kingdom for each year since 1980.

Mr. Forth: The average size of classes taught by one teacher in maintained primary and secondary schools in England for the years requested is shown in the table. Information on schools in other parts of the United Kingdom is the responsibility of my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and Wales and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Average size of one teacher classes in maintained primary and secondary schools in England Position as at January each year

Year	*Primary*	*Secondary*
1992[1]	26·4	20·6
1991	26·3	20·3
1990	25·9	20·0
1989	25·7	19·9
1988	25·4	19·9
1987	25·4	20·2
1986	25·5	20·3
1985	24·9	20·4
1984	24·7	20·4
1983	24·8	20·6
1982	25·1	20·7
1981	25·2	20·8
1980	25·4	20·9

[1] Provisional.

Special Schools

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what will be the terms of reference of his general review of policy with regard to special schools with section 56 status, arising from the case of Scotforth house, Lancaster; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend has no plans for a policy review arising from the Scotforth house case. However he has received a copy of the report of the inquiry and will consider carefully whether there are lessons of general applicability to be learned from it.

Electrical Engineering

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans his Department has to promote electrical engineering at university level.

Mr. Forman: The Government have promoted science and technology subjects by setting the publicity funded fee for laboratory and workshop courses at 50 per cent. higher than the classroom rate. We are planning to widen the differential between these two fee levels further in order to increase the incentive to provide laboratory and workshop-based courses. The Higher Education Funding Council for England has been asked to consider ways to encourage continuing expansion of engineering and technology at all levels through its funding, and to provide incentives for two-year vocational diplomas. Electrical engineering can expect to benefit from all these measures.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what information his Department has on the

non-completion rate for students undertaking electrical engineering courses in *(a)* universities and *(b)* other institutes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forman: Information which is available on non-completion rates relates to all engineering and technology subjects.

For universities, the estimated non-completion rate for engineering and technology, averaged between 1989 and 1991, was 16 per cent. (Source: University Management Statistics and Performance Indicators in the United Kingdom, 1992.)

For other institutions, available data are for the first year of the course only, for 1987-88. They show that the exit rate for engineering and technology degree courses was 24 per cent. (Source: Department of Education Statistical Bulletin 9/92, 1992.)

Text Books

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is his estimate of the expenditure per pupil on text books in the United Kingdom for 1980, 1985 and 1990.

Mr. Forth: Average expenditure per pupil in nursery, primary and secondary schools in England on books and equipment for 1980-81, 1985-86 and 1990-91 was £22, £35 and £57 respectively. The real terms increase on spending per pupil between 1980-81 and 1990-91 was 40 per cent. Not all local authorities separate expenditure between that on books and that on equipment. Expenditure on schools in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland is the responsibility of my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Wales and Scotland and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Hospital Education

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) if he will make it his policy that the Further Education Funding Council and local education authorities should co-ordinate arrangements to ensure that further education continues to be provided in long-stay hospitals;

(2) if the Further Education Funding Council will be responsible for the provision of further education in long-stay hospitals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forman: Under the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 the duty to secure adequate further education provisions for adults, including those with learning difficulties, will be shared between the Further Education Funding Councils and LEAs. The scope of the funding councils' duty in relation to such provision is set out in schedule 2 to the Act; LEAs' duty is to secure adequate provision of a kind not covered by schedule 2. It will be a matter for the councils and local education authorities to determine what facilities, including those in long-stay hospitals, they should support in pursuit of their respective duties. Guidance from my Department on the Act makes clear the need for collaboration between all the agencies involved in making provision for students with learning difficulties, in order to ensure the best possible response to their needs.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what percentage of secondary schools are grant maintained.

Mr. Forth: Ten per cent. of eligible secondary schools have decided in favour of grant-maintained status. Six per cent. are already operating, a further 1 per cent. are approved but not yet operating, and an additional 3 per cent. have published or are publishing proposals.

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many schools have *(a)* held ballots on grant-maintained status and *(b)* opted for grant-maintained status; and of those schools which have voted for grant-maintained status what percentage of the parents who voted voted in favour.

Mr. Forth: To date, 726 ballots on grant maintained status have been held. Of these, 569 have resulted in a vote for grant maintained status. In those 569 cases, 77 per cent. overall of the parents who voted did so in favour of grant-maintained status.

Women Undergraduates

Ms. Hoey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what percentage of people entering universities in 1992, from schools and as mature students, were women.

Mr. Forman: Information from the normal statistical sources—the USR 31 December census and the FESR 1 November census—will not be available fully until the middle of 1993, although provisional figures may be available by April.

Student Loans

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the number of students who have taken up loans since the introduction of the scheme, the total that has been loaned, and the amount that has subsequently been repaid.

Mr. Forman: As at 24 November 1992, some 371,000 students had taken out loans, worth some £264 million, since the start of the scheme. Nearly £5 million had been repaid; this figure includes accrued interest.

Engineering

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans his Department has to promote engineering within the national curriculum; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: The national curriculum provides a broad and balanced education for all pupils to the age of 16 as a basis for a wide range of further education, training and career aspirations. A number of national curriculum subjects, including mathematics, science, technology and art, offer pupils the opportunities to acquire fundamental knowledge, skills and understanding appropriate for the study of engineering post-16. The flexibility now available in the curriculum for 14 to 16-year-olds will allow those who wish to pursue vocationally related courses to do so at that stage.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the total number of

(a) engineering and *(b)* electrical engineering graduates from (i) universities and (ii) other institutions for each year for the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forman: The numbers are as follows:

	1987-88	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*
Universities (United Kingdom)					
Engineering and technology of which	8,801	9,114	9,349	9,662	9,485
Electrical engineering	409	503	499	505	443
Polytechnics and colleges (England and Wales)					
Engineering and technology of which	6,176	6,192	4,898	5,357	5,573
Electrical engineering	1,251	1,363	1,028	952	1,072

Note:

Due to a change in subject codes, graduate numbers from polytechnics and colleges for 1988 and earlier years are not directly comparable with data for 1989 and later years.

Sources:

University statistics, volume 2, table 3; examination results and first destinations survey, pack ref. 72/92.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans his Department has to reduce non-completion rates of students on *(a)* engineering and *(b)* electrical engineering courses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forman: Universities and colleges have the prime responsibility to make their engineering courses attractive and their teaching effective so that completion rates are high. In his initial guidance to the Higher Education Funding Council for England, my right hon. Friend asked the council to make arrangements to monitor completion rates in all subjects in higher education and to consider, in due course, whether these should be reflected in the allocation of funds to institutions.

Unqualified Teachers

Mr. Stolsberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement on the increase of unqualified teachers teaching specialist subjects in the United Kingdom; and what measures he plans to remedy this situation.

Mr. Forth: The latest secondary school staffing survey undertaken this year shows that, compared with the previous survey in 1988, there has been a small reduction in the proportion of tuition given by teachers who do not hold an appropriate qualification in the subject being taught. Only 19 per cent. of tuition was delivered in such circumstances, and of this about half was by teachers who had substantial expertise in the subject gained through teaching it for more than five years. We will continue to seek improvements in the match of qualifications to task through increased funding for in-service training and by recruiting teachers with qualifications relevant to the national curriculum.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Ozone Depletion

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will implement a refrigerant recycling and reclaim policy covering all departmental equipment currently using chlorofluorocarbons and hydrochlorofluorocarbons; if he will publish targets for departmental reuse and recycling; if he will implement an equipment conversion and replacement programme for all departmental uses of CFCs and HCFCs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: My Department will develop a refrigerant recycling and reclaim policy when it moves into its new premises.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will introduce a leakage prevention programme for all refrigeration and air conditioning equipment owned and operated by his Department; if he will publish targets for reductions in leakages; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: My Department is not currently in a position to introduce a leakage prevention programme as it does not own or operate refrigeration and air conditioning equipment.

Gymnastics

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list the specific financial grants made available by this Department in support of the sport of gymnastics for the current year.

Mr. Brooke: Most Government funds for sport are channelled through the Sports Council, which allocates these according to its policies and priorities. In the current financial year, the Sports Council has allocated a total of £398,000 in grant to gymnastics. This includes £322,000 to the British Amateur Gymnastics Association in support of the programmes identified in its four-year plan; £53,000 towards the costs of staging the world artistic gymnastics championships in Birmingham in April 1993; £13,000 to the British Schools Gymnastics Association; and £10,000 towards the costs of staging an international Brevet course in January 1993. In addition, the Foundation for Sport and the Arts has provided £1,649,992 for various projects associated with the development of gymnastics since September 1991.

English Tourist Board

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make a statement on the future of the English tourist board.

Mr. Key: I refer to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans) on 13 November 1992 at columns 997-98.

Hill Walking

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what steps are being taken to promote hill walking and rambling in Lancashire's hill country.

Mr. Key: The North West tourist board, which receives funding from my Department via the English tourist board —around £531,000 in this financial year—is responsible for the promotion of tourism in the North West region, which includes Lancashire. Its activities include the promotion of outdoor pursuits.

Royal Palaces

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if his Department will carry out and publish an inventory of the contents of the historic royal palaces, indicating what items are public property.

Mr. Brooke: The royal household has for some time been preparing a computerised inventory, to replace existing manual records, of all the works of art in the occupied royal palaces. These are part of the royal collection which is owned by the sovereign in right of the Crown.

National Lottery

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if it is to be proposed that betting offices will be allowed to sell national lottery tickets.

Mr. Brooke: I intend to publish the Bill to establish the national lottery at the earliest opportunity. This will establish the arrangements for operation and regulation which will apply.

English Heritage

Mr. Macklsay: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what duty is imposed upon English Heritage to survey and, or inspect refurbishment, rewiring and other works on grade 1 listed buildings; and what rights of access exist for English Heritage to fulfil duties in this regard.

Mr. Brooke: English Heritage has a duty under section 33 of the National Heritage Act 1983, so far as practicable, to secure the preservation of historic buildings situated in England. In appropriate cases, inspections could fall within the scope of this duty.

Under section 88 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, any persons authorised in writing by the Secretary of State for National Heritage, the Secretary of State for the Environment or a local planning authority may enter on land for various specified purposes including ascertaining whether any listed building is being maintained in a proper state of repair; officers of English Heritage could be authorised under this provision. In addition, English Heritage itself has power to authorise such entry in London.

Windsor Castle

Mr. Macklsay: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage which parts of Windsor castle are listed grade 1; and what consideration has been given to listing Windsor castle as a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation world heritage site.

Mr. Brooke: Windsor castle and all the buildings within its walls are listed in grade 1.

Windsor castle has been considered for nomination to UNESCO as a world heritage site, but as there are already a number of other strong candidates for world heritage site status I have no present plans to nominate this site.

Mr. Macklsay: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage (1) what parts of the Chester tower at Windsor castle were maintained, redecorated or refurbished by his Department, or its predecessor, over the past five years; and what was the cost of this work to the Exchequer;

(2) what surveys were made to the Chester tower, Windsor castle, since the fire at Hampton Court; what additional or alternative fire precautions and installations were recommended which were subsequently installed or implemented; and what was the cost to the Exchequer of those improvements.

Mr. Brooke: Following the Hampton court fire, a detailed survey of electrical services and fire precautions was carried out at Windsor castle, including Chester tower. In addition, in 1988 the PSA surveyed every part of the interior of the castle and recorded its findings in drawings, photographs and written reports. A photogrammetric record was also produced of the castle from Edward III tower to the Brunswick tower, including the private chapel.

As a result of the survey which followed the Hampton court fire, a works programme costing over £20 million was started in 1988 and is now nearing completion. The Chester tower work had been completed. The fire prevention measures included:

complete rewiring of the main castle buildings;
automatic fire detection system;
installation of new fire resisting doors to staircases and in corridors;
upgrading of existing doors to provide fire resistance;
infilling or upgrading of openings in staircase enclosures or escape corridors;
replacement of combustible linings to services, to staircase enclosures;
upgrading of enclosing elements of construction to plant rooms, store rooms, workshops, kitchens, lifts, ducts, shafts, tank rooms and access doors;
enclosure of builders work ducts and service shafts;
enclosure of light well features to internal corridors and state rooms;
sealing of disused shafts, ducts and service openings;
upgrading of floors relative to change of use;
fire protection to exposed steel members, if newly installed;
provision of fire breaks in some extensive voids;
fire stopping of duct surrounds and service penetrations;
fire sealing of the junctures of connecting cavities;
infilling of openings or gaps in structural elements, especially in party walls;
replacement of combustible service duct covers;
installation of non-combustible false ceilings with cavity barriers;
removal and replacement of combustible insulation or covers to air conditioning ductwork;
installation of fire dampers in A/C systems;
insulation of metal ducting in proximity of timber;
removal of combustible waste materials from underfloor voids; and
sealing of underfloor voids in the proximity of wall panelling.

Broadcasting

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make a further statement on the effectiveness of denying direct broadcasting access to spokesmen of certain political organisations.

Mr. Brooke: The reasons for imposing the notices remain valid and I have no plans to announce any changes.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Personal Debts

Sir Patrick McNair-Wilson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish the latest figures available relating to the level of personal indebtedness of all adults aged 18 years and over, and as a percentage of the total population, in respect of *(a)* mortgages, *(b)* personal loans, *(c)* credit cards and *(d)* small business loans.

Mr. Nelson: The available statistics on lending to the personal sector do not include any information relating to the age of the borrowers. For the sector as a whole, which includes individuals, unincorporated businesses, charities and other private non-profit-making bodies, the levels outstanding as at 30 June 1992 were as follows:

	£ billion
Loans for house purchase (mortgages)	330·8
Bank credit cards	9·6
Others consumer credit (personal loans)	43·1
Other borrowing from banks	40·6
Total personal sector borrowing	424·1

The figure for other borrowing from banks is mainly that of unincorporated businesses—some of which may be relatively large—but it also includes an element of borrowing by charities and other private non-profit-making bodies classified to the sector. The figure for credit cards relates only to bank credit cards; borrowing on other cards—for example, on some store cards—is included in the figures for other consumer credit and cannot be separately identified.

The Council of Mortgage Lenders estimates that the number of mortgages outstanding at the end of the first half of 1992 was 9·8 million.

The latest estimate of the adult population of the United Kingdom in mid-1991 is 44·5 million.

Mortgage Lenders

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proposals he has for requiring mortgage lenders to offer capital and interest mortgages as well as endowment mortgages and for advising customers that alternative insurance advice should be sought when an endowment mortgage is preferred.

Mr. Nelson: The choice of products offered by mortgage lenders is a matter for their commercial judgment. However, my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade proposes to make new quotations regulations under the Consumer Credit Act to improve consumer protection in this area. These include a requirement to ensure that borrowers taking out loans to purchase residential property are informed of their rights under the "tying in" provisions of the Courts and Legal Services Act which, when brought into force, will make it an offence to refuse to grant a loan on the grounds that a prospective borrower declines another service, for example life insurance, offered by the lender or his associate.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proposals he has for requiring mortgage lenders with tied insurance arrangements to display warnings that only one specified company's products are on sale in their branches.

Mr. Nelson: SIB and LAUTRO published detailed new rules on disclosure and standards of advice in connection with the marketing of life assurance on 22 July. These include requirement relating to prominent display of status in the premises of "tied intermediates", if customers have regular access to them. SIB and LAUTRO have stated that they will not be bringing the new rules into force until after they have been considered by the Director General of Fair Trading.

EURO PROD COM

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer under what treaty or directive the EURO PROD COM inquiry has been instituted; and at which meeting the United Kingdom Government gave its consent to the EURO PROD COM inquiry.

Mr. Nelson: On December 1991, the EC Internal Market Council of Ministers passed the PRODCOM Regulation (No. 3924/91). The United Kingdom voted against adoption of the regulation.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many enterprises are being asked to submit returns under the EURO PROD COM inquiry; and what assessment he has made of comparability of the sampling frame and statistical base of EURO PROD COM in each country where it is pursued.

Mr. Nelson: So far 18,000 enterprises—24,000 contributors—have been informed that they are likely to fall within the scope of the annual and quarterly PRODCOM inquiries for the reference year 1993. Work is being carried out to establish a sample of smaller businesses to be included in the 1993 inquiries. It is expected that this will increase the number of contributors by 5,000.

The Central Statistical Office has compared the methodology of its current product inquiries—as well as its planned implementation of PRODCOM—with that of other national statistical offices in Europe. The most up-to-date published study of product survey methods in European countries (Eurostat's "Industrial Production" booklet; Theme 4, series E) has provided a starting point on the methods currently employed. The PRODCOM regulation allows a two-year transition period during which each country must move its current product statistics inquiries onto the PRODCOM basis. The CSO continues to gather information about the latest plans of other European countries from their representatives on the Statistical Programme Committee for PRODCOM.

Manufacturing and External Trade

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table showing, on the basis of July to December 1983 = 100, the United Kingdom terms of trade for finished manufactures together with (i) the volume of imports and exports of finished manufactures and (ii) the surplus/deficit on trade in manufactures at 1992 prices.

Mr. Nelson: Information from which terms of trade in finished manufactures on a 1985 base may be derived is available on the Central Statistical Office databank which may be accessed through the Library of the House. Information relating to volumes is only calculated at 1985 prices. An index giving the volume of imports and exports of finished manufactures on a 1985 base is published regularly in the Central Statistical Office's "Monthly Review of External Trade Statistics" and is also available on the Central Statistical Office databank. From these the imports, exports and balances at 1985 prices can be calculated.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will publish a table showing, on the basis of July to December 1973 = 100, the increase in United Kingdom relative export unit values in dollars for each year since 1970 together with the United Kingdom share of the volume of exports of manufactures by the main manufacturing countries;

(2) what is his estimate of the percentage fall in the real exchange rate since the fourth quarter of 1986 and the second half of 1973 in terms of trade-weighted relative export unit values in dollars;

(3) what is his estimate of the percentage fall in the real exchange rate against the deutschmark and the dollar respectively since the fourth quarter of 1986 and the second half of 1973 in terms of relative export unit values in dollars.

Sir John Cope: The latest figures for both relative export unit values and volume shares of manufacturing exports for the main manufacturing countries are available on the CSO databank which may be accessed through the Library of the House.

Exchange Rates

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment has been made of the effect of the appreciation in the nominal value of sterling between the fourth quarter of 1986 and the third quarter of 1990 on the rate of inflation, manufacturing output and employment.

Mr. Nelson: The level of the nominal exchange rate is one of many factors that will have affected inflation, manufacturing output and employment.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the trade-weighted reduction in the value of sterling, the dollar, the deutschmark and the yen since 1985; and if he will publish a table showing in each case to the latest available date the corresponding change in *(a)* the unit cost of labour, *(b)* producer prices and *(c)* consumer prices.

Mr. Nelson: Data for the effective exchange rates, consumer prices and producer prices of Germany, the United Kingdom, the United States and Japan can be found in the IMF's International Financial Statistics. Data on unit labour costs can be found in the "Monthly Review of External Trade Statistics". Figures for the United Kingdom can also be found in CSO's "Economic Trends".

Ozone Depletion

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will implement a refrigerant recycling and reclaim policy covering all departmental equipment currently using chlorofluorocarbons and hydrochlorofluorocarbons; if he will publish targets for departmental reuse and recycling; if he will implement an equipment conversion and replacement programme for all departmental uses of CFCs and HCFCs; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope: I have recently signed a declaration of corporate commitment on energy efficiency on behalf of the Treasury. The Treasury's strategy for environmental good housekeeping includes a commitment to cease to use, wherever possible, ozone-depleting substances. The Treasury is making arrangements to monitor, evaluate and set performance levels and targets.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will introduce a leakage prevention programme for all refrigeration and air conditioning equipment owned and operated by his Department; if he will publish targets for reductions in leakages; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope: I have recently signed a declaration of corporate commitment on energy efficiency on behalf of the Treasury. The Treasury's strategy for environmental good housekeeping includes a commitment to cease to use, wherever possible, ozon-depleting substances. The Treasury is making arrangements to monitor, evaluate and set performance levels and targets. We are considering the introduction of a leakage prevention programme for all refrigeration and air conditioning equipment owned by the Department.

Civil Servants

148. **Mr. Sheerby:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total number of *(a)* established and *(b)* unestablished civil servants, including those in next steps agencies, on 1 January 1980 and on 1 September 1992, including those on short-term contracts.

Mr. Nelson: The number of civil servants, including those in next steps agencies, was 707,830 on 1 January 1980 and 565,319 at 1 April 1992, the latest published data. We do not collect information for 1 September. Data for 1 October will be available shortly. No breakdown between numbers of established and unestablished staff is available: the concept of unestablished service was abolished with effect from 1 April 1991.

Building Societies (Interest Rates)

150. **Mr. Hannam:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps he is taking to ensure that building societies are passing on interest rate reductions to their customers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson: The setting of mortgage rates is a matter for the commercial judgment of individual mortgage lenders, taking into account a range of factors including their overall financial position and the interests of both depositors and borrowers.

At a recent meeting with the Council of Mortgage Lenders my right hon. Friend the Chancellor made it clear that he hoped that the recent cut in base rates would be reflected in lower mortgage rates as quickly as possible.

The building societies gave their assurance that reductions would be made as soon as possible consistent with the prudent management of the societies. The main societies have announced reductions in their basic mortgage rates to around 8·5 per cent.—their lowest level since the 1970s. The new rates already apply to new borrowers and will be implemented for most existing borrowers by 1 January 1993.

VAT (Job Losses)

Dr. Spink: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many jobs will be lost in south east Essex by the move of the value added tax central unit from Southend.

Sir John Cope: Around 830 VAT central unit posts are to be relocated from Southend in phases between October and March 1995. Over the same period, some 110 Customs Directorate posts will be moved from London to Southend. This will mean that 320 posts have been moved in total from London to Southend and will complete the implementation of the Customs relocation programme announced in 1989 following a comprehensive internal study undertaken in the context of the Government's overall relocation policy.

Privatisation

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will set out the proceeds from privatisation for each year since 1988-89; and what is the expected figure for 1992-93.

Mr. Portrell: Privatisation proceeds since 1988-89 and the forecast for 1992-93 are shown in the attached table.

Privatisation proceeds

	£ billion
1988-89	7·1
1989-90	4·2
1990-91	5·3
1991-92	7·9
1992-93	8·0

Debt

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what initiatives he has undertaken during the United Kingdom's presidency of the European Community to assist the developing world to reduce its external debt.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 19 November 1992]:* Following the Prime Minister's Trinidad terms initiative, the Paris Club has been giving enhanced debt relief to the poorest and most indebted countries since the beginning of this year. Twelve countries have so far benefited. The enhanced terms include cancelling 50 per cent. of the debt payments falling due over the period of the debtor's IMF programme, and offering the possibility of a 50 per cent. reduction in the entire stock of debt after three to four years if the debtor keeps to its IMF and Paris Club agreements. The United Kingdom has consistently pressed for these terms to be made more generous still, in line with the Prime Minister's original Trinidad terms proposals, involving an immediate two thirds reduction in the entire stock of debt. At the Munich summit in July, the United Kingdom joined with the rest of the G7 in calling for the Paris Club to recognise the special situation of some highly indebted lower middle income countries on a case-by-case basis.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will list the countries which have received debt relief under the Trinidad terms; and if he will give details in each case of *(a)* the debt cancelled by the United Kingdom and *(b)* the debt cancelled by all Paris club Governments;

(2) what percentage of official bilateral debt owed to Great Britain by developing countries has been cancelled under the Trinidad terms.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 26 November 1992]:* Twelve countries have benefited from Trinidad terms so far. They are Benin, Bolivia, Equatorial Guinea, Guinea Republic, Honduras, Mali, Nicaragua, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda and Zambia.

Around £1 billion has been written off, of which the United Kingdom's share is some £65 million.

Under the terms of the rescheduling agreements, debt payments due over the period of each debtor's IMF programme have been reduced by 50 per cent., though the United States and, on occasion, Australia, have adopted a non-concessional rescheduling option. The rescheduling agreements also include a good will clause committing the Paris Club to consider giving relief on the whole stock of debt after three to four years if the debtor adheres to Paris Club and IMF agreements.

Figures for the actual debt owed by or cancelled for any individual country are confidential. We cannot publish these figures without the consent of the authorities in both debtor and creditor countries. For several debtor countries discussions on detailed terms are, in any case, still under way.

Early progress is very unlikely on any of these fronts owing to the resolute opposition of other creditors, especially the United States and Japan.

There has been a certain amount of pressure from the aid lobby for the United Kingdom to "deliver on its commitment to the unilateral implementation of Trinidad terms".

But it would not be in our interests, nor really in the interests of the poorest countries, to go beyond the multilateral compromise. Debts to the United Kingdom are only 5 per cent. of the debts of the poorest, and going beyond the consensus would sacrifice leverage of the kind effectively deployed at Harare, and only succeed in marginally increasing the recoverability of other's claims at our expense.

Debts cancelled under Trinidad terms result from insurance claims paid out to United Kingdom exporters by ECGD after a sovereign default. Debts to export credit agencies constitute the majority of developing country debts, and, unlike most aid loans, are at commercial interest rates. Many countries have forgiven substantial amounts of aid debts, including the United Kingdom.

About half of the $1 billion relief provided by the Overseas Development Administration represents the conversion of Indian hard currency debt into a local currency obligation.

EC Trade

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the expected growth in United Kingdom trade with EC countries after January 1993.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 24 November 1992]:* The forecast growth in the volume of United Kingdom-non oil exports in 1993 is 7 per cent. world wide. Separate forecasts for trade with individual geographical areas are not available.

Brady Initiative

Mr. Denham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the effect of the Brady initiative on *(a)* the total debt owed by developing countries and *(b)* the debt service payable by developing countries.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 26 November 1992]:* As noted by the IMF/World Bank Development Committee on 21 September, arrangements for debt and debt service reduction measures have now been reached with 12 countries and account for more than 90 per cent. of the commercial bank debt of the major debtor nations. These arrangements involve a variety of debt and interest rate reduction measures which, on average, are equivalent to a debt reduction of more than one third of their commercial bank debt.

Developing Countries

Mr. Denham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the measures employed by the International Monetary Fund and the World bank to ensure that economic policy reforms in developing countries do not resultt in adverse social and environmental impact.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 26 November 1992]:* The Government strongly support the policy of the IMF and the World bank to pay full regard to the impact of adjustment programmes on the poor and the environment. The measures taken by the two institutions to achieve this are described in detail in their 1992 annual reports, copies of which are available in the Library of the House.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the measures taken by the United Kingdom Government to encourage British commercial banks to provide debt relief to those developing countries which have benefited from the Trinidad terms, and on the effectiveness of those measures.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 26 November 1992]:* The Government have supported and funded their share of the World bank's facility which supports voluntary arrangements on debt relief between debtors and banks. Two such operations have been agreed so far for Mozambique and Niger resulting in the retirement of $231 million of principal along with interest arrears totalling $90 million. The World bank expects that three further operations—for Bolivia, Guyana and Uganda—will be agreed shortly. Twelve other countries have expressed interest in taking advantage of this facility.

EMPLOYMENT

Wages Councils

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to her answer of 19 November, *Official Report*, column *332*, when and how the Government's conclusions to the 1988 consultation document were published; and how many employer bodies are represented on the six largest councils.

Mr. McLoughlin: Results of the 1988 consultation were given in a reply on 21 March 1989, *Official Report*, column *556*. There are 43 employers organisations represented on the six largest wages councils.

Wages Inspectors

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many wages inspectors there were in each region in each year since 1979; and how many there are currently.

Mr. McLoughlin: The average number of wages inspectors in each wages inspectorate division is shown in tables 1 and 2. The information is divided into two tables because of changes in divisional boundaries in 1986. The current number of inspectors is shown in table 3.

Table 1
Average number of inspectors 1979-1986

Division	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
London (East)	13·0	13·5	9·5	9·0	8·0	8·0	6·0	12·0
London (West)	13·0	14·0	12·0	12·0	11·0	7·0	8·0	[1]
South East	11·0	13·0	11·0	9·0	10·0	10·0	9·0	6·0
Southern	11·0	10·0	8·0	7·0	7·0	7·0	7·0	5·0
Eastern	9·0	11·0	8·0	7·0	7·0	7·0	7·0	6·0
South West	10·0	11·0	9·0	9·0	9·0	9·0	9·0	9·0
Midlands (East)	11·5	9·5	8·0	6·0	7·0	7·0	7·0	5·0
Midlands (West)	11·5	12·0	9·0	10·0	10·0	10·0	12·0	7·0
North West (East)	11·0	8·0	8·0	8·0	7·0	6·0	8·0	6·0
North West (West)	10·0	10·0	9·0	5·0	8·0	9·0	8·0	6·0
Yorkshire and Humberside	15·0	13·0	10·0	10·0	9·0	10·0	10·0	9·0
Northern	10·0	9·0	7·0	6·0	6·0	7·0	8·0	7·0
Scotland (East)	7·0	7·0	7·0	7·0	7·0	7·0	7·0	5·0
Scotland (West)	8·0	8·0	4·0	6·0	6·0	6·0	6·0	5·0
Wales	7·0	6·0	5·0	5·0	4·0	5·0	6·0	4·0

[1] Included in London (East) figure.

Table 2
Average number of inspectors 1987-1991

Divisions	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
London	9	8	7·00	7	5
South East	8	6	6·00	6	4
Eastern	6	6	6·00	5	3
South West	9	9	8·00	8	8
Midlands	11	11	10·00	10	10
North West	11	11	10·00	10	11
Yorks and Humberside	7	7	7·00	7	8
Northern	6	5	5·35	6	8
Scotland	8	7	7·00	7	8

Table 3

Division	[1]1992
Southern	7
South West	6
Midlands	9
North West	12
Yorks and Humberside	6
Northern	8
Scotland	7

Note:
From November 1991 the London, South East and Eastern Divisions have been merged to form a new Southern Division
[1] as at 31 October 1992

Wages Act 1986 (Prosecutions)

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the lowest level of payment for which prosecutions have taken place under the Wages Act 1986 in each region in each year since 1986.

Mr. McLoughlin: The hourly rates of payment discovered in these cases are listed in the table:

Divisions	1986 £	1987 £	1988 £	1989 £	1990 £	1991 £	1992 £
London	—	—	—	—	—	2·48	—
South East	0·88	1·60	1·29	1·50	1·42	—	—
Eastern	1·15	—	1·23	—	—	—	—
South West	—	—	1·55	1·60	1·74	2·18	1·87
Midlands	—	1·375	1·20	2·04	—	—	2·30
North West	—	1·60	1·75	—	—	1·50	—
Yorkshire and Humberside	—	—	1·92	2·19	2·00	1·50	1·70
Northern	—	—	—	1·91	n/a	1·25	2·00
Scotland	—	—	—	—	—	2·48	1·60

Car Industry

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what were the numbers of employees in employment in the automotive sector in total and by standard region in 1979 and at the latest available date.

Mr. McLoughlin: The available information is given in the following table:

Employees in employment not seasonally adjusted
Manufacture of Motor vehicles and parts (Class 35)

	June 1979 ('000's)	September 1989[1] ('000's)
South East (including Greater London)	131	69
Greater London	n.a.	19
East Anglia	15	6
South West	13	8
West Midlands	156	79
East Midlands	12	11
Yorkshire and Humberside	20	16
North West	67	40
North	10	8
England	423	236
Wales	23	12
Scotland	17	5
Northern Ireland	3	3
United Kingdom	466	256

[1] Latest date for which estimates are available at this level of detail.

Shell (Stanlow)

Mr. Miller: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many redundancies have been notified to her Department by Shell (Stanlow) since 1 November.

Mr. McLoughlin: Information given to the Department under the redundancy handling provisions of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 is provided in confidence.

Oil Refining

Mr. Miller: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people were employed in the oil refining sector in *(a)* Cheshire and *(b)* the north-west region in each of the last three years.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Statistics of Trade Act 1947 prohibits the disclosure of information which could be identified as relating to an individual employer. In the circumstances, I cannot provide the information requested.

Training Agencies

Mr. Miller: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will make it her policy to provide increased support for training agencies in Ellesmere Port and the surrounding area.

Mr. McLoughlin: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will continue to provide support for training and enterprise through CEWTEC, the training and enterprise council for Ellesmere Port and the surrounding area. The 1993-94 contract, including the resources available to the TEC, will be negotiated between CEWTEC and the Department over the next few months.

Domiciliary Care Agencies

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is her latest estimate of the number of independent sector domiciliary care agencies.

Mr. McLoughlin: It is estimated that there are 1,388 licensed employment agencies which have indicated that their field of activity may include domiciliary care work.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Alcohol (Ingredients)

Mrs. Roe: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will take the opportunity presented by the United Kingdom presidency of the EC Council of Agriculture Ministers to ensure that a full ingredients listing is provided for still and sparkling wine.

Mr. Soames: Yes. Ingredient listing for alcoholic drinks, including still and sparkling wines, is already the subject of a European Commission proposal currently being negotiated within the Council. The United Kingdom presidency is seeking to ensure that any measures which are eventually adopted are as comprehensive as practicable and apply consistently to all alcoholic drinks.

Mrs. Roe: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will take action during the United Kingdom presidency of the EC Council of Agriculture Ministers to ensure that the current review of ingredients listing of beers, wines and spirits is extended to include the legalisation of voluntary unit of alcohol labelling of still and sparkling wines; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: The voluntary labelling of still and sparkling wines to show units of alcohol, which is currently contrary to Community legislation, does not form part of the European Commission's proposal concerning ingredient listing for alcoholic drinks. The matter of voluntary labelling of still and sparkling wines with units of alcohol is being pursued separately with the Commission.

Ozone Depletion

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will implement a refrigerant recycling and reclaim policy covering all departmental equipment currently using chlorofluorocarbons and hydrochlorofluorocarbons; if he will publish targets for departmental reuse and recycling; if he will implement an equipment conversion and replacement programme for all departmental uses of CFCs and HCFCs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: The Department disposes of all equipment containing CFCs and HCFCs in accordance with the Duty of Care Regulations which came into force on 1 April 1992 under the Environmental Protection Act 1990. These regulations put a responsibility on producers of controlled waste to ensure that it is disposed of safely and legally. Where existing equipment containing CFCs is to be renewed it is replaced by equipment which contains refrigerants which are understood to be less environmentally damaging. The Department considered but rejected replacing all sound equipment containing CFCs because on balance there was seen to be no environmental advantage in this course of action.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will introduce a leakage prevention programme for all refrigeration and air conditioning equipment owned and operated by his Department; if he will publish targets for reductions in leakages; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: The Department is fully aware of its responsibilities towards equipment containing ozone-depleting substances and has taken appropriate action to meet those responsibilities. All its refrigeration, other than small freezers and refrigerators, and air conditioning equipment is already subject to a rigorous maintenance regime, performance is regularly monitored and defects are attended to promptly.

Badgers

Mr. Meale: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many licences were granted in 1991 and 1992 permitting *(a)* interference with a badger sett under the 1991 and 1992 Badgers Acts and *(b)* the entering of a dog into a badger sett; when the licences were issued; to whom; for what purpose; and for which geographical area.

Mr. Soames: Information on licensing has only been collected centrally since February 1992, prior to which very few licences were issued. The number of licences issued since this time is as follows:

(a) licences to interfere with a badger sett under the 1991 and 1992 Badgers Acts (excluding the entry of dogs into setts) —numbers issued by month and by Ministry region

Region	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October
Northern	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—
North Eastern	1	—	—	—	3	—	—	—	—
East Midlands	—	—	1	1	—	1	3	1	3
North Mercia	—	1	—	—	—	6	4	4	3
South Mercia	—	—	1	1	2	2	3	—	—
Anglia	—	—	—	—	1	1	1	—	—
South East	—	1	1	1	2	4	2	2	1
Wessex	1	—	7	6	7	4	3	8	9
South West	—	2	—	—	—	6	1	4	2

Region	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October
Totals	1	4	10	9	15	24	18	19	18

The names and addresses of individual licence holders are confidential.

While information on the specific purpose of each licence is not collected centrally, the majority of licences have been issued for the purpose of agricultural or forestry operations. Licences have also been issued to prevent serious damage to land, crops, livestock or other forms of property, or for land drainage purposes.

(b) no licences have been issued at any time to permit the entry of a dog into a badger sett.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many applications for licences to enter a dog into a badger sett his Department has received.

Mr. Soames: The Ministry has received six applications for licences to enter a dog into a badger sett.

Salmon

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what measures are being taken to ensure the preservation of salmon stocks in English rivers.

Mr. Curry: The National Rivers Authority is responsible for the management and regulation of salmon and freshwater fisheries in England and Wales and has a statutory duty under the Water Resources Act to maintain, improve and develop such fisheries. The authority has extensive powers under salmon and freshwater fisheries legislation—which are subject to confirmation by the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food or the Secretary of State for Wales, as appropriate—to make byelaws, orders and related measures, and the duty and means to enforce them. Both the National Rivers Authority and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food—which has policy responsibility for salmon and freshwater fisheries in England and Wales—maintain extensive research programmes into salmonid fisheries.

Sheep Premium

Mr. Steen: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the action being taken in each other EC country to meet the new EC requirements on sheep premium.

Mr. Curry: It is for the Commission to monitor member states implementation of Community legislation on the sheepmeat regime.

Mr. Steen: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the additional checks and requirements that are now required to meet new European Community requirements on those applying for sheep premium in 1992; and what timetable has been imposed.

Mr. Curry: The principal changes to the 1992 sheep annual premium scheme requiring additional checking are the application of headage payment limits to partnerships and to shared flocks; the eligibility of leased flocks, shepherds, and employees in the context of a producer group claim; and the need for producers to keep additional records. There is no formal timetable but we aim to complete all checks and pay claims as quickly as possible.

Fishing Quotas

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about the procedures which his Department follows in allocating quotas for the remainder of the year to a vessel which is expelled from a producer's organisation for overfishing and misconduct part through a year; and how a vessel's track record is assessed by his Department.

Mr. Curry: Producer organisations (POs) may request the suspension of the licence of a member who has persistently ignored the PO's quota management arrangements. If, after notifying Fisheries Departments of such a request, and following the full range of the PO's own disciplinary procedures, the PO subsequently expels the member, Ministers would not normally issue a fishing licence for the remainder of the quota year in question. If this procedure is not followed by the PO, Ministers may issue the expelled member with a non-sector licence. In these circumstances, a proportion of the PO's allocation based on the expelled vessel's share of the PO's track record would be transferred to the non-sector.

A vessel's track record is its total reported landings over an agreed reference period. Vessels which are new to the fishery, or have licences aggregated onto them, during the reference period are given track records based on the vessels to which the licences were previously attached.

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy to administer non-producer organisation sector cod and sole quotas for 1993 on the basis of a quarterly allocation with a roll-over allowed for under fishing and a fishery closure for overfishing, in place of the monthly allocation and annual shutdown in December; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: The management of quotas is not a precise science and we do not want to make the system more complicated to operate both by fisheries departments and fishermen than is absolutely necessary. Seasonal fishing patterns may be subject to fluctuations from year to year. However, fisheries departments are considering ways of improving the management of non-sector quota allocations with particular reference to seasonal fisheries.

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to consider a scheme of individual boat fishing quotas for all boats regardless of length and for all species; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: Fisheries departments considered in 1990 whether to introduce individual transferable quotas in order to allow market forces to operate more effectively. Such a regime would be difficult to operate in the common fisheries policy context and difficult to enforce in United Kingdom conditions. I do not believe it would be practical to introduce such a scheme presently.

Commodities (EC)

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and food, pursuant to his answer of 25 November, what is the European Commission's estimate

of the overall level of reduction in each agricultural commodity arising from the assumption made in preparation of its latest GATT proposals; and how that breaks down in volume, percentage and value terms in each EC country and commodity and overall throughout the EC.

Mr. Curry: The European Commission has prepared a note on the GATT agricultural negotations with the United States. This analyses the compatibility of the outcome with the reform of the CAP as decided by the Council on 22 May 1992. A copy of the report will be deposited in the Library of the House when it becomes available. It is not possible to assess the level of output in individual member states within the single market without making a large number of assumptions about the development of markets, except for some commodities where quotas set a limit on output.

DEFENCE

Refit and Repair Contracts

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will set out the Royal Navy refit and repair contracts undertaken by private yards in the latest year for which figures are available, the total costs of such contracts, and the proportion that expenditure represented of the expenditure on all Royal Navy refit and repair work, including work at the royal dockyards and the Fleet Maintenance and Repair Organisation at Portsmouth.

Mr. Aitken: During the financial year 1991-92, in excess of 400 contracts were placed. Following competition, for the refit and repair of RN, Royal Fleet Auxiliary, Royal Maritime Auxiliary Service and other small vessels. Such contracts ranged from providing assistance to the RN in rectifying defects on operational vessels to the refitting of RFAs. The major contracts awarded are listed below.

The total value of these contracts is in the order of £85 million (1992-93 price levels). This excludes those contracts awarded overseas and represents 14·7 per cent. of the total expenditure on all RN, RFA and RMAS refit and repair work. In volume terms, this represents 30·6 per cent. of the total naval production load.

List of Royal Navy refit and repair contracts placed following competition 1991-92

Vessel	*Contractor*
Cleeds	Devonport Management Limited
Ona	DML
Black Rover	DML
Regent	Tees Dockyard Limited
Rescuer	Tees
Fort Grange	DML
Argus	A and P Appledore
Sir Bedivere	Appledore
Sir Geraint	Appledore
Sir Percivale	Tees
Sir Tristram	Tees
Sir Galahad	Appledore

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the total expenditure in the latest financial year for which figures are available on all Royal Navy and Royal Fleet Auxiliary refit, repair and maintenance.

Mr. Aitken: The total expenditure in the financial year 1991-92 on the refit, repair and maintenance of all RN, Royal Fleet Auxiliary, Royal Maritime Auxiliary Service and other small vessels is approximately £580 million at 1992-93 price levels. This covers work carried out in FMRO Portsmouth, the Royal dockyards and private yards and includes support work carried out in aid of such tasks.

Harrier Squadrons (Support)

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will set out, by squadron or similar unit, the level of dedicated *(a)* Royal Engineer, *(b)* Royal Signals and *(c)* other Army support for the Harrier squadrons based in Germany in each year since 1979.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The information requested is as follows:

Royal Engineers: 10 Field Squadron based in Gutersloh and 38 Engineer Regiment (comprising 11 Field Squadron, 32 Field Squadron and 15 Field Support Squadron) based in Ripon will continue to provide this support until 1 December 1992. In future, a minimum of 1 squadron of 39 Engineer Regiment, to be United Kingdom based, will take on this role. The remaining 2 field squadrons will provide Airfield Damage Repair (ADR) to RAF Bruggen and RAF Laarbruch. In his statement to the House 10 December 1991 on the Reserve Forces the then Secretary of State announced that TA Royal Engineers would be taking on greater responsibility for ADR and support of the RAF Harrier force; a TA Regiment, 73 Engineer Regiment (V), will be available to provide ADR and combat support to the Rapid Reaction Force (Air) as well as for the Main Defence Forces.

Royal Signals: From 1979 to 1 April 1992, 21 Signal Regiment provided one squadron to each Harrier airfield in Germany. This task is now undertaken by the RAF Tactical Communications Wing currently based at Brize Norton.

EH101 Helicopters

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many EH101 Merlin helicopters will be carried on each of the Royal Navy's aircraft carriers; how many were originally planned to be carried in this role; how aircraft carriers not to receive EH101 Merlin will carry out their anti-submarine warfare mission; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: It is not our policy to discuss numbers of aircraft deployed on individual ships. The 44 Merlin EH101 anti-submarine warfare helicopters ordered last year will enable us to set up training squadrons and introduce the first squadrons of aircraft into service with the type 23 frigate and one carrier. No decision has yet been taken on the size or timing of a second order. We currently envisage each of the aircraft carriers being provided with Merlin EH101 helicopters.

Bosnia (Mail)

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will bring forward proposals to establish a subsidy scheme to allow a reduced rate, or zero rate, postage for mail to service men and women serving in Bosnia.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Free aerogrammes can already be sent to and from service personnel serving in the former Yugoslavia.

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make arrangements to ensure that Christmas parcels can be sent out to those service personnel in Bosnia free of charge.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Forces free airletters are delivered to the Bosnian region free of charge. Parcels can be sent at forces concessionary rates which are in line with the United Kingdom inland parcel rate.

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what is the average length of time taken for an airmail letter to reach service personnel in Bosnia from the United Kingdom;

(2) what is the latest posting date for parcels and letters to be sent to service personnel in Bosnia in time for Christmas;

(3) how many free airmail letters can be sent and received per week by service personnel stationed in Bosnia.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Responsibility for the subject of the questions has been delegated to the Defence Postal and Courier Services Defence Support Agency under its chief executive, Brigadier Browne. I have asked him to arrange for replies to be given.

Letter from Brigadier M. A. Browne to Mr. Eric Martlew, dated 30 November 1992:

I have been asked to reply to your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State in which you ask what is the latest posting date for parcels and letters to be sent to service personnel in Bosnia in time for Christmas.

The latest recommended posting dates for parcels and letters to be sent to service personnel in Bosnia in time for Christmas are:

30th November	Economy Service Parcels
11th December	Airmail 2nd class letters, cards, packets and Standard Service (Airmail) parcels
14th December	Airmail 1st class letters, cards and Forces Free Airletters.

Letter from Brigadier M. A. Browne to Mr. Eric Martlew, dated 30th November 1992:

I have been asked to reply to your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State in which you ask what is the average length of time taken for an airmail letter to reach service personnel in Bosnia from the United Kingdom

At present airmail letters posted in the United Kingdom arrive at the British Forces Post Office in Bosnia within 2-3 days from date of posting. Final delivery to the individual is dependent upon his operational location.

Letter from Brigadier M. A. Browne to Mr. Eric Martlew, dated 30 November 1992:

I have been asked to reply to your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Defence in which you asked how many free airmail letters can be sent and received per week by service personnel stationed in Bosnia.

There is no restriction on the number of Forces Free Airletters that can be sent and received per week by service personnel stationed in Bosnia.

Major Peter Cory

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will return to the hon. Member for Basingstoke's constituent, Major Peter Cory (Rtd.), the 196 supporting documents which Major Cory handed to his Department between June 1962 and April 1963.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Major Cory has already been asked by my Department to write to the office of the Judge Advocate General, giving details of the documents he requires. Once the Judge Advocate General's office has these details, it will attempt to establish the whereabouts of the documents, with a view to returning them if possible.

Cnewr Estate, Brecon Beacons

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what date his Department commenced negotiations for the use of the Cnewr estate in the Brecon Beacons national park; on what date these negotiations were completed; on what date the National Park Authority was informed of these negotiations; on what defence grounds the decision was taken to seek the use of this land; what changes he envisages as a result of his Department's environment manual; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much it will cost his Department to use the Cnewr estate in Brecon Beacons; how many days per year it will be used; how it will be used; what public access will be allowed on days when military exercises are not taking place; if he will compensate the national park for loss of access to the Cnewr; and what other land of his Department will be released as a result of this access.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Members to the answer I gave the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) on 27 November at column *893*.

Landing Ships Logistics

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has for the future of the three landing ships logistics that are now over 25 years old.

Mr. Aitken: Design studies are under way for the refurbishment and re-equipment of the three older landing ships logistic. It is our current intention to invite competitive tenders for the refit of the first of these vessels in the near future.

Amphibious Vessels

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what role Britain's two amphibious LPD assault ships play in NATO's rapid reaction capability; where the two ships HMS Fearless and HMS Intrepid, are currently located; and how quickly they could respond as part of NATO's rapid reaction capability.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: HMS Fearless and HMS Intrepid form part of UK/NL Amphibious Force, which is primarily assigned to the defence of NATO's northern flank in Norway, but available for operations anywhere within the NATO area, including with the Allied Command Europe Rapid Reaction Corps. Both are currently at Portsmouth. For operational reasons we do not disclose response times.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to have completed the evaluation of tenders submitted in respect of the new LPH amphibious helicopter carrier; and when he expects to make a decision to procure the vessel.

Mr. Aitken: Evaluation of the tenders for the new LPH amphibious helicopter carrier, which were received in October, will be complete next summer and it is planned to place the order in the autumn of 1993.

Northern Ireland and Yugoslavia

Mr. Churchill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what units, other than whole units that have been deployed, are currently contributing men to other units serving *(a)* in Northern Ireland and *(b)* in former Yugoslavia.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The following units are currently contributing personnel to other formed units deployed in Northern Ireland and the former Yugoslavia:

(a) *Northern Ireland*
The Household Cavalry Regiment
4th Royal Tank Regiment
1 Royal Horse Artillery (Battery)
7 Royal Horse Artillery
47th Field Regiment Royal Artillery
156 Battery Royal Artillery
9 Parachute Squadron Royal Engineers
2nd Battalion Coldstream Guards
2nd Battalion Scots Guards
1st Battalion the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers
The Royal Anglian Regiment
The Light Infantry
1st Battalion Queen's Own Highlanders
1st Battalion the Gordon Highlanders
1st Battalion The Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders
The Royal Green Jackets

(b) *former Yugoslavia*
2nd Battalion The Royal Irish Regiment

Using soldiers from one unit to reinforce another is not an unusual occurrence.

Diego Garcia

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what United Kingdom military presence there is on Diego Garcia.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to page 36 of the 1992 Statement on the Defence Estimates, Cm 1901.

Iraq

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give the details of all discussions which Ministers or officials of his Department had with International Military Services on its exports to Iraq.

Mr. Aitken *[holding answer 25 November 1992]:* International Military Services has signed only one export contract with Iraq since 1980. Details of this were given to the House on 2 July 1991.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what evaluation has been made by Her Majesty's Government of the effect on Iraq's military capabilities of sales of military equipment or dual-use engineering technology by United Kingdom companies following their attendance at the Baghdad international military equipment exhibition and fair in April 1989.

Mr. Aitken *[holding answer 27 November 1992]:* The Government have studied the Iraqi defence industry and its military procurement activity. Apart from case-by-case assessments of individual export licence applications, no specific study has been undertaken by Her Majesty's Government on the effect of exports by united Kingdom companies on Iraq's military capability following the Baghdad exhibition.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on his Department's monitoring of the Advanced Technology Institute in connection with military exports to Iraq.

Mr. Aitken *[holding answer 27 November 1992]:* My Department monitors all organisations which we have any reason to suspect may be trying to procure military technology for Iraq.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list by date all written, telephonic and personal communications Ministers or officials of his Department had with *(a)* Matrix Churchill Ltd., *(b)* Alliance International Group, *(c)* Allivane International Ltd., *(d)* Ordtech Ltd., *(e)* Autel Ltd. and *(f)* Consarc Ltd. in regard to Iraq since 1985.

Mr. Aitken *[holding answer 27 November 1992]:* The information the hon. Gentleman requests is not held centrally and could not be provided without incurring disproportionate cost.

Mr. Faulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what responses have been made by his Department to requests and reports received from the United Nations Special Commission of Inspection on Iraq or its executive chairman, Rolf Ekeus; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken *[holding answer 26 November 1992]:* The Government have made a significant contribution to the work of the United Nations Special Commission on Iraq as it seeks to implement relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions. In response to UNSCOM's requests, we have supplied MoD personnel as part of the UNSCOM inspection teams and some specialist equipment. It is not our practice to comment in detail on the information given to us by UNSCOM.

Astra Holdings

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what papers or records belonging to Astra Holdings plc or its former directors or employees are held by his Department and its agencies; and if he will make these papers available to Lord Justice Scott's inquiry.

Mr. Aitken *[holding answer 27 November 1992]:* Lord Justice Scott will have access to all relevant Government papers.

It is not the practice of Government Departments to itemise publicly documents in their possession.

Nuclear Tests

Mr. Churchill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many documents having a bearing upon the health and safety of participants in Britain's nuclear test programme are being withheld from public scrutiny beyond the 30-year rule; on what grounds this has been done; and if he will now ensure that all such documents are placed in the public domain.

Mr. Archie Hamilton *[holding answer 26 November 1992]:* Much information relating to the health and safety

of participants in Britain's nuclear test programme has already been released into the public domain. Those documents which continue to be withheld from public scrutiny beyond the 30-year release period of the public records Acts are properly retained on files by the MOD, under section 3(4) of the 1958 Act, for national security and personal sensitivity reasons. The number of such documents cannot be assessed without disproportionate cost, but the files in question will continue to be kept under regular review and will be progressively released as their sensitivity lapses.

El Alamein Anniversary

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what contribution to the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of El Alamein was made by companies; and if he will identify the companies and amounts concerned.

Mr. Archie Hamilton *[holding reply 27 November 1992]:* The following companies generously provided sponsorship for the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the battle of El Alamein:

Alvis plc
British Aerospace Defence Ltd.
Perkins Engines (Shrewsbury) Ltd.
Vickers plc
VSEL
Land Rover
British Airways

Sponsorship was either in the form of a cash donation or the provision of a service in kind. Individual contributions are a matter for the companies concerned.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give full details of all official representatives of Her Majesty's Government who attended the Eighth Army Veterans Association 50th anniversary of the Battle of El Alamein held at Commonwealth cemetary, El Alamein on Sunday 25 October with, in each case, their travel and expenses costs.

Mr. Archie Hamilton *[holding answer 27 November 1992]:* Her Majesty's Government were represented at the El Alamein commemoration ceremony by the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Defence. Calculation of their exact travel and expenses costs has not yet been finalised.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what contribution was requested from the 8th Army veterans towards expenses of their attending the 50th anniversary of El Alamein; and if he will refund it.

Mr. Archie Hamilton *[holding answer 27 November 1992]:* The El Alamein commemoration events consisted of the service at Westminster abbey, a ceremony in Egypt and the refurbishment of the El Alamein museum. The MOD El Alamein project team funded by the MOD, industry and private individuals helped to organise the events. No contributions were requested from either individual veterans or the Eighth Army Veterans Association. All veterans made their own arrangements, and paid for travel to Egypt, most booking packages with travel firms or with the Royal British Legion.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Family Credit

12. Mrs. Browning: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans his Department has to establish a family credit helpline.

Mr. Burt: We will fulfil our manifesto commitment by introducing a family credit telephone helpline from March 1993. This expanded service will for the first time be available to potential family credit recipients rather than simply current recipients and will help support yet more working families.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many family credit claimants, since its introduction, have sought a change in their payments arising from a change in their income during the 26 weeks for which the award has been granted.

Mr. Burt: The information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what percentage of family credit claimants since its introduction have had a different income when they have made their second 26 weeks claim from when they made their first.

Mr. Burt: Since April 1988, 83 per cent. of family credit recipients, who made a successful claim for a period immediately following a previous award, had a different income at the time of their second claim.

No comparable information is held about those whose second claim was unsuccesful, or about those whose second award did not follow immediately after their previous award.

Source: 5 per cent. sample.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to alter the family credit regulations to allow payments to take account of a claimant's change in income during the 26 weeks for which the award has been granted; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: The majority of family credit claimants receive an increase in their earnings during the 26 weeks of the award. The rule therefore works to their advantage and we have no plans to change it.

Expenditure

13. Mr. Knox: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security by what percentage total expenditure on social security has increased since 1979 in real terms.

Mr. Lilley: Expenditure on social security increased in real terms by almost 60 per cent. between 1978-79 and now. Included within this total is a 33 per cent. real increase in expenditure on benefits for the elderly and additional spending on the long term sick and disabled which is one and a half times as great as in 1979. In addition—help for low income families has more than doubled-five times as many families now receive family credit as received family income supplement in 1979.

Disability Living Allowance

14. **Mr. Leighton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he expects the backlog of applications for disability living allowance to be cleared.

Mr. Scott: Steady progress towards achievement of the Benefits Agency's national clearance times for disability living allowance is being maintained and the number of outstanding claims continues to fall.

21. **Mr. Alnger:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the average time taken to process a disabled living allowance application.

Mr. Scott: The information is not available in the form requested. Clearance is measured against targets and for disability living allowance these are: 60 per cent. of claims cleared in 30 days and 95 per cent. of claims cleared in 55 days.

22. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many disabled people will benefit from the introduction of the new disability living allowance.

27. **Mr. Nigel Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people will gain from the two new disability benefits introduced in April.

Mr. Scott: Around 300,000 people are expected to gain from the introduction of disability living allowance and disability working allowance.

Low-income Families

15. **Mr. Richards:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what extra help, over and above normal upratings, he has made available to help low-income families since 1987.

Mr. Burt: The measures we have taken since 1988 to help low income families will be worth around £1 billion extra from April next year.

Mr. Nicholls: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what estimate he has of the number of low income families facing marginal reduction rates in excess of 100 per cent. in *(a)* 1978-79 and *(b)* the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Burt: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to the hon. Member for Blackpool, North (Mr. Elletson) on 3 November at column *94*.

Public Sector Pay

17. **Mr. Norman Hogg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what will be the effect on the level of his Department's expenditure on benefits of the proposed public sector pay norm.

Miss Widdecombe: We are unable to identify separately numbers of potential beneficiaries who work in the public sector. However, the effect of the policy for public sector pay announced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his autumn statement was taken into account when assumptions about future earnings for the whole economy were made for the purpose of forecasting benefit expenditure.

Disabled People

18. **Mr. Booth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what measures his Department has taken to maintain support for disabled people.

Mr. Scott: Since 1979 we have introduced a wide range of improvements. They include the introduction of severe disability allowance, improvements to income support premium for disabled children, and the extension of invalid care allowance to non-relatives and married women. We have aimed to provide a comprehensive and coherent system giving priority to those disabled early in life, who have least opportunity to work and to save and to promote independence and integration. These improvements culminated in the introduction of disability living allowance and disability working allowance in April this year.

By the end of 1992-93 planned expenditure on benefits for long-term sick and disabled people will have risen by more than 170 per cent. in real terms to £13·7 billion.

Invalid Care Allowance

19. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the current earnings disregard in invalid care allowance; and what was its value three years ago.

Mr. Scott: The earnings limit has been increased each year since 1990, rising from £12 a week in March 1990 to £40 a week in April 1992, a total increase of £28. Subject to Parliament's approval the limit will increase to £50 a week from April 1993.

New Age Travellers

20. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he expects social security payments to cease to new age travellers.

Mr. Burt: The Income Support (General) Amendment (No. 3) Regulations 1992, which come into effect on 3 December, will remove entitlement to income support from most unemployed single people and childless couples who fail to seek work actively. So-called new age travellers and others who make no effort to look for work will no longer be able to support themselves at the taxpayer's expense.

Child Support Agency

23. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans his Department has to provide information about the new Child Support Agency.

Mr. Burt: We are planning an advertising campaign to begin in mid-January with advertisements in professional journals. This will be followed in mid-February by television and radio advertising, and advertisements in newspapers and magazines.

Leaflets providing a broad overview of the changes will be available on request from early December. The main leaflet will be available from mid-February; this will explain the changes in more detail and how much child support maintenance might be payable in individual cases.

In addition, officials are holding a series of training presentations for advisers and lawyers at 23 locations in Great Britain.

Support for Families

24. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what measures his Department has taken to maintain support for families.

Mr. Burt: The information follows:

Date and change introduced

April 1988
Introduction of Family Credit

April 1989
Extra 50p in IRB child allowances

April 1990
£1 on Family Credit adult credit
Extra 50p on Income Support and Housing Benefit family premium
Extra 50p on child personal allowances in Income Support, Family Credit and Housing Benefit
Increase in lone parent premium in Housing Benefit and Community Charge Benefit
Increase in lone parent earnings disregard in Housing Benefit and Community Charge Benefit
Extra in disabled child premium in Income Support
Extra for expectant mothers through Social Fund maternity payment

October 1991
Increase for families on Income Support to ensure they gain from Child Benefit increases

April 1992
Change in Family Credit hours rule and maintenance disregards for lone parents

April 1993
No clawback of amounts included in IRB for Community Charge

Homeless Families (Cooking Facilities)

25. **Mr. Raynsford:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will introduce a boarder premium for homeless households living in temporary accommodation who do not have access to cooking facilities.

Mr. Burt: We have no plans to do so.

Computerisation

26. **Mr. Duncan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what evidence he has of improvements in the service offered by the social security offices as a result of a computerisation of the benefits system.

Mr. Burt: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern) on 2 November at column *94*.

Invalidity Benefit

28. **Mr. Miller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the methods by which he plans to make savings from invalidity benefit.

Mr. Scott: We will streamline the medical control procedures which already apply to all claims for incapacity benefits. People invited for medical examinations will be given more notice, and asked to give reasons if they cannot attend; and improved reports by examining doctors will reduce the number of people who are invited to attend a second examination. This better use of resources will help to ensure that benefit is paid only to those who satisfy the entitlement conditions laid down by Parliament.

Pensioners (Diet)

29. **Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement concerning his Department's efforts to enable pensioners to have access to and be able to afford a better diet.

Miss Widdecombe: While endorsing the view that everyone should be encouraged to follow a healthy diet, the Government believe that pensioners, like other benefit recipients, should be free to spend their money as they choose.

Direct Payments

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many of his Department's regional offices currently allow direct payments for benefit claimants to water companies.

Mr. Burt: Direct payments for water charges are available to people in receipt of income support in England and Wales who meet the criteria in paragraph 7 of schedule 9 the Claims and Payments Regulations 1987. These are that the beneficiary has failed to budget for the charge and that the adjudication officer considers direct payments to be in the interests of the family. These arrangements do not apply in Scotland, where water is paid for through community water charge.

Water and Sewerage Charges

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will ensure that charges for the emptying of cesspits which are over the normal sewerage charge levied by water companies in an area will be wholly or partially met by the Benefits Agency for households living on income support.

Mr. Burt: We have no plans to do so. It would be administratively complex and expensive to take account of local or individual variations in the cost of such items.

Women Claimants

Ms. Hoey: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many women, as a percentage of the total female population, claim *(a)* child benefit, *(b)* family credit, *(c)* income support, *(d)* housing benefit and *(e)* poll tax benefit; or any combination of these benefits.

Mr. Burt: Such information as is available provides that the number of women who claimed the specified benefits, as a percentage of the total female population aged 16 and above in mid-1991, was estimated to be:

	Per cent.
Family credit	1
Income support	11
Housing benefit	6
Community charge benefit	9

Notes:
1. Information on the numbers of women eligible to claim is not available.
2. Female population of 23,195,000 is based upon provisional 1991 census estimates.
3. In housing benefit and community charge benefit cases without income support, the sex of the claimant is not recorded, therefore no information in respect of these cases can be given.

4. In housing benefit and community charge benefit cases that are also in receipt of income support, only the sex of the income support claimant is recorded, which is not necessarily the same as that of the housing benefit and/or community charge benefit claimant.
5. Figures provided are for single women and women as heads of households (i.e. claiming for a male partner).

Recipients of child benefit number 6,717,000, the overwhelming majority of whom are women.

Multiple-birth Children

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he will make it his policy, as part of a review of the payment of a higher level of child benefit only to first-born children, to conduct a study into the relative costs of raising multiple-birth children in families; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how he assesses the needs of multiple-birth children and their families in determining the levels of all benefits for which he has responsibility.

Mr. Burt: A range of social security benefits provide increasing help for families with increasing numbers of children, whether of single or multiple births. In the case of the income-related benefits, which help less well-off families, support for children increases as they grow older. These families may in addition receive a maternity payment of £100 from the social fund in respect of each baby expected, born or adopted.

The higher rate of child benefit applies to the eldest child for whom payment is made at any time, not just the first-born. So it underpins the role of this benefit in recognising that all families with children face additional expenditure compared with other families. We have no plans to review the present structure.

Income Support

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many recipients of income support are having deductions made from their benefit *(a)* for poll tax arrears, *(b)* fuel bills and *(c)* social fund loan repayments; and what percentage of the total number of claimants this represents.

Mr. Burt: The latest information showing the total number of income support recipients with a deduction for community charge arrears, fuel bills and social fund repayments and as a percentage of the total number of recipients is as follows:

Recipients with deductions		
	Number	*Per cent.*
(a) Community charge arrears	337,000	6·2
(b) Fuel bills	305,000	5·6
(c) Social fund repayments	637,000	11·8

Notes:
1. Source: The figures used are based on management information statistics collected by the Benefits Agency at the end of August 1992. These figures, which have been rounded to the nearest '000, are provisional and may be subject to amendment.
2. It is not possible to exclude from the social fund figure repayments made by people not in receipt of income support.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many recipients of income support in each region and as a percentage of the total had deductions made from their benefit *(a)* for poll tax arrears, *(b)* fuel bills and *(c)* social fund repayments in (i) 1990, (ii) 1991 and (iii) 1992 to date.

Mr. Burt: The information requested is in the table. The figures show the number of income support recipients with a deduction at the point of survey. Figures showing the total numbers who received a deduction throughout each year are not available.

	England	[1] *Percentage*	*Scotland*	[1] *Percentage*	*Wales*	[1] *Percentage*
1990[2]						
Community charge	Nil	0·0	2,000	0·4	Nil	0·0
Social fund[4]	284,000	8·2	75,000	15·6	24,000	9·7
Fuel[6]	153,000	4·4	59,000	12·2	11,000	4·4
1991[3]						
Community charge	18,000	0·5	13,000	2·7	3,000	1·2
Social fund[5]	333,000	8·9	84,000	17·3	26,000	10·1
Fuel[6]	176,000	4·7	52,000	10·7	14,000	5·4
1992[4]						
Community charge	262,000	5·7	52,000	9·9	22,000	7·4
Social fund[5]	495,000	10·8	103,000	19·6	38,000	12·8
Fuel[6]	238,000	5·2	51,000	9·7	17,000	5·7

[1] As a percentage of the total number of Income Support recipients in each country.
[2] Source: Income Support Annual Statistical Enquiry 1990 (except for the Community Charge figure which is based on Management Information Statistics collected by the Benefits Agency the end of May 1990). All figures have been rounded to the nearest '000.
[3] Source: Income Support Annual Statistical Enquiry 1991 (rounded to the nearest '000).
[4] Source: The figures used are based on Management Information Statistics collected by the Benefits Agency at the end of August 1992. These figures, which have been rounded to the nearest '000, are provisional and may be subject to amendment.
[5] It is not possible to exclude from the Social Fund figures repayments made by people not in receipt of Income Support.
[6] In compiling the figures for fuel, those cases with a deduction for both gas and electricity have been counted twice.

Residential Care

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to alter the benefits system so that residents in local authority residential care are treated equally with those in private residential care.

Mr. Burt: Local authorities receive central grant funding through the revenue support grant towards the cost of the services that they provide. It would be inappropriate for people in local authority residential care homes to receive the same levels of income support as people in independent sector homes as it would be double provision of central Government funding.

HEALTH

Ultraviolet Radiation

Mr. Dalle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what plans she has to issue detailed advice to the public on the maximum lengths of time people with sensitive skins should be exposed to direct sunlight;

(2) what material has been produced by her Department in each year since 1989 on the subject of skin cancer and the dangers of over-exposure to UVB.

Mr. Sackville: Advice on safe exposure to the sun has been included in a Health Education Authority leaflet "Are You Dying To Get A Sun Tan", and "Smart Cookies Don't Burn" produced by the pharmacy health care scheme. The chief medical officers also issued an information note to directors of public health in May 1992 which gave advice on avoidance of excessive exposure to the sun. As part of the "Health of the Nation" strategy the Department proposes to issue comprehensive guidance on skin cancer prevention in the new year. The Department will also discuss with the Health Education Authority a national public education campaign on exposure to sunlight and other sources of ultraviolet radiation. Other departmental initiatives include a review of protection standards for sun screens and sunglasses, the information available to users of sun-tanning equipment, and of research.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her reply of 19 October, *Official Report*, column *80*, what evidence she has of changing patterns of exposure to sunlight since 1979; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The Department was advised on the health effects of ultraviolet radiation by the expert Committee on Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment—COMARE—in June this year and I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin) on 1 July 1992 at columns *637-39*. COMARE's views that skin cancer risk is determined largely by patterns of exposure to existing levels of UVR was based on consideration of a number of peer reviewed reports published in the medical literature.

London Ambulance Service

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will remove budgeting limits for the London ambulance service to allow all overtime offered by staff to be taken up to the extent necessary to avoid shortages in rostered crews.

Mr. Sackville: The London ambulance service has had real growth of £1 million 1992-93 with a total budget of £69·7 million for the year. The LAS is expected to operate within the resources available to it and to manage overtime levels effectively. Management and staff agree the need to review jointly the effectiveness of the current rosters in meeting the standards of service expected from the LAS and must work together to achieve that objective.

Nurses, London

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many nurses are currently employed in each of the four London health regions.

Mr. Sackville: The information is given in the table. The figures are expressed as whole-time equivalents and have been rounded to the nearest ten. The figures are for 30 September 1991, the latest information held centrally and exclude agency staff and include trusts within the boundary of each region.

	Numbers
North West Thames Region	26,480
North East Thames Region	32,750
South East Thames Region	28,280
South West Thames Region	21,590

Dental Patients

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients who had registered with dentists for NHS dental care have subsequently been de-registered by their dentist.

Dr. Mawhinney: The available information shows that between 1 October 1990, when patients first registered with dentists, and 30 September 1992, a total of 7,632,613 patients were removed from the dental lists. During the same period there were 35,993,965 additions to the list. Removal from the list occurs for a variety of reasons, for example, dentists' retirement, patients wanting to change dentists and patients moving area. Removals from the list can be instigated by either the dentist or the patient, but are not separately identified.

Ozone Depletion

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will introduce a leakage prevention programme for all refrigeration and air conditioning equipment owned and operated by her Department; if she will publish targets for reductions in leakages; and if she will make a statement;

(2) if she will implement a refrigerant recycling and reclaim policy covering all departmental equipment currently using chlorofluorocarbons and ydrochlorofluorocarbons; if she will publish targets for departmental reuse and recycling; if she will implement an equipment conversion and replacement programme for all departmental uses of CFCs and HCFCs; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: It is the responsibility of individual health authorities and national health trusts to operate and manage equipment in an environmentally conscientious manner. NHS Estates, an executive agency of my Department, plans to issue guidance on refrigerants and air conditioning in 1993. This guidance will address the operation, maintenance and reclamation of refrigerant equipment and will take account of developments on alternative agents.

AIDS (Dental Equipment)

Ms. Abbott: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what recent research information she has concerning the risk of infection with the AIDS virus from dental apparatus such as air and water lines and head and rotary drills; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: None.

Bereavement Services

Ms. Abbott: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what bereavement services are funded by her Department; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The Department currently provides grant aid under the section 64 general scheme towards the central administrative—core—costs of two national voluntary organisations providing bereavement services. They are Cruse—Bereavement Care which receives £114,000 per annum and the Widows Advisory Trust which receives £18,000 per annum.

Youth Care Services

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what assessment she has made of the adequacy of the level of Government support given to young people leaving care;

(2) what action is being taken to ensure that all local authorities are providing continuing support for young people leaving care.

Mr. Yeo: Local authorities have a flexible range of powers and duties through which they may support young people who are no longer being accommodated by them, or other agencies. We are closely monitoring how local authorities are exercising their powers and duties under the Children Act 1989 as a whole, and will be reporting to Parliament on this in the new year. As part of the monitoring exercise, a separate survey on progress in implementing the aftercare provisions of the Act was commissioned. We are carefully assessing the results of this work.

Cervical Smears

Ms. Hoey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of women were given cervical smear tests during the last 12 months.

Mr. Sackville: The objective of the national health service national cervical screening programme is to screen women between the ages of 20 and 64 at least once every five years. Seventy-four per cent. of the target population in England were screened by 31 March 1991, the latest year for which figures are available. Provisional figures indicate that 80 per cent. of the target population will have been tested by 31 March 1992.

Public Consultation Responses

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she expects to reply to the letter of 16 November from the hon. Member for Halifax concerning public availability of public consultation responses.

Mr. Sackville: I replied on 27 November.

Deaths (Children)

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the number of deaths among under-fives in England for the year 1991-92.

Mr. Sackville: The number of deaths among children under five in England for 1991 is 5,750. The figure for 1992 up to and including the end of June is 2,548. The decline in infant mortality, with deaths at the lowest level ever achieved, include the welcome reduction in sudden infant death—cot death.

Service Contracts

Mr. Jim Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of budgets placed by health authorities with provider units to fulfil service contracts will have been used up before the end of the financial year.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not collected centrally.

Pay Review Bodies

Mr. Hall: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the future of the pay review bodies dealing with the pay of NHS staff.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Government are confident that the review body system is the right way of determining the pay of those staff within their remits.

Asthma

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what criteria must be met before a disease or condition is accorded key area status in the "Health of the Nation" strategy; and in what respects asthma fails to meet those criteria.

Dr. Mawhinney: Three criteria, set out in "The Health of the Nation" Green Paper, governed the selection of the key areas: the area should be a major cause of premature death or avoidable ill-health; effective interventions should be possible, offering significant scope for improvement in health; it should be possible to set objectives and targets, and monitor progress towards them. Asthma was not selected as a key area because more information is needed for understanding causes and effective interventions before realistic targets can be set.

West Midlands Ambulance Service

Ms. Estelle Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the response time for 999 calls by the West Midlands ambulance service for the last five years in each district.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not held centrally. The hon. Member may wish to contact Sir James Ackers, the chairman of West Midlands regional health authority, for details.

Community Care

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received on the possible implications for the continued financial viability of residential drug and alcohol services of new community care arrangements after April 1993; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: The Department has received a number of representations following our decision to ring fence the whole of the community care special transitional grant. I have met the national voluntary organisations representing alcohol and drug misuse services, and with leading service providers. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is meeting representatives of the Alcohol and Drug Services Alliance today.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what method of algebra group data was used for calculating the amount of community care funding to be transferred to local authorities after April.

Mr. Yeo: The formula used and the assumptions made in calculating the amount of the transfer from social security are explained in the Department of Health's memorandum dated 13 November 1992. A copy is in the Library.

141. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will identify the make-up of the amount allocated for community care support and other service costs, for 1993-94, broken down into *(a)* costs arising from development of purchasing and contracting, *(b)* development of financial systems, *(c)* setting up of assessment and care management systems, *(d)* information technology, *(e)* the effect of alignment of charges, *(f)* inspection of small homes, *(g)* home care and *(h)* support to carers.

Mr. Yeo: The £140 million additional finance covers all the items listed except inspection of small homes, which was considered in the context of the overall personal social services settlement.

Renal Dialysis

Ms. Coffey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health pursuant to her answer of 23 November, *Official Report*, column 505, if she will introduce into the patients charter a specified time limit within which non-emergency renal patients on dialysis will be guaranteed the disconnect system.

Mr. Sackville: Whether and when disconnect dialysis is appropriate is a matter for clinical judgment and the resources available bearing in mind local health needs and priorities.

Limited List Prescribing

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received from the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry in connection with the changes which have been announced to the limited list prescribing system.

Dr. Mawhinney: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health met the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry on 19 November to discuss the implications of the autumn statement and the proposed changes to the selected list scheme.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement giving details of the changes which she has announced to the limited list system of drugs which may routinely be prescribed; what are the names of those individuals who are to serve upon the advisory committee which is to consider the changes in question; what new categories of products are to be considered for inclusion in the system; what are the reasons for including those categories; and if she will indicate the timetable by which she expects progress to be made on this subject.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer my hon. Friend to the replies I gave my hon. Friends the Members for Taunton (Mr. Nicholson) and for Wimbledon (Dr. Goodson-Wickes) on 24 November at column *589* and on 26 November at columns *808-9* respectively.

The categories listed were chosen because they covered a range of products at varying price levels and therefore offered scope for savings while enabling all real clinical needs to continue to be met.

The Advisory Committee on NHS Drugs will in future be asked to take into account in its recommendations in all therapeutic categories the purpose for which the drugs are normally used as well as the indications for which they have been licensed.

I expect the advisory committee to start reviewing the new categories early in 1993. I hope that changes in the list of non-prescribable drugs will be made before the end of that year.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to meet representatives of the pharmaceutical industry, the medical profession and patient representatives, in connection with her announced changes to the limited list prescribing system.

Dr. Mawhinney: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has already met the Association of British Pharmaceutical industry. Requests from other organisations to hold meetings about the selected list scheme will be considered in the normal way. I expect that in any case this issue will be on the agenda at many of the regular meetings which Ministers or the Department hold with professional and other organisations.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of the impact upon the British pharmaceutical industry, in terms of profitability, employment and product development, of the changes which have been announced to the limited list prescribing system.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) on 26 November at column *810*. The relative profitability of the United Kingdom pharmaceutical industry and decisions on product development depend on factors in both the United Kingdom and other key pharmaceutical markets. It is not possible to assess whether there will be any effect on employment in the United Kingdom pharmaceutical industry until decisions on individual products have been taken.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the effectiveness of the limited list prescribing system *(a)* in reducing the cost of drugs to the NHS and *(b)* in promoting improved patient care.

Dr. Mawhinney: In 1985-86 the selected list scheme saved £75 million on the drugs bill. It is not possible to make meaningful estimates for subsequent years but we have every reason to believe that significant savings continue to be made. Savings from the recently announced extension of the scheme will depend on the recommendations of the independent Advisory Committee on NHS Drugs. Drugs needed to meet all clinical needs will remain available on NHS prescription. Limiting the rate of growth of the drugs bill will ensure that the overall resources available to the NHS can be put to best use in order to provide the highest possible standards of patient care.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make it her policy to publish in the form of a consultation document the details of any changes which are to be made to the limited list prescribing system prior to bringing forward the necessary order to this House.

Dr. Mawhinney: We intend to follow the established procedures for amending the list of drugs which GPs cannot prescribe under the national health service. Recommendations on particular drugs are made by the Advisory Committee on NHS Drugs, which comprises doctors, dentists and pharmacists appointed after consultation with relevant professional organisations. The manufacturers concerned are able to submit representations to the committee before it makes its recommendations to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many national health service prescriptions were written for appetite suppressant medicines in 1990 and 1991; how many of these prescriptions were for pensioners; and which medicines for appetite suppression currently available will cease to be prescribable on the NHS as a result of new limited list regulations;

(2) how many national health service prescriptions were written for anti-diarrhoeal medicines in 1990 and 1991; how many of these prescriptions were for pensioners; and which medicines currently available for the treatment of diarrhoea will cease to be prescribable on the NHS as a result of new limited list regulations;

(3) how many national health service prescriptions were written for medicines acting on the skin in 1990 and 1991; how many of these prescriptions were for pensioners; and which medicines acting on the skin currently available will cease to be prescribable on the NHS as a result of new limited list regulations;

(4) how many national health service prescriptions were written for medicines acting on the ear and nose in 1990 and 1991; how many of these prescriptions were for pensioners; and which medicines currently available for the treatment of ear and nose condtions will cease to be prescribable on the NHS as a result of new limited list regulations;

(5) how many national health service prescriptions were written for medicines for the treatment of vaginal and vulval conditions in 1990 and 1991; how many of these prescriptions were for women aged over 60 years; and which medicines currently available for the treatment of vaginal and vulval conditions will cease to be prescribable on the NHS as a result of new limited list regulations;

(6) how many national health service prescriptions were written for contraceptives in 1990 and 1991; and which contraceptives currently available will cease to be prescribable on the NHS as a result of new limited list regulations;

(7) how many national health service prescriptions were written for allergic disorders in 1990 and 1991; how many of these prescriptions were for pensioners; and which medicines currently available for the treatment of allergic disorders will cease to be prescribable on the NHS as a result of new limited list regulations;

(8) how many national health service prescriptions were written for topical anti-rheumatics in 1990 and 1991; how many of these prescriptions were for pensioners; and which topical medicines currently available for the treatment of rheumatism will cease to be prescribable on the NHS as a result of new limited list regulations;

(9) how many national health service prescriptions were written for hypnotic and anxiolytic medicines in 1990 and 1991; how many of these prescriptions were for pensioners; and which hypnotic and anxiolytic medicines currently available will cease to be prescribable on the NHS as a result of new limited list regulations;

(10) how many national health service prescriptions were written for medicine used in the treatment of anaemia in 1990 and 1991; how many of these prescriptions were for pensioners; and which medicines currently available for the treatment of anaemia will cease to be prescribable on the NHS as a result of the new limited list regulations.

Dr. Mawhinney: Details of the prescriptions dispensed by chemists and appliance contractors in England in 1990 and 1991 for each of the categories of drug that will be added to the selected list scheme are shown in the table. Information on prescriptions issued to pensioners is not available for 1990. No decisions have been made on which drugs within each groups will cease to be prescribable on the national health service. Such decisions will be based on advice from the independent Advisory Committee on NHS Drugs.

Prescriptions dispensed by chemists and appliance contractors in England
(Prescriptions in thousands)

Group	*1990 total*[1]	*Pensioners*	*1991 total*[1]	*Pensioners*	*Pensioners as a percentage of total*
Appetite suppressants	358·0	[1]—	379·3	50·0	13·2
Anti-diarrhoeal	1,498·5	[1]—	1,377·6	480·2	34·9
Acting on the skin	25,280·8	[1]—	26,607·3	7,232·6	27·2

Group	1990 total[2]	Pensioners	1991 total[3]	Pensioners	Pensioners as a percentage of total
Ear and nose	5,590·8	[1]—	5,773·0	1,442·4	25·0
Vaginal and vulval	2,553·7	[1]—	2,414·2	355·8	14·7
Contraceptives	7,036·8	[1]—	7,118·1	—	—
Allergic disorders	4,901·1	[1]—	5,171·0	952·2	18·4
Anti-rheumatics	3,979·6	[1]—	4,394·9	2,501·8	56·9
Hypnotic and anxiolytic	17,634·1	[1]—	16,820·9	9,586·0	57·0
Anaemia	4,364·1	[1]—	4,229·0	1,875·4	44·3

[1] Not available.
[2] 1990 data are based on fees.
[3] 1991 data (new Prescription Cost Analysis) are based on items.

Prescription Budgets

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, further to her letter of 23 November to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne Central, if her projections for the indicative prescription budgets for 1992-93 include provision for *(a)* third wave and *(b)* other general practitioner fundholders; and what estimate she has made of the provision for those fundholders.

Dr. Mawhinney: The third wave of the fund holding scheme is not due to start until April 1993. Information for third wave fund holders is therefore unavailable. Information about existing fund holders has been placed in the Library.

Council Tax

Ms. Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of the effect on the cost of the community care reforms of the proposal to levy council tax on nursing and residential care homes.

Mr. Yeo: Residents and patients in residential care and nursing homes will not be counted towards the personal element of the council tax. Where a home has no resident staff, home owners will be required to pay only the property element. This will reduce the bill by 50 per cent. They are likely also to be able to claim further reductions in respect of disabled residents and should in addition benefit from the transitional relief scheme. The cost to care homes and nursing homes is therefore likely to be small and there should be no significant effect on the cost of the community care reforms.

Payments and Services (West Midlands)

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what were the rules governing payments and levies given to Financial Information Project Systems Ltd by the West Midlands regional health authority.

Dr. Mawhinney: Directions to health authorities on the maintenance of systems of sound financial control are contained in health circular HC(91)25. A copy is in the Library. The question of payments to Financial Information Project Systems Ltd is currently under investigation.

Residential Care

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what allowance has been made for meeting the shortfall between benefits and charges for residential care in the arrangements for community care funding with effect from April.

Mr. Yeo: The £140 million additional finance for community care above the £399 million transfer from social security will ensure that all authorities will be able to purchase appropriate care for people under their new responsibilities. The cost of care to individual authorities will depend on their success in obtaining good contract terms with care homes and in providing non residential services for people who could be better cared for at home.

AIDS

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what were the levels of social services specific grant for the years 1991-92 and 1992-93 for AIDS/HIV; how many cases of *(a)* people with AIDS and *(b)* people with HIV were reported in each of the years 1990-91 and 1991-92; and what are the current estimates for 1992-93 and 1993-94;

(2) if she will make a statement on the level of social services specific grant for AIDS/HIV for 1993-94.

Mr. Sackville: The level of AIDS/HIV specific grant for 1991-92 was £10·2 million and for 1992-93 £15·3 million. For 1993-94 the grant will be £12·4 million. The number of AIDS cases reported and HIV infection reports for England and Wales are as follows:

	AIDS	HIV infection reports
1990-91	1,226	2,179
1991-92	1,260	2,368
1992-93	[1]756	[1]1,298

[1] First 6 months only.

The latest predictions are for the period to the end of 1993 and are for AIDS cases only. For 1992-93 the planning projection after adjustments for reporting delay and under-reporting is 2,150 AIDS cases.

Citizens Charter

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she expects to introduce a citizens charter for carers and users of personal social services.

Mr. Yeo: We have no plans to do so at present. Our community care reforms are fully consistent with the principles on which the citizens charter rests. They set new standards in user and carer involvement in the assessment of individual need; they promote choice; and they ensure users have access to information and the right to complain.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 1 December 1992

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Legal Aid

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what is the estimate of his Department of the numbers of adults who *(a)* are at present liable to pay a contribution for civil legal aid and *(b)* are not at present liable to pay a contribution towards the cost of civil legal aid but would become so under the Lord Chancellor's proposals.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Information on eligibility for legal aid is available only on the basis of percentages of households. We estimate that about 23 per cent. of households are currently eligible for civil legal aid with a contribution. The proportion of households which are not at present liable to pay a contribution but will become so under the changes recently announced is estimated at 14 per cent.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Pakistan

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action he plans to take to persuade the Pakistani authorities to review the death sentence for blasphemy passed on the Christian, Gul Masih; and what representations he has made to the Pakistani Government concerning the treatment of religious minorities in Pakistan.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have been carefully monitoring the position of all minorities in Pakistan, including Christians, for some time. We have regularly made our concerns known to the Pakistan Government, most recently on 30 November with the Pakistan Foreign Secretary, Shaharyar Khan. We understand that the case of Mr. Gul Masih has gone to appeal.

Bosnia

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the Government first became aware of aircraft flying in logistical or any other support of combat forces in the air exclusion zone over Bosnia-Herzegovina before 16 November.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Since the establishment of air and ground-based observation, we have become aware of reports of flights by military aircraft which have not been approved by the United Nations protection force. We have had no confirmation of the purpose of such flights, or evidence that the aircraft were used in combat missions.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his oral answer to the hon. Member for Western Isles on 25 November, *Official Report*, column 854, to what extent the ban on military flights imposed by United Nations resolutions 781 and 786 is limited to aircraft flying combat missions; and to what extent it extends to any flights with a military purpose, with the exceptions of the United Nations protection force flights or other flights in support of United Nations operations or resolutions.

Mr. Garel-Jones: United Nations Security Council resolutions 781 and 786 ban military flights in the airspace above Bosnia-Herzegovina. The ban does not apply to UNPROFOR flights or to other flights in support of United Nations operations, including humanitarian assistance.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what definition he uses of aircraft flying combat missions in his assessment of contraventions of the exclusion zone over Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The United Nations protection force has produced guidelines which define a military flight for the purposes of United Nations Security Council resolutions 781 and 786 as any flight by a fixed-wing or rotary aircraft that has a military purpose. This excludes flights with a humanitarian purpose, or which are judged by UNPROFOR to be in the pursuance of the peace process.

We have no confirmed reports of aircraft being involved in combat activity over Bosnia-Herzegovina since 13 October.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will now make it his policy in the Security Council of the United Nations to press for further measures necessary to enforce the ban on military flights in the airspace of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as provided for in resolution 786.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The United Nations Security Council made clear in resolution 786 its determination to consider urgently further measures necessary to enforce the ban on military flights over Bosnia-Herzegovina in the case of farther violations reported to it.

Research Projects

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 19 October, *Official Report*, column *27*, how many scientists working on these projects had to sign the Official Secrets Acts or agree to any restrictions on publication or discussion of the project; and how many projects in universities and polytechnics which were funded by the Government Communications Headquarters were signed in each year since 1979.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Five scientists working on the projects listed in my answer of 19 October have signed the Official Secrets Act. The research commissioned by GCHQ is confined to unclassified subjects, as stated in my answer of 29 June, but there are clearly benefits to GCHQ to be able to discuss the context in which the research will be useful to them, and this of necessity involves revealing classified information to some of those involved.

The numbers of research contracts signed in each year since 1979 are as follows:

Institutions	Number of contracts
1979	
University of Birmingham	1
University of Surrey	1
1980	
Loughborough University of Technology	1
1981	
University of Sheffield	2
1982	
University of Sheffield	1
University of Surrey	3
University of York	2
1983	
University of Leicester	2
University of York	1
1984	
University of Sheffield	1
1985	
Cheltenham and Gloucester College of Higher Education	1
University of Leicester	1
Plymouth Polytechnic	1
1986	
Imperial College, London	1
University of York	1
Cheltenham and Gloucester College of Higher Education	1
University of Leicester	1
University of Manchester	1
1987	
Plymouth Polytechnic	1
University of Leicester	1
Cheltenham and Gloucester College of Higher Education	1
1988	
Plymouth Polytechnic	2
1989	
Cambridge University	1
1990	
University of Leicester	1
1991	
University of Leicester	3
University of York	1
Oxford University	1
1992	
University of York	2
Cheltenham and Gloucester College of Higher Education	1

I have asked GCHQ to confirm the titles and cost of the projects referred to above and will write to the hon. Member when I have the full list.

During research for this question, a further contract has come to light which should have been included in my earlier answer. The contract signed in 1990 with the university of Leicester was worth £1,700. This should be added to the sum given in my answer of 29 June to give a total of £528,200. The contract was for testing and integration of DF subsystems.

Correspondence

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the average time taken by the Ministers in his Department, including himself, to answer letters from hon. Members, in each of the first three quarters of 1992, measuring the time from the receipt of the letter to the dispatch of the substantive reply.

Mr. Goodlad: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Gower (Mr. Wardell) on 3 November, at col 173.

Running Costs

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress he has made in achieving the target of a reduction of 1·5 per cent. in his Department's running costs for the present financial year, in the first half of this financial year; and what specifically has been saved, by what means and in what areas of his responsibility.

Mr. Goodlad: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office diplomatic and aid (Overseas Development Administration) Wings are expected to achieve efficiency savings of 2·3 per cent. and 2·74 per cent. respectively on running costs for 1992-93, thus exceeding the minimum target of 1·5 per cent.

The target areas for savings include relocation, staff reductions, overseas security, overseas estate, energy efficiency, training, travel, communications and information systems.

Neo-Nazi Activities

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make representations to the Governments of the former Soviet Union concerning neo-Nazi and extreme right-wing activities in these countries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We look to all countries of the former Soviet Union to live up to their obligations and commitments in respect of human rights, including the rights of ethnic and religious minorities. We use appropriate opportunities to express to their Governments our concern about the activities of extremist groupings of all persuasions.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make representations to the Governments of Germany, Spain, and France concerning neo-nazi activities in those countries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Her Majesty's Government are very alert to the rise in attacks against foreigners in Europe. So are the Governments of Germany, France and Spain. The European Council has twice issued declarations expressing its condemnation of racism and xenophobia: at Dublin in June 1990 and at Maastricht in December 1991. The European Parliament also issued resolutions on the subject during its plenary sessions in March and November this year. The problem is being addressed both at the European and national level.

Acquired Rights Directive

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what estimate he has made of the effects of the acquired rights directive on *(a)* services which his Departments contracts out and *(b)* services which he plans to contract out in the future; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office is fully aware of its obligation to take account of the effects of the Transfer of Undertaking (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 (TUPE), the British law based on the acquired rights directive, and of the directive itself, when contracting out any services, but the detailed implications have to be assessed in each particular case; it is not possible to generalise.

European Union

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs under what circumstances and constitutional procedures he expects to deposit instruments of ratification in respect of titles I, V and VI of the treaty on European union with the President of the Italian Republic as required by that treaty.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The United Kingdom's instrument of ratification will be deposited with the Italian Government once we have given effect in United Kingdom law to those provisions of the treaty of European union which amend the European Community treaties previously enacted here. The instrument of ratification will cover all titles of the treaty on European union.

Iraq

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what responses have been made to requests and reports received from the United Nations special commission of inspection in Iraq or its executive chairman, Rolf Ekeus; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding reply, 26 November]:* The Government have made a significant contribution to the work of the United Nations special commission on Iraq as it seeks to implement relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions. In response to UNSCOM's requests, we have supplied personnel for the UNSCOM inspection teams and some specialised equipment. It is not our practice to comment in detail on the information given to us by UNSCOM.

TRANSPORT

Aviation

Mr. Deva: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what conclusions he has reached on the case for compulsory third party insurance in aviation, in the light of the single market in aviation.

Mr. Norris: The EC licensing regulation (council regulation (EEC) No. 2407/92 of 23 July 1992), which is part of the single market in aviation, introduces from 1 January 1993 a statutory requirement for air carriers to hold insurance to cover liability in case of accidents in respect of passengers, luggage, cargo, mail and third parties. Any air transport operator established within the European Community and operating commercially will, with minor exceptions, be subject to this requirement as a condition of holding the new operating licence—which all Community air carriers will need to have.

My Department had already been examining the case for a general scheme, within the United Kingdom only, of compulsory third party insurance for all United Kingdom operators and pilots. In the light of consultation with the Civil Aviation Authority and the insurance industry (and in the light of the new EC requirement), my officials have found no reason to doubt that the great majority of United Kingdom operators and pilots do already hold insurance in respect of third parties. Accordingly, taking into account the new EC requirement, I see no reason to add to bureaucracy and administrative costs by introducing a separate United Kingdom scheme.

Correspondence

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the average time taken by the Ministers in his Department, including himself, to answer letters from hon. Members, in each of the first three quarters of 1992, measuring the time from the receipt of the letter to the dispatch of the substantive reply.

Mr. Norris: The average time taken by Ministers in the Department of Transport, including the Secretary of State, to answer letters from hon. Members, in each of the first three quarters of 1992, measuring the time from the receipt of the letter to the despatch of the substantive reply is as follows:

1 January—31 March—average response time = 14·93 working days.

1 April—30 June—average response time = 15·98 working days.

1 July—30 September—average response time = 14·83 working days.

The target for ministerial correspondence in the Department of transport from letter in to reply out is 15 working days or less.

Running Costs

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress he has made in achieving the target of a reduction of 1·5 per cent. in his Department's running costs for the present financial year, in the first half of this financial year; and what specifically has been saved, by what means and in what areas of his responsibility.

Mr. Norris: My Department's running costs budget for financial year 1992-93 contains planned savings significantly in excess of 1·5 per cent.

The review of running costs at the mid-point of the financial year showed that the Department was within budget. The forecast outturn for the full year is also forecast to be within budget.

The savings initiatives are wide-ranging and varied. They include the continued equipment of most administrative staff with word processors, which has allowed the closure of a typing pool and a reduction in the number of typists, the computerisation of traffic area offices and a reduction in their number from eleven to eight, the contracting out of stationery and publications, energy conservation measures, and reductions in accommodation

costs, as well as initiatives across the whole Department at working level to improve the effectiveness with which all resources are used.

Further details of the efficiency targets set by my Department are given in the departmental management plan 1992-95, a copy of which is in the House of Commons Library.

Red Routes

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much money has been allocated to the London boroughs of *(a)* Haringey, *(b)* Islington and *(c)* Tower Hamlets for work related to red routes since these were introduced.

Mr. Norris: The latest estimates of expenditure on approved works for the red route pilot scheme are as follows:

	£
(a) Haringey	778,000
(b) Islington	1,111,000
(c) Tower Hamlets	1,490,000

A further £526,000 has been provided for works in Hackney.

Rail Privatisation

Sir Keith Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list all the individuals and organisations he has consulted over his Department's current rail privatisation proposals.

Mr. Freeman: Many individuals and organisations have been consulted, and many others have volunteered their views. They include the British Railways Board, railway trade unions, local authorities, rail user consultative committees and other consumer groups, the CBI, commercial enterprises and financial institutions.

Road Building

Mr. Peter Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much his Department has spent in each of the last five years on new road building; if he will give the figures for each region; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The Department of Transport has spent £4·8 billion on the new construction of motorways and trunk roads in England in the period 1987-88 to 1991-92, broken down as follows:

	£ million
1987-88	557
1988-89	725
1989-90	955
1990-91	1,280
1991-92	1,302
Total	4,818

The table sets out the expenditure by region.

In real terms (GDP deflated), expenditure rose 91 per cent. over the five years; investment in new roads has increased further to £1,446 million in 1992-93, and will rise to the record level of £1,496 million by 1994-95. This funding is being used to make excellent progress with the road programme; since 1987-88 we have completed 604 miles of new motorway and trunk roads, including 72 bypasses.

Trunk roads and motorways in England: new construction expenditure (cash)

£ million

Transport Regions	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*5 year Total*
Eastern	79·7	61·8	69·6	209·0	240·5	660·6
South Eastern	68·6	121·0	214·5	313·0	320·3	1,037·4
North Western	56·1	71·4	63·9	102·0	100·0	393·3
West Midlands	85·0	162·3	213·5	165·5	193·0	819·3
Yorkshire and Humberside	56·1	39·4	30·2	41·3	48·7	215·7
South Western	93·6	103·3	92·2	119·4	122·8	531·3
East Midlands	29·7	73·7	88·0	152·8	100·7	444·9
Northern	28·9	39·1	58·1	55·3	34·4	215·8
London	59·1	53·0	124·5	121·4	141·6	499·6
Total (Cash)	556·8	725·0	954·5	1,279·5	1,302·0	4,817·9
Total (GDP deflated constant 1992-93 prices)	708·9	884·7	1,115·9	1,411·0	1,355·1	5,475·7

A27 (Improvements)

Mr. Higgins: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will estimate the amount which would be payable under the Compulsory Purchase Act 1965 if his preferred route for the A27 Worthing-Lancing improvements scheme went ahead; and what is the corresponding amount for the bypass north of Cissbury ring.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The estimated sums payable under the Compulsory Purchase Act 1965 are £22·84 million for the published route and £837,000 for the route north of Cissbury ring at current prices. These sums are included in the "land cost" estimates shown in the recently published brochure for the A27 Worthing-Lancing scheme.

Federation of Civil Engineering Contractors

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent representation his Department has received from the Federation of Civil Engineering Contractors.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: My right hon. Friend has not received any representations recently from the Federation of Civil Engineering Contractors, although it did send him a copy of its letter of 1 October to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor about the importance of investment in transport infrastructure. We have had a number of useful

discussions with the federation this year, and there is a regular dialogue with the Department which has enabled a helpful exchange of views on various matters.

Main Line Rail Services

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will establish a target date by which time all major freight and passenger ports and airports will be served by a main line railway.

Mr. Freeman: No. The provision of railway infrastructure is a matter for the British Railways Board.

Out of Town Shopping

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what research has been conducted by his Department into the effect of the development of out of town shopping facilities on the level of car journeys undertaken.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: There are two research projects currently in hand: *(a)* a series of traffic surveys on trip attraction rates at different sites for a variety of land uses, including retailing, in London and the south-east; and *(b)* a joint DOE/DOT commission to investigate the relationship between land use and trip generation, and identify measures to reduce the need to travel.

Private Sidings and Rail Schemes

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to amend the criteria for section 8 payments for developing private sidings and rail schemes by *(a)* broadening the environmental criteria referred to to include motorways and trunk-roads and take account of congestion, *(b)* increasing the lorry sensitive mile value, *(c)* reducing the minimum qualifying period for asset use *(d)* the widening of the scheme to include intermodal operations.

Mr. Freeman: The criteria for the payment of freight facilities grants were broadened last year and we are continuing to keep their effectiveness under review. The grants scheme will require amendment in due course to reflect the privatisation and liberalisation of rail freight.

Combined transport operations are eligible for grant.

Traffic Calming

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the effect of traffic calming measures on the level of traffic on nearby roads.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Traffic calming measures can have the effect of displacing traffic onto nearby roads. We have advised highway authorities that traffic calming schemes need to be developed within an overall strategy for the roads in their areas.

The Department, through the Transport Research Laboratory, has studied some 60 traffic calming schemes introduced by local authorities. A preliminary assessment indicates that there has not been an increase in accidents on the surrounding road network.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will review his Department's guidelines for local highways authorities on traffic calming measures.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Advice and guidance on traffic calming is kept under review and brought up to date in the light of experience, changes in the law and the results of research.

My Department is currently working on traffic calming regulations, under provisions of the Traffic Calming Act 1992. We aim to undertake a public consultation soon and lay regulations before the House in the new year.

Motoring Campaigns

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what publicity campaigns have been launched by his Department during 1991 and to date in 1992 highlighting *(a)* the importance of proper car maintenance, *(b)* reduction of speed for (i) cars and (ii) lorries, *(c)* acceleration and braking and *(d)* encouragement of public transport usage; and what is the amount allocated to each individual campaign.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: During 1991 and 1992 the Department launched two major television advertising campaigns (with the slogan "Kill your speed, not a child") aimed at the reduction of driving speed in residential areas. The amounts allocated to this campaign were £1·2 million in 1991 and £2·3 million in 1992.

A number of campaigns launched in 1991 and 1992 have addressed issues raised by the hon. Member, for example:

April 1991
Travel Safely by Public Transport.
June 1991
Transport and the Environment. Included information on benefits of public transport.
August 1991
Safer, Cleaner, Wiser Driving. Leaflet issued with all vehicle licence renewals for 12 months. Included advice on maintenance.
September 1991
Advice on new Road Traffic Act provisions. Leaflet issued with vehicle licence renewals for 12 months. Included advice about unroadworthy vehicles.
June 1992
Blunt Instrument public service information film for television. Encourages reduction of driving speed in residential areas.
July 1992
Easy Ways to Save Fuel. Leaflet issued with vehicle licence renewals for 12 months. Includes advice on braking and accelerating and on use of public transport.

Many of these initiatives form part of wider campaigns covering a number of related issues, and it is not possible to provide costs in the form requested by the hon. Member.

A12 Dualling (Suffolk)

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his latest estimate of the cost of dualling the A12 in Suffolk, including a new crossing at Lake Lothing; and if he wil make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 30 November 1992]:* The cost of dualling the A12 in Suffolk is currently estimated to be £197 million. This figure includes £82 million for the Lowestoft relief road and second harbour crossing.

Speed Limits

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects the changes he has announced on speed limits to be in operation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 30 November 1992]*: A draft order was laid before the House on 23 November, seeking to remove the requirement for local authorities to obtain the Department's consent before establishing a speed limit on a principal road. This is subject to affirmative resolution of both Houses but I hope to be in a position to make the order by January 1993.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Guildford Four

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what documents the security services have disclosed to Sir John May's inquiry into the Guildford Four convictions and on what terms.

Mr. Jack: None.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what evidence his Department has supplied to Sir John May's inquiry into the Guildford four convictions; and on what terms.

Mr. Jack: We provided Sir John May with documents relating to the consideration given by the Home Office to representations which were made about the safety of the convictions of the Guildford Four. These documents were supplied to Sir John on a confidential basis and with his understanding and agreement that he would discuss with us any question of their further use which might arise in the course of his inquiry.

Windsor Castle

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has regarding advice given to authorities responsible to Windsor castle on fire safety precautions.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The royal household is responsible for providing suitable fire safety precautions for Windsor castle. In doing so they may seek advice from whatever sources they consider to be most appropriate.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from Berkshire fire brigade on the advice offered to the authorities at Windsor castle in respect of fire safety precautions, specifying the nature of the recommendations and the dates upon which they were made.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for fire safety at Windsor castle and at all occupied royal residences has been vested in the royal household since 1 April 1991. The royal household may seek advice from any source. Her Majesty's chief inspector of fire services has asked for a full report on the fire from the chief officer of the Royal Berkshire fire and rescue service, which will include details of any fire safety advice provided by his brigade.

Car Boot Sales

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the connection between car boot sales and burglary.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Clearly there may be instances of car boot sales being used to dispose of stolen property. However, there is no evidence that the majority of traders at car boot sales are anything other than law abiding citizens.

May Inquiry

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the cost so far of Sir John May's inquiry into the Guildford and Woolwich pub bombings.

Mr. Jack: Sir John May's inquiry was established in October 1989. Up to the end of October 1992, the inquiry had incurred expenditure of £1,357,000. Most of this expenditure relates to the Maguire case. The amount that can be attributed to the inquiry into the Guildford and Woolwich convictions can be identified only at disproportionate cost.

National Identification Bureau

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the functions of the National Identification Bureau; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The National Identification Bureau provides police forces with confirmation of the identity of arrested persons through the matching of sets of fingerprints; supplies details of arrested and convicted persons for prosecution, investigative and other purposes; maintains, to these ends, the national collections of fingerprints and criminal records; operates a national index of selected criminal methods; circulates details of wanted persons to forces through the *Police Gazette*; and facilitates the exercise by members of the public of their rights of subject access to the police national computer under the Data Protection Act 1984.

Correspondence

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the averge time taken by the Ministers in his Department, including himself, to answer letters from hon. Members, in each of the first three quarters of 1992, measuring the time from the receipt of the letter to the dispatch of the substantive reply.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The figures for the period in question are not currently available in the form requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. New monitoring arrangements came into effect on 1 October 1992 and it is my intention to make available in the *Official Report*, early next year, performance figures showing the volume of ministerial correspondence from hon. Members in 1992, the targets set for reply and the percentage of replies sent within target.

Running Costs

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress he has made in achieving the target of a reduction of 1·5 per cent. in his Department's running costs for the present financial year, in the first half of this financial year; and what specifically has been saved by what means and in what areas of his responsibility.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The planned efficiency saving on Home Office running costs for the present financial year is £24·7 million, or 1·7 per cent. of the estimated outturn on

running costs. The Home Office has already made efficiency savings of £14·7 million on its running costs in the first half of 1992-93. Details of these savings are set out in the table.

Home Office: Running cost efficiency savings for the first half of 1992-93 financial year

Department	*1991-92 (first half) running cost efficiency savings (£k)*	*Achieved through*
Prison service	6,056	Increased manpower productivity.
Police department	7,000	Rationalisation of maintenance resources and savings from relocation in the Directorate of Telecommunications, civilianisation in District Training Centres and economies of scale in the Police National Computer Organisation.
Criminal and research and statistics departments	101	Productivity gains in the Attendance Centre Network, computerisation of drugs related activities and the more effective use of human and computer resources in statistical analysis.
Immigration and nationality department	35	Relocation savings and productivity gains in nationality and citizenship activities.
Finance department	263	Productivity savings in Budget Support Group and improvements in purchasing and supply management in the Home Office Procurement Unit.
Fire department	377	Contracting out of maintenance and storage of the Emergency Fire Service and staff efficiency savings.
Establishment department	536	Productivity savings in Personnel Management Division and computerisation and increased productivity at ED5 (computers and payroll).
Forensic science service	200	Improved caseworking productivity.
Passport agency	120	Improved purchasing methods and better stock control.
Total Home Office running cost efficiency savings	14,688	

Acquired Rights Directive

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what estimate he has made of the effects of the acquired rights directive on *(a)* services his Department contracts out and *(b)* services he plans to contract out in the future; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The possible effects of relevant employment legislation have been taken into account in any consideration of the contracting out of my Department's services.

The main functions to be market-tested to September 1993 were published in the citizens charter White Paper (Cm 2101) on 25 November 1992. The impact of the acquired rights directive and Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 will be fully taken into account, and legal opinion sought on a case-by-case basis.

Prison Education

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how he intends to ensure quality and high standards in the delivery of prison education.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Government consider that competition is the best guarantee of quality and value for money. The report from the Education, Science and Arts Committee on prison education in 1990/91 (HC 311) and reports from Her Majesty's chief inspector of prisons have commented that, under the present arrangements, the quality of education provision varies considerably between different establishments. Through more detailed specification of requirements, competition and more rigorous monitoring, the aim is to ensure that, in future, education programmes delivered to prisoners are of a consistently high quality.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to re-organise the delivery of the prison education service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer the hon. Member to the reply which I gave to the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Milburn) on 27 October at column 581-2. Invitations to tender for the future provision of educational services in prisons and young offender institutions were issued on 30 October and are due for return on 7 December.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what estimates he has made of the effects of the acquired rights directive on his plans to put prison education out to competitive tendering.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The legal advice received by the prison service is that, where there is a transfer of an undertaking for the purposes of the acquired rights directive and the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981, then the directive will apply. The directive does not apply where there is not a transfer of an undertaking. Competitive tendering for the future provision of education services in a prison establishment would not necessarily lead to such a transfer.

Wolds Remand Centre

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners at the Wolds remand centre are segregated under rule 43 or any similar arrangements.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: At unlock on 27 November 1992, there were five prisoners segregated under rule 43 for good order and discipline. A further 21 were segregated under the same rule at their own request.

Sea Defence

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about the future of the sea defence and river flooding early warning siren from April 1993.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The obsolete national air raid warning siren network is to be closed as soon as possible. My officials have approached those local authorities which are understood to use the siren system for flood warning purposes and have asked them whether they wish to retain the equipment for such future use and to be responsible for its upkeep. Arrangements will be made to effect retention where it is sought.

Shops Act

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his statement of 26 November relating to the Shops Act 1950—*Official Report*, columns 997-98—if he will set out the grounds on which he considers the Shops Act 1950 to be in abeyance; and if he will make a statement on the consequences for local authorities.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Pending the decision of the European Court, there is doubt whether the provisions for Sunday trading in the Shops Act 1950 are consistent with Community law, but my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary made it clear to the House on 26 November that, as my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General explained to the House on 11 May at columns 367-68, local authorities can still issue summonses and apply for interim injunctions against retailers. Local authorities must decide for themselves what action to take.

Fire Precautions (Places of Work) Regulations

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has completed his consideration of comments on the proposals for the Fire Precautions (Places of Work) Regulations 1992; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The consultation process drew an excellent response, and I am grateful to all those who contributed to it. While many who responded were generally content, some valid criticisms did emerge. It was also evident that the possible impact of the regulations had in many cases been misunderstood.

I intend, therefore, to give further and fresh consideration to the content of the draft regulations. We will not now introduce them on 1 January 1993 as originally planned. My aim will be to simplify the regulations and to limit their scope in order to reduce unnecessary burdens on business and those charged with enforcement responsibilities. The associated technical guidance will be redrafted in order to clarify our intentions. It will also be supplemented by a simplified guide for the owners of small businesses.

I shall bring forward fresh proposals for consultations in due course.

Probation

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the projected numbers of persons who will be supervised by the probation service on licence after release from custody for each of the next three years.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 26 November 1992]:* Estimates based on the latest prison projections will be produced in the new year.

Fire Regulations

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what fire regulations are imposed on *(a)* English stately homes which are open to the public and *(b)* to Windsor castle.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Under the Fire Precautions Act 1971, the use of premises or parts of premises as an office, shop, factory, railway premises, hotel or boarding house where the numbers of people involved are above certain minima may require a fire certificate. Any part of a stately home or of Windsor castle that falls within these categories may therefore be subject to the provisions of the 1971 Act.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Natural Resources Institute

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 6 November, *Official Report*, columns *426-27*, what has been the cost to the Exchequer of the chief executive of the Natural Resources Institute's visit to Wageningen, Netherlands on 8 May.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Natural Resources Institute under its chief executive, Mr. Anthony Beattie. A copy of his reply is attached.

Letter from Anthony Beattie to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 27 November 1992:

Lady Chalker has asked me to reply to your Parliamentary Question about my visit to Wageningen last May.

The visit was combined with one to Amsterdam in connection with NRI's participation in the European Consortium for Agricultural Research in the Tropics. The additional costs associated with the visit to the Centre for Tropical Agriculture in Wageningen were £113·97.

In my letter to you of 28 October I gave the date of my visit to Wageningen as 8 May. This should have read 13 May, an error for which I apologise.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Windsor Castle

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what part of the Chester tower at Windsor castle has been open to the public; and on what occasions this has occurred over the past five years.

Mr. Brooke: The Chester tower is not open to the public. It comprises a small number of state rooms which are used for state occasions only, together with office and staff accommodation.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what insurance against fire loss or damage exists in relation to the fabric of Windsor castle and the furnishings and artefacts therein.

Mr. Brooke *[holding answer 30 November]:* The fabric of the occupied royal palaces has never been insured since it is almost impossible to put a value on such buildings. Where damage occurs, the cost of repairs is met from the annual works programme funded by my Department. The Government bear insurance risks themselves, since it is far more economic to do this than to pay annual premiums on Crown property.

Items in the royal collection are insured against damage but not loss. Other contents are insured.

Hampton Court Fire

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what help was offered to the royal household to meet the cost of additional or alternative fire precautions to Windsor castle, following the fire at Hampton Court and the subsequent publication of the report of the inquiry into that fire.

Mr. Brooke: There have been significant increases in resources for the royal household works programme in recent years to provide for fire prevention programmes at Windsor castle and the other royal residences. The total cost of the programme for rewiring and other works at Windsor castle has been £20 million, including a substantial amount for fire protection.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what advice was tendered to the royal household following the fire at Hampton Court and the subsequent publication of the report of the inquiry into that fire.

Mr. Brooke: The royal household received advice on fire safety from PSA after the Hampton Court fire, and that advice was fully incorporated into the designing of works projects at Windsor castle and other royal residences. The household now employs its own fire consultants.

Correspondence

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what was the average time taken by the Ministers in his Department, including himself, to answer letters from hon. Members, in each of the first three quarters of 1992, measuring the time from the receipt of the letter to the dispatch of the substantive reply.

Mr. Brooke: As my Department was established in April 1992, I can supply estimates of the time taken to respond to hon. Members' letters for the second and third quarters of 1992. The average was approximately 16 working days in the second quarter and 17 working days in the third.

Accounts (Confidentiality)

Mr. Fabricant: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will bring forward legislation to prohibit the offering by newspapers of financial inducements to staff of banks and credit card companies to divulge confidential information about customers' accounts.

Mr. Brooke: I shall consider what, if any, action needs to be taken when I have received and studied Sir David Calcutt's report on press self-regulation. Meanwhile, I have no plans for legislation.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Economic and Monetary Union

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of when the United Kingdom will meet the convergence criteria for EMU.

Mr. Nelson: The Government are determined to ensure that the United Kingdom economy is able to meet the convergence criteria so that the United Kingdom can choose whether or not to move to the third stage of EMU.

Company Cars

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will bring forward proposals to treat all company cars and company car parking provision as income for taxable purposes.

Mr. Dorrell: Employees are already taxed on the benefit of cars made available for private use by employers. Car parking provided by employers for employees was exempted from tax as a benefit in the Finance Act 1988.

Car Tax

Mr. Mills: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much revenue was received from special car tax in 1990-91 and 1991-92; and what is his estimate for 1992-93.

Sir John Cope: Car tax raised £1·5 billion in 1990-91 and £1·2 billion in 1991-92. Following the reduction in the rate from 10 per cent. to 5 per cent. in the 1992 Budget, the yield for 1992-93 was estimated to be £0·7 billion. This forecast was revised down to £0·6 billion prior to the autumn statement, reflecting depressed car sales. Following abolition of the tax with effect from 12 November, this estimate has been revised to £0·5 billion.

Charities

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will bring forward proposals to exempt charities from VAT.

Sir John Cope: I have no plans to add to the existing wide range of VAT reliefs already in place for charities and the voluntary sector.

Maastricht Treaty

Mr. Duncan-Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans Her Majesty's Government have to seek amendment of the Maastricht treaty so as to alter the dates for commencement of stages two and three of economic and monetary union.

Mr. Nelson: We have no such plans to do so.

Civil Servants

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many civil servants are currently employed by his Department *(a)* in London and *(b)* elsewhere.

Mr. Nelson: There are 1,350 in London and 640 elsewhere, based on staff in post at 1 November 1992.

Correspondence

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the average time taken by the Ministers in his Department, including himself, to answer letters from hon. Members, in each of the first three quarters of 1992, measuring the time from the receipt of the letter to the dispatch of the substantive reply.

Sir John Cope: The average number of working days between a letter being received and the dispatch of the reply was:

Letters posted	*Number*	*Average working days*
Q1	4,409	15
Q2	1,126	17
Q3	3,332	22

From November 1992, new targets were introduced for the dispatch of replies to letters from hon. Members:

Letters for ministerial reply on matters concerning Her Majesty's Treasury: reply to be posted within 15 working days;

Letters for ministerial reply on matters concerning other Chancellor's Departments, including Inland Revenue and Her Majesty's Customs and Excise: reply to be posted within 18 working days;

Letters for ministerial reply on matters requiring a report from a local Inland Revenue tax office: reply to be posted within 23 working days.

Running Costs

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what progress he has made in achieving the target of a reduction of 1·5 per cent. in his Department's running costs for the present financial year, in the first half of this financial year; and what specifically has been saved, by what means and in what areas of his responsibility.

Mr. Nelson: The 1992-93 running costs limit for the Treasury already takes account of planned efficiency savings of 1·6 per cent. of some £0·9 million. The main areas for efficiency savings are staff savings on support services and improved purchasing procedure. Savings in the year to date on the purchase of a wide range of goods and services amount to some £420,000.

Premium Bonds

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what criteria he used in proposing to increase the minimum purchase by parents, guardians, or grandparents of premium bonds for children; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson: The minimum purchase level of national savings products is kept under review. The minimum purchase level for premium bonds was raised to £100 in July 1989, except for purchases on behalf of children, which remained at £10. I have decided that, given the need to achieve running costs savings in the 1992 public expenditure survey, these thresholds should be brought into line.

National Savings

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what criteria he used in proposing to increase the minimum for each deposit into ordinary account with national savings, including the amount required to open an account; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson: The minimum deposit level of national savings products is kept under review. Since each deposit costs the same to administer, irrespective of the amount involved, small transactions are disproportionately expensive. Given the need to achieve running costs savings in the 1992 public expenditure survey, I therefore decided that the minimum deposit should be increased from £5 to £10.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what criteria he used in proposing to increase the minimum for each deposit into an investment account with national savings, including the amount required to open an account; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson: The minimum deposit level of national savings products is kept under review. Since each deposit costs the same to administer, irrespective of the amount involved, small transactions are disproportionately expensive. Given the need to achieve running costs savings in the 1992 public expenditure survey, I therefore decided that the minimum deposit should be increased from £5 to £20.

Private Health Care

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what element of private health care provision falls within the public sector borrowing requirement where *(a)* public sector land or property is used, *(b)* tax relief is provided on contributions, *(c)* private insurance is offered as an alternative to pay in public sector employment and *(d)* public sector contracts are purchased from private sector provider units; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: *(a)* None; *(b)* tax relief increases the PSBR; *(c)* the cost of obtaining private insurance would increase the PSBR, offset to the extent that pay is lower than otherwise; *(d)* the contract is funded from the expenditure provision for the NHS. This is part of public expenditure which affects the PSBR.

Hospital Trusts

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to exempt hospital trusts from inclusion in calculations in compiling the public sector borrowing requirement; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: None.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to exempt hospital trusts from regulations on capital expenditure applied to directly managed units; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: None.

Pleasure Craft

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what were the recommendations agreed this week on value-added tax on the import of pleasure craft; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope: Proposals by the EC Commission about VAT on pleasure craft currently under temporary importation arrangements are still under discussion in the Council as part of the simplification directive. I will write to the hon. Member with details when the proposal is adopted.

Leasing Agreements (NHS)

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer in what way the relaxation of leasing agreements will be applied to the provision of equipment or materials within the national health service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: Provided that the great majority of the risk stays with the private sector, the capital value of the leased asset will not count against the health authority's allocation or trust's external financing limits. In the past this provision has been restricted to leases satisfying a short term need. It will continue to be necessary to demonstrate the value for money of leasing as opposed to purchase.

Bank of Credit and Commerce International

Mr. Darling: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will reconsider his decision not to publish those parts of Lord Justice Bingham's report into the supervision of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International which disclose the use of BCCI accounts to facilitate the trade of arms with Iraq; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 17 November 1992]:* Neither my right hon. Friend the Chancellor nor I are aware of any evidence that BCCI accounts were used to facilitate the trade of arms for Iraq. As for the Bingham report, my right hon. friend the Chancellor has already made it clear to the House that the balance of public interest weighs against publishing any of the appendices.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 16 November, *Official Report*, column 26, whether the Bank of England is liable, as a result of the indemnity given to Price Waterhouse when commissioning the section 41 report on BCCI, to defray any damages or costs awarded against Price Waterhouse as a result of the action recently instituted on behalf of the Sheikh of Abu Dhabi.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 27 November 1992]:* The indemnity given to Price Waterhouse by the Bank of England when commissioning the section 41 report on BCCI is limited to any cost, liabilities and expenses arising out of their appointment, investigation and report. It would not cover any cost, liabilities and expenses were it shown that these had been caused by Price Waterhouse's own negligence or wilful default.

Nationalised Industries

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what were the guidelines for the capital spending, investment policies and external financing limits of the nationalised industries as they existed prior to his autumn statement; what new guidance he has given to the nationalised industries and trade agencies; and if he will place a copy of all relevant documentation in the Library.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 30 November 1992]:* The main elements of the control framework for nationalised industries are set out in the relevant parts of the 1978 White Paper "The Nationalised Industries" (Cm 7131), and summarised in the statistical supplement to the 1991 autumn statement (Cm 1920). The latter document also sets out the external financing limits planned for 1992-93.

Further detailed and technical central administrative guidance is issued from time to time, in internal working documents.

In addition, Ministers responsible and Departments may give guidance to particular industries from time to time.

No general guidance on these subjects has been issued to the nationalised industries since the Chancellor's autumn statement. The new external financing limits are, however, set out in the "Autumn Statement 1992" (Cm 2096).

Inland Revenue, Dundee

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many of the staff at the Caledonia house tax office in Dundee belong to non-mobile civil service grades; and what right these individuals have to choose to stay with the Inland Revenue in Dundee, and to refuse a compulsory transfer to an office outwith Dundee.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 30 November 1992]:* Twenty four of the staff at Dundee 4 Inland Revenue office, Caledonia house, Dundee are in non-mobile grades. Each is obliged to accept a transfer into another office only if it is within a reasonable daily travelling distance of his or her home.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what accommodation is provided in Dundee for *(a)* the tax district 3 office, *(b)* the tax district 1 office, *(c)* the collector of taxes office and *(d)* the taxes inquiry centre; from whom this accommodation is leased in each case; and what would be the cost in each case of terminating the lease at six months' notice.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 30 November 1992]:* The accommodation occupied is as follows:

Office	*Address*	*Area occupied sq metre*
Dundee 3 Tax District	Overgate House Marketgait Dundee	890
Dundee 1 Tax District	2 Court House Square Dundee	990
Dundee Collection Office	Overgate House Marketgait Dundee	680
Dundee Tax Inquiry Centre	2 Court House Square Dundee	340

As is common with Government Departments, the Inland Revenue pays an accommodation charge to Property Holdings, which acts as landlord in relation to the Inland Revenue and rents the buildings for Crown use.

The Inland Revenue incurs no cost by surrendering the buildings to Property Holdings after giving six months' notice of its intention to do so.

Independent Taxation

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whom he consulted before taking the decision to close the tax offices at Dundee and Falkirk, and to concentrate the work arising from independent taxation for women in the office in Glenrothes; how many Inland Revenue staff will now be required to change their place of work to Glenrothes as a result of this decision; and what assessment has been made of the civil servants' increased travel costs arising out of this decision.

Mr. Derrell *[holding answer 30 November 1992]:* We approved the Inland Revenue's decision to concentrate work on tax repayment claims in Glenrothes and four other Inland Revenue offices, in order to ensure that resources are used efficiently within the Inland Revenue. It is not yet possible to say how many, if any, Inland Revenue staff will be required to change their place of work to Glenrothes as a result of the decision: the wishes and preferences of individual members of staff will be fully taken into account in considering this. Increased travel costs stemming from a change in an individual's place of work will also be taken into account and may, depending on the circumstances, be met by the Inland Revenue for up to three years.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Private Detectives

Mr. Cohen: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what use his Department and the Department of Energy made of private detectives in each of the last five years; at what cost; and if he will list the firms involved.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Information on the use of private detectives in the context of the question is not available centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Denham: To ask the President of the Board of Trade on how many occasions since 1979 his Department has engaged private detective agencies to investigate the activities of British citizens; and if he will list the date and purpose of each investigation.

Mr. Neil Hamilton *[holding answer 18 November 1992]:* Information on the use of private detectives in the context of the question is not available centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Nuclear Electric plc

Mr. Cohen: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what conditions are attached to the spending of the fossil fuel levy by Nuclear Electric; and what proportion of the levy is applied to the decommissioning of nuclear plants.

Mr. Eggar: The non-fossil fuel obligation and the fossil fuel levy arrangements were introduced to secure the benefits of nuclear and other non-fossil fuel energy in increasing diversity of supply and reducing CO_2 emissions. The levy is needed to cover the additional costs associated with nuclear and renewables generation over those of fossil generation. In the case of nuclear, these additional costs include so-called back-end costs, which comprise the reprocessing of spent fuel, the decommissioning of stations and other plants and the treatment and disposal of resulting waste.

Loan Sharks

Mr. Redmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will take action to control criminal activities and extortion by unauthorised loan sharks.

Mr. Leigh: The Director General of Fair Trading and local authority trading standards departments are responsible for enforcing the Consumer Credit Act 1974 which prohibits unlicensed persons from carrying on the business of lending sums of less than £15,000 to individuals. Enforcement of the criminal law on making unwarranted demands with menaces and on unlawful harassment of debtors is a matter for chief constables.

Plutonium

Mr. Flynn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether he will now make it his policy to publish details of amounts and destinations of all civil plutonium exported under safeguards from the United Kingdom.

Mr. Eggar: Information on the exports of civil plutonium under safeguards are published annually by my Department. The information is as detailed as possible within the constraints given in my answer to the hon. Member on 14 May 1992, *Official Report*, column *170*.

Shipping

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the total tonnage of shipping constructed in the United Kingdom in each year since 1973.

Mr. Salisbury: Records held by the Department of Trade and Industry cover merchant shipbuilding constructions since 1976. Figures of the period prior to this date are not available.

Warship building is the responsibility of the Ministry of Defence and is excluded from these figures.

The total tonnage of merchant registered ships of 100 gross tonnes and over constructed in the United Kingdom for each year since 1976 is as set out in the table.

Compensated Gross Tonnage (Thousands)

Year	*Completions*
1976	898
1977	693
1978	709
1979	584
1980	513
1981	254
1982	418
1983	349
1984	288
1985	262
1986	168
1987	236
1988	87
1989	144
1990	208
1991	142

Regulatory Measures

Mr. Sproat: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the main measures increasing regulation in any area for which his Department has responsibility, which his Department has caused to be put into effect since the last general election.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Since 9 April 1992, two pieces of primary legislation have been brought into effect by my Department.

The Competition and Services (Utilities) Act 1992 (some provisions have not yet been implemented);
The Timeshare Act 1992.

Deregulation

Mr. Sproat: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the main measures of deregulation, or simplification of regulation, which his Department has carried out, or caused to be carried out, since 9 April.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: My Department continues to make a good contribution to the Government's deregulation initiative. Since 9 April 1992 the main measures are as follows:

Nine partnerships have been established between local authorities and businesses as a result of a DTI initiative to make local authority regulation more effective and less burdensome;

The companies Act 1985 (Accounts of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises and Publications of Accounts in ECUs) Regulations 1992 has come into effect and reduces the burden of reporting on small and medium-sized companies;

A scrutiny of the procedures for approving and monitoring oil and gas field development and production activity offshore and onshore has been completed. Its overall effect will be to bring about a more streamlined system for approving developments and the scrutiny's recommendations will be implemented in the near future;

A new telecommunications class licence, which revoked the class licence for the running of branch telecommunications system and clarifies, simplifies and improves arrangements for the provision of resale services from rented telecommunications capacity;

A new radiocommunications licence for road contractors, which removes the previous need for a separate licence for each contract.

Work is currently going on in my Department to identify a new programme of work under the deregulation initiative for 1993 and beyond.

Running Costs

Mr. Sproat: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what progress he has made in achieving the target of a reduction of 1·5 per cent. in his Department's running costs for the present financial year, in the first half of this financial year; and what specifically has been saved, by what means and in what areas of his responsibility.

Mr. Eggar: Prior to the merger of the Department of Trade and Industry with the Department of Energy, the two Departments published targets for efficiency savings of 3·7 per cent. and 2·3 per cent. respectively. The running cost allocations to each department for this year reflected those savings, which the Department is on course to achieve. Furthermore, as a result of the merger, the Department has been able to reduce the overhead costs of common functions and services, with savings to date of 60 posts. These savings have been used to strengthen the Department's sponsorship role and to support other priority activities.

Manufactured Goods

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the value in current prices, for each year since 1979, of (i) civil aeroplanes, (ii) washing machines, (iii) ships, (iv) cameras, (v) television sets, (vi) motor cycles, (vii) computers and (viii) cars and buses which were *(a)* manufactured in the United Kingdom, *(b)* manufactured by non-United Kingdom companies in the United Kingdom and *(c)* imported into the United Kingdom.

Mr. Needham: The sales information for non-United Kingdom companies in the United Kingdom is not available. Information on United Kingdom manufacturers' sales on United Kingdom imports is given in the table.

United Kingdom imports and manufacturers' sales[1] (£ millions)

(1) United Kingdom manufacturers' sales[2]

	Civil aircraft and parts[4]	*Washing machines*	*Cameras*	*Televisions*	*Computers*	*Ships and boats*	*Cars and commercial vehicles*	*Motor cycles*
1979	[3]	168	45	395	347	—	4,424	—
1980	353	178	37	395	413	—	4,295	—
1981	417	167	38	405	364	648	4,032	—
1982	477	178	29	431	391	1,072	4,388	—
1983	582	207	34	508	548	1,101	4,267	4
1984	712	210	34	494	948	1,037	4,856	—
1985	836	230	33	494	1,279	1,387	6,078	—
1986	1,099	231	56	516	1,032	575	6,517	—
1987	1,009	259	59	592	1,957	835	8,669	—
1988	1,333	276	45	607	2,394	900	9,838	4
1989	1,501	247	56	545	2,445	1,080	10,941	3
1990	1,860	268	—	848	2,684	1,216	—	1
1991	1,700	245	—	1,004	—	1,160	10,648	—

(2) United Kingdom imports[3]

1979	—	59	64	117	190	—	2,978	100
1980	—	59	69	105	247	270	2,464	128
1981	227	70	87	—	399	233	2,448	117
1982	245	77	85	187	494	267	3,295	87
1983	378	93	91	251	723	110	4,232	88
1984	479	100	102	249	916	299	4,322	68

	Civil aircraft and parts[4]	Washing machines	Cameras	Televisions	Computers	Ships and boats	Cars and commercial vehicles	Motor cycles
1985	894	124	111	186	1,046	149	4,889	76
1986	353	136	136	226	1,080	322	5,653	78
1987	513	131	145	227	1,369	184	5,915	84
1988	712	158	149	256	1,449	183	8,014	103
1989	1,819	144	157	265	1,777	186	8,674	123
1990	1,899	128	136	218	1,741	138	8,282	165
1991	1,584	137	131	245	—	298	6,106	130

[1] Information on sales and imports is not directly comparable. The product classifications used for the collection of sales and trade information differ, and sales information is not collected from smaller companies.
[2] There have been changes over the years in the products included in the headings and to the coverage of the inquiries. Therefore, the series may not be consistent over time. Full details for each product are in the relevant Business Monitors.
[3] A new system of product classification was introduced on 1 January 1988.
[4] Sales statistics are not available, therefore, turnover is used.
[5] not available.
Data sources: PQ and PA business monitors 3302, 3454, 3460, 3733, 3633, 3634, 3650, 3510, 3521, 3610 and the Society of British Aerospace Companies.

Nuclear Power Stations

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish estimates for the average amount and value of fossil fuel used in the construction of a nuclear power station in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Eggar: It is very difficult to make estimates of the amount and value of fossil fuels utilised in the construction of any power station. In particular, it is difficult to hypothecate electricity used in the manufacture of materials used in the construction of the station to any particular fuel source.

Assisted Areas

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the areas which have submitted an application to obtain assisted area status; and if he will list the names of individuals or organisations which submitted the applications.

Mr. Salisbury: At the most recent count, on 16 November, there had been 1,550 formal written representations received in my Department and the Welsh and Scottish Offices about the review of the assisted areas map. Providing information about each individual or organisation in the form requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost. However, as the consultation paper about the review issued in June made clear, representations received are available for inspection at specified offices of the three Departments concerned.

Defence Cuts

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 4 November to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Cousins), *Official Report*, columns *313-15*, if he will list those proposals he received for European Commission funding under the Perifra II scheme concerned with retraining and resettlement of former members of the armed forces and their families, or civilians displaced as a result of reduced defence expenditure, identifying those proposals subsequently forwarded to Brussels, those which were subsequently approved and the estimated expenditure in each case; what is the total expenditure for this programme throughout the European Community; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Salisbury: A proposal from the Royal British Legion was the only such proposal received for the second year of the Perifra scheme. The costings of individual grant applications are not normally published as they may contain commercially sensitive information.

This proposal was transmitted to the European Commission, and was awarded 1,969,000 ecu in grant towards the design and construction of a training centre. The total expenditure on Perifra committed in 1993 throughout the Community was 50 million ecu.

Major Energy Users Council

Mr. Beggs: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the principal members of the Major Energy Users Council; and if he will make a statement on his most recent discussions with the council.

Mr. Eggar: The Major Energy Users Council represent large energy users in many industrial sectors. Officials met the MEUC last month. It was agreed that the MEUC would survey the electricity prices paid by their members in 1991 and 1992. My Department will then compare the results of this survey with our own statistics.

Electricity Contracts

Mr. Beggs: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish a list of the principal sectors of industry in which large users of electricity in Great Britain have successfully negotiated beneficial supply contracts with the private sector electricity generating companies.

Mr. Eggar: DTI statistics show that the average electricity prices paid by industry fell by 12 per cent. in real terms between the second quarter of 1992 and the second quarter of 1989, before the electricity supply industry was privatised. Individual contracts are a commercial matter for the companies concerned.

Power Generation

Mr. Dowd: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) which other EC countries have invested in coal-water mixtures; and which intend to use it as a source of power generation;

(2) how much has been invested into research of coal-water mixtures as a clean source of power generation since 1980 by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* British Coal;

(3) how much *(a)* his Department and *(b)* British Coal intend to invest in research and development of coal-water mixtures in the financial year 1993-94.

Mr. Eggar: The use of coal water mixtures was investigated by industry during the 1980s, with support from the European Commission. British Coal, with EC support, invested about £1·1 million and industrial companies also contributed to the collaborative research programme. Several other EC countries also received EC support for research on coal water mixtures, including France, Germany and Italy. My Department has not provided financial support for research on coal water mixtures.

The conclusions of the research were that the use of coal water mixtures in power station boilers was technically feasible but it was not economic. In particular it was a more expensive method of reducing sulphur emissions from coal fired power stations than gas desulphurisation equipment. Neither my Department nor British Coal has any plans for further research on coal water mixtures.

Mr. Dowd: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how much has been invested by his Department in *(a)* oil, *(b)* gas and *(c)* nuclear fuels as a source of power generation.

Mr. Eggar: My Department's expenditure on nuclear research directed specificially at power generation in 1991-92 was £80·1 million. There was no expenditure on oil or gas research for power generation.

Debt Payment

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will introduce legislation to require businesses over a certain size to pay their bills promptly.

Mr. Leigh: Though we understand the frustrations felt by small businesses because of delayed payments, we remain unconvinced that legislation would prove effective. The majority of organisations representing small firms share the Government's view that the effect of a legislative approach would be, at best, minimal and could even be damaging to the small firms sector. We remain interested however to receive views on how an effective legislative framework might operate.

Thermo-Lag 330-1

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what use is made of Thermo-Lag 330-1 produced by Thermal Science Inc., in British nuclear power plants for the purpose of protecting electrical systems in the event of an emergency.

Mr. Eggar: This is a matter for the operators of nuclear power plants.

Animal Experiments

Mr. Colin Shepherd: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Rochdale (Ms. Lynne) of 2 November, *Official Report*, column *60*, what progress has been made with his European Community counterparts in the development of standards in respect of the testing of cosmetics on animals.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 19 November 1992]:* At the meeting of the Council of Ministers held on 3 November, we secured agreement on a common position on the proposed sixth Council amendment to the EC cosmetics directive which includes a ban on the use of ingredients tested on animals after January 1998, with a provision for the Commission on scientific advice, to propose the postponement of the ban where validated alternative testing methods are not available by then.

Support Programmes

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the support programmes for small and medium-sized enterprises run by his Department with the latest available figures for annual expenditure and take-up; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 25 November 1992]:* The support programmes run by my Department for small and medium sized enterprises are as follows:

Scheme	*Take-up 1991-92*	*Expenditure 1991-92*
The Enterprise Initiative Consultancy Scheme	14,387 cases	£64·4 million
Loan Guarantee Scheme	2,941 loans guaranteed	£27·541 million
Small Firms Merit Award for Research and Technology (Smart);	180 stage 1 grants	£12 million
Support of Projects Under Research (SPUR);	148 grants	£318,000
Your Business Success;	75,000 kits	£1 million
Graduate Enterprise;	5,200 students	£340,000
The Export Marketing Research Scheme (ERMS);	221 projects	£1·1 million
Regional Enterprise Grants;	975 grant offers	£7·3 million
Development Projects	individual projects	£350,000
	late payment development projects with three trade associations	£30,000 each
	informal investment demonstration projects with five TECs	£100,000 in 1992-93

During next year my Department will start support for up to 15 pilot schemes which will provide businesses with a single point of access to information and advice.

Manufactured Imports

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the value of manufactured goods imported, in current and real terms, for each financial year since 1979-80 from *(a)* the rest of the European Community, *(b)* Japan, *(c)* South Korea and *(d)* Taiwan; and what was the percentage change between 1979-80 and the current year.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 26 November 1992]:* Information is not available for financial years nor for individual countries in real terms. The available information, in current prices and for calendar years, is given in the table.

United Kingdom imports of manufactured goods[1]
Current prices £ million

	[2]European Community	Japan	South Korea	Taiwan
1979	16,225	1,441	256	211
1980	16,023	1,666	229	222
1981	16,607	2,154	313	311
1982	19,903	2,572	307	324
1983	24,233	3,250	424	447
1984	28,050	3,650	426	574
1985	31,768	4,036	469	561
1986	35,325	4,863	641	687
1987	39,808	5,413	915	989
1988	45,912	6,452	1,133	1,133
1989	52,768	6,980	1,134	1,334
1990	54,102	6,607	943	1,193
1991	49,646	6,655	905	1,250
Percentage change, 1979 to 1991				
	206	362	254	492
Average annual percentage change, 1979 to 1991				
	10	14	11	16

[1] Sections 5 to 8 of the Standard International Trade Classification.
[2] European Community is defined in terms of its 1991 membership throughout.
Source: Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom, CSO.

Utilities Regulation

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the cost of regulation in 1991-92 for *(a)* telecommunications, *(b)* gas and *(c)* electricity; and what are the expected corresponding figures for 1992-93.

Mr. Neil Hamilton *[holding answer 30 November 1992]:* I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Betts) *Official Report*, column *345*. Details of the 1992-93 budgets for the regulators may be obtained from the regulators themselves, or from published Government expenditure plans:

	Budget 1992-93 (£ million)
OFFER	10·0
OFTEL	8·055
OFGAS	[1]3·203

[1]Information supplied by OFGAS.

Albania

Mr. Wareing: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what trading links now exist between the United Kindom and Albania; what talks he has held with that country in respect of such trade; what subjects in respect of trade were discussed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 26 November 1992]:* The United Kingdom's present trade with Albania is small, with exports of less than £2 million and imports of £250,000 in the period to the end of September this year. In part, this is due to the extremely difficult economic conditions which prevail there. None the less there have been several visits by British companies to the market recently which have shown some long-term potential in sectors such as tourism, agriculture and food processing, and mineral extraction. I hope these early forays can be built on in the future.

Trading Standards Departments

Mr. Morgan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what consultation he has had with the county councils in Wales in relation to the reorganisation of trading standards departments; if the reorganisation will follow the boundaries of the unitary authorities; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what proposals he has to administer the trading standards service in Wales following local government reorganisation; what consultations he has had with county trading standards officers in Wales in relation to joint boards to provide the service; and what proposals he has for local democratic accountability in relation to joint boards.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 26 November 1992]:* My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade has had no such consultation. A Department of Trade and Industry official participated in the environment and public protection services sub-group set up by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales. The sub-group, which also included representatives of the district and county councils, discussed the future arrangements for the trading standards service in Wales. Its report is in the Library. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales will announce his decisions in due course.

Business Statistics

Mr. Milburn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 19 November, *Official Report*, column *225*, to the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) if he will give a breakdown by region and by county of the number of businesses that have registered and deregistered in each year since 1981.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 27 November 1992]:* A breakdown of the number of businesses that have registered and deregistered for VAT by region and by county for the years 1980 to 1990 was published in "VAT Registrations and Deregistrations, County and District Analyses 1980 to 1990", a copy of which is available in the Library or online via NOMIS. For further information, contact the NOMIS team at: NOMIS, Unit 3P, Mountjoy research centre, University of Durham, Durham DH1 3SW.

Girobank

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will place the final sale contract documents for the sale of Girobank in the Library.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 30 November 1992]:* No. The final sale documents for the sale of Girobank are commercially confidential documents belonging to the Post Office as vendor and the Alliance and Leicester building society as purchaser.

999 Calls

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what approaches and representations he has received from commercial organisations over the future management of 999 calls.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 30 November 1992]:* The Department has received no such representations from private sector commercial organisations.

Development Area Status, Cheshire

Mr. Miller: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make it his policy not to remove development area status from Ellesmere port and adjacent parts of Cheshire.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 30 November 1992]:* I shall consider the needs and circumstances of all areas, including the Wirral and Chester travel-to-work area, in the review.

Pyramid Selling

Mr. Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what information he has on the number of *(a)* prosecutions and *(b)* convictions for offences related to pyramid, direct selling and multi-level marketing practices and advertisements in each year from 1982.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 23 November 1992]:* Part XI of the Fair Trading Act covers pyramid selling and similar trading schemes. The only prosecution brought by this Department under this legislation was in 1987. Two companies and their directors pleaded guilty to 39 offences under the Fair Trading Act 1973 and the Pyramid Selling Schemes Regulations 1973.

Oil Exploration

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the marine sites where his Department are offering licences for test drilling for oil and mineral exploration; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Copies of the announcements, made on 5 March, 30 July and 26 November, giving details of the acreage on offer in the 14th offshore licensing round have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses. Applications for the first two stages of the round are due by midday 16 December 1992 and for the frontier stage by midday 9 March 1993.

EDUCATION

Correspondence

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the average time taken by the Ministers in his Department, including himself, to answer letters from hon. Members, in each of the first three quarters of 1992, measuring the time from the receipt of the letter to the dispatch of the substantive reply.

Mr. Forman: In the first quarter of 1992 substantive replies were issued in an average of 39 days; in the second quarter 29 days and in the third quarter 24 days.

Running Costs

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what progress he has made in achieving the target of a reduction of 1·5 per cent. in his Department's running costs for the present financial year, in the first half of this financial year; and what specifically has been saved, by what means and in what areas of his responsibility.

Mr. Forman: The Department's target for efficiency improvements in the 1992-93 financial year, as published in the departmental report in February 1992, Cm 1911, is 2·2 per cent. The main contributing areas to this are the wider use of information technology, relocation of posts, rigorous staffing reviews, and tighter control of support service costs. The Department expects to reach its target, but the data necessary for calculating efficiency improvements are not available until after the year-end.

Acquired Rights Directive

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what estimate he has made of the effects of the acquired rights directive on *(a)* services his Department contracts out and *(b)* services he plans to contract out in the future; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forman: In contracting out services, this Department has taken into account the possible effects of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981. It will continue to do so for each of the components of its market testing programme. These were set out in the citizens charter White Paper, Cm 2101, as:

- building, office and support services in DFE's London HQ;
- some information systems services;
- payroll services provided by Chessington Computer Centre; and
- services provided to the Teachers' Pensions Agency by the Paymaster General's Office.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Wia Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what are the latest figures he has for schools which have held a successful ballot to opt out of local authority educational provision and the number of such schools which have been refused permission to opt out.

Mr. Forth: A total of 574 schools have voted in favour of grant-maintained status. Of these, the Secretary of State has turned down applications from 51 schools.

Higher Education Funding Council

Dr. Moonie: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what proportion of the Higher Education Funding Council for England's budget is expected to be spent on supporting research activities in the financial year 1992-93 and the planned totals for 1993-94, 1994-95 and 1995-96.

Mr. Forman: The Higher Education Funding Council for England will become responsible for funding higher education in England on 1 April 1993. The council is expected to announce its funding for teaching and research for 1993-94 early in 1993. The proportion of recurrent funding allocated for research by the Universities Funding Council in academic year 1992-93, before taking account of the transfer of resources to the research councils for the new boundary for dual support, was 35 per cent. The Government have indicated that they expect no significant change in the proportion of funding allocated for research in higher education in 1993-94. Funding council allocations are determined on an annual basis.

Students

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will publish an education charter for students.

Mr. Forman: The White Paper, "The Citizen's Charter, First report: 1992", Cm 2101 indicated that further and higher education charters will be published in spring 1993.

Education Inspectors

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the expected salary costs for 1992-93 for higher education inspectors.

Mr. Forman: A total of £1·2 million, including national insurance contributions by the Department.

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many inspectors are currently employed by the Higher Education Funding Council.

Mr. Forman: The Higher Education Funding Council for England is in the process of establishing its arrangements for the assessment of higher education. In preparation for a full programme of visits in 1993, the council has carried out test assessments using the services of four inspectors seconded from the Department. The council will make appointments shortly.

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many of Her Majesty's inspectors were employed in 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Mr. Forth: The number of full-time equivalent HMI employed by the Department on 1 April each year since 1989-90 was as follows:

1 April 1989—479
1 April 1990—462·5
1 April 1991—482·5
1 April 1992—456·5

Since 1 September 1992 HMI engaged in the inspection of schools and teacher training have been members of the independent Office for Standards in Education, headed by Professor Sutherland, Her Majesty's chief inspector of schools.

Student Unions

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what information he has as to the major users of those student union funds received from public sources, including *(a)* the cost of sabbatical officers and *(b)* support for students' societies in institutions of higher education.

Mr. Forman: Student unions' funds derive from a variety of sources: notably profits on their trading activities, and grant from their parent institutions, paid out of funds deriving from a mix of public and private sources. A survey undertaken by the Department in 1988 identified the principal services provided by campus unions: these include representation of students; welfare; sports; catering and refreshments; shopping; travel and insurance; and support for student societies. No information is available centrally on the breakdown of unions' expenditure on these activities, or on the employment of sabbatical officers.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will circulate to all student unions details of the recent High Court ban on the university of Greenwich students union from political campaigning.

Mr. Forman: This would be premature, since the transcript of the court case is not yet available. When it is, I shall consider the implications of this case.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the legal status of a student union.

Mr. Forman: In England and Wales, as a general rule student unions in further and higher education institutions are established by or under their institution's charter or articles of government.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will audit the use of funds of student unions to discover the extent of illegal spending.

Mr. Forman: The auditing of student unions' use of funds is a matter for the educational institution concerned. The short survey of student unions, carried out by the Department and published in September 1989, found that over 75 per cent. of unions' accounts were subject to approval by the institution. Among the issues addressed in the current consultations initiated by the Department is whether any improvement in financial accountability is required.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make it his policy to apply charities law on political campaigning to student unions.

Mr. Forman: A significant proportion of local student unions are already charities and subject to charities law. Responsibility for taking legal action to ensure that a charity's activities conform to its charitable objects rests with the Attorney-General, who issued guidance on this to student unions in 1983.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education on what basis student unions receive public and members' funding.

Mr. Forman: Student unions are financed from block grant from their institutions. The Department's survey of

student unions, published in 1989, found that half were dependent on this grant for 90 per cent. or more of their non-trading expenditure. The amount and the method of determining grant vary between institutions. In higher education, the grant is paid out of general funds which come from a variety of public and private sources. In further education, the usual pattern is for the block grant to be funded at least in part from an element within the student registration fee. In most institutions student union income from individual members is not substantial, relating to small amounts from associate or live members.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education who is liable for repaying illegal spending by student unions.

Mr. Forman: Where a student union's funds are used for purposes which are not within its objects, officers of the student union are potentially at personal risk to a claim that they have been party to a breach of trust, and liable to make good any loss.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what estimate he has made of the number of sabbatical officers funded by student unions in each year since 1964 and the range of payments to sabbatical officers in student unions.

Mr. Forman: No estimate has been made centrally of the number of sabbatical officers funded by student unions or the range of payments to such officers.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is his policy on permitting student unions to influence public opinion and to affiliate to other organisations so as to promote non-charitable purposes or charitable purposes other than those of the student union.

Mr. Forman: The Government have initiated consultations on membership of campus unions and the National Union of Students; freedom of speech; and the use of public funds by campus unions and the National Union of Students. In the light of the consultations, the Government are now considering proposals for action. The extent to which student unions influence public opinion and affiliate to other organisations in order to promote activities that could be regarded as outside their legitimate concerns is being considered within this framework.

Ozone Depletion

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) if he will implement a refrigerant recycling and reclaim policy covering all departmental equipment currently using chlorofluorocarbons and hydrochlorofluorocarbons; if he will publish targets for departmental reuse and recycling; if he will implement an equipment conversion and replacement programme for all departmental uses of chlorofluorocarbons and hydrochlorofluorocarbons; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will introduce a leakage prevention programme for all refrigeration and air conditioning equipment owned and operated by his Department; if he will publish targets for reductions in leakages; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: Property Holdings, or its appointed contractors, maintains all the Department's refrigeration and air-conditioning plant, under its standard option arrangements. The Department depends on these arrangements to control the use of ozone-destroying chemicals, and to recycle any waste from this plant.

There have been no leaks of ozone-depleting chemicals recorded in the Department for the last five years. Leaks are prevented by the application of planned maintenance regimes. The disposal and recycling of all controlled waste material is governed by the duty of care regulations. The Department does not currently have sufficient information to publish targets for the reuse and recycling of CFCs and HCFCs.

In the case of light equipment, such as fire extinguishers and domestic fridges, the Department observes guidance disseminated by the Department of the Environment. This has led, for instance, to the replacement of all the Department's halon fire extinguishers with environmentally friendly alternatives.

The Department's purchasing policy is to avoid buying materials and equipment that rely on ozone-depleting substances in their use or manufacture, unless suitable alternative products are unavailable. A reduction in the amount of ozone-depleting chemicals used in its premises will automatically follow as a result of the implementation of this purchasing policy.

PRIME MINISTER

Security Service Commissioner

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Prime Minister what arrangements have been made to appoint a Commissioner under the Security Service Act 1989 when Lord Justice Stuart-Smith's appointment expires on 17 December.

The Prime Minister: Lord Justice Stuart-Smith has accepted reappointment for a further three years, until 17 December 1995.

Engagements

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 1 December.

Sir Peter Tapsell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 1 December.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

As part of the EC presidency duties, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is visiting Spain and Portugal for discussions with Prime Minister Gonzalez and Prime Minister Cavaco Silva in preparation for the European Council in Edinburgh.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Science and Technology White Paper

Dr. Moonie: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the names of the individuals and organisations who have made submissions to the consultation on his forthcoming White Paper on science and technology; and if he will place copies of the responses in the Library.

Mr. Waldegrave: The consultation period ended on 30 November, and the response has been superb. Over 500 submissions from all over the United Kingdom have been received from multinational companies, small businesses, charities, academia, professional bodies, institutes and societies, and, of course, scientists at the bench. Their responses have covered all the major aspects of science and technology.

All the views expressed will be taken on board and fed into our thinking on the White Paper, which I intend to publish in the early part of 1993. I very much appreciate how seriously the consultation has been taken and am pleased with the way it has widened the debate on the future of science and technology in this country.

Since responses are still arriving I intend to wait a short while before placing a list of respondents and copies of responses from organisations, who have consented, in the Library. However, today I am placing in the Library copies of the submissions from the Research Councils.

Medical Reports

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make it the practice of Her Majesty's Government employing Departments to give the right of access to medical reports to their employees, or individuals who undergo medical examination as potential employees.

Mr. Waldegrave: Government Departments are bound by the requirements of the Access to Medical Reports Act 1988 and the Access to Health Records Act 1990. The civil service occupational health service also complies with these statutes.

Since employees and potential employees already have ready access to medical reports provided and health records maintained about them, I do not consider further action to be necessary.

NHS Medicines (Limited List)

Mr. Elletson: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what assessment the Office for Science and Technology has carried out of the likely impact on scientific medical research of the Government's proposed extension to the limited list regulations in respect of NHS medicines.

Mr. Robert Jackson: It is not expected that the proposed extension will have an adverse impact on Government-funded medical research.

As regards research funded by the United Kingdom pharmaceutical companies, I can add nothing to the answer already given by my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for Health, in his answer on 26 November to the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) at column 810.

Technology Transfer

Dr. Moonie: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what responsibilities the Office of Science and Technology has for the promotion of technology transfer from the public sector research base into industry.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Office of Science and Technology supports many initiatives through the five research councils to encourage the transfer of technology from higher education institutes or publicly funded research establishments to companies.

The initiatives supported by the OST through the research councils are:

1. The LINK scheme which encourages companies to become involved at the pre-competitive stage of research. To date 30 programmes have been announced involving almost 300 active projects, with many more under consideration. Overall funding for these programmes is currently £410 million, made up of equal inputs from Government and industry. Most programmes involve both research councils and one or more HEIs alongside other Government Departments and industry.

2. The teaching company scheme (TCS) which arranges partnership programmes between companies and HEIs. Able graduates ("Associates") are employed on two-year contracts to undertake a specific project within a company. TCS announced their 1000th programme earlier this year. At present, there are over 400 TCS programmes in operation involving around 450 Associates. The TCS is organised jointly by SERC and DTI; ESRC and other Departments are also involved.

3. Integrated graduate development scheme (IGDS). This scheme is run by the Science and Engineering Research Council (SERC); it enables graduates in employment to undertake postgraduate training at masters level in a part-time modular form. Twelve programmes are running at present; there will be six intakes in 1992-93 and six more are planned. Costs are shared between SERC and the company.

4. Collaborative awards in science and engineering (CASE): these entail industrial sponsorship of research post-graduates by companies based in the United Kingdom. Since 1990 an average of 1,000 students have taken up CASE awards. The student receives a normal studentship from a research council plus additional maintenance grant, and spends a minimum of two months with the company. A similar scheme arising from a review conducted by Dr. J. Parnaby (SERC) enhances the stipends of students working towards engineering PhDs. This new doctorate course will include a higher content of industrial engineering and work experience in industry. The scheme started on a pilot basis in September 1992.

5. Postgraduate training partnerships (PTPS): this is a joint OST/Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) pilot scheme started in 1992-93. In the first year some 50 postgraduate students are carrying out research for their higher degree at the five partnerships between an industrial research organisation and higher education institution.

6. Application of computers to manufacturing engineering (ACME): among other things ACME co-funds club-type initiatives whereby groups of companies benefit from new technology developed in HEIs. There has been SERC funding of about £40 million since 1984-85, and 320 schemes since inception.

7. Interdisciplinary research centres (IRCs): the IRCs, jointly financed by the research councils and industry, were set up with the purpose of performing research in 'fusion' areas which would be of broad relevance to industry. There are 19 IRCs with another two (in human toxicity and brain repair) planned. There are 868 full-time equivalent staff employed in IRCs.

8. Engineering design centres: are based in universities; there are now seven of these centres and many of them have close links with industry.

9. Industrial fellowships: this is a scheme supervised by the Royal Society which manages a two-way flow of senior researchers (at the senior lecturer or industrial equivalent level) in order that a specific research project can be completed. Currently, there are about 5 fellows per annum.

10. Total technology: is a scheme whereby engineering postgraduates work towards a PhD while interacting closely with industry: the project work has to be completed in industry, under joint academic and industrial supervision.

11. Royal Academy of Engineering industrial secondment scheme: enables academics to be seconded into industry, particularly SMEs, to do research which would not normally be undertaken by SME concerns. The scheme grant pays for the replacement teaching staff in the HEI while the academic is seconded. Currently, there are four or five secondments per annum.

12. Centre for Exploitation of Science and Technology (CEST): this body is jointly funded by OST, DTI and industry. Many of its projects are concerned with exploiting new technology and finding applications for new technology more widely in industry. Most projects involve science base organisations.

WALES

General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement concerning the implications for Wales of the GATT negotiations.

Mr. David Hunt: I welcome the agreement between the EC and the United States of America on the outstanding differences between them. We await the full report from the Commission, but the agriculture agreement appears to be broadly compatible with reforms of the CAP regimes agreed last year.

The need now is to return to Geneva to make the agriculture agreement multilateral and complete negotiations in all other areas, including liberalisation of trade and services and tariff reductions. We believe it is possible to reach political agreement this year.

Mining (Environmental Damage)

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the basis for excluding the coal spoil heaps and mine tailings dams of Wales from the draft regulations under section 143 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The uses of land listed in the draft regulations for initial coverage by registers are those considered most likely to give rise to contamination. Current research being undertaken for the Government is identifying, in general terms, the occurrence of natural contaminants associated with mined ground.

Dentists

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will prevent the employment of more salaried dentists by family health service authorities in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: No.

Smoke Alarms

Mr. Hannon: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are his plans for assisting local councils in Wales to increase the programme of fitting smoke alarms to council properties; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: It is for individual local authorities to decide what priority within their enhanced resources to give to fitting smoke alarms to their properties.

Housing Management Tendering

Mr. Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what guidelines have been produced by his Department on the steps to be taken to protect tenants in the event of a successful housing management tenderer becoming insolvent or failing to deliver adequate performance standards.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: It will be for local authorities to ensure that their tenants' interests are protected in the event of inadequate contract performance or of insolvency.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the change in unemployment in Wales by number and percentage since November 1990.

Mr. David Hunt: Between November 1990 and October 1992 the number of people unemployed in Wales, after seasonal adjustment, increased by 38,900, from 91,300 to 139,200 a rise of 42·6 per cent.

Abortion

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many and which national health service hospitals in Wales providing day-care abortion services are offering medical abortion services in the first nine weeks of pregnancy by mifepristone and prostaglandin.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Information in the form requested is not collected centrally. Abortion notifications between July, when the drug was licensed, and December 1991, the latest period for which figures are available, show that the mifepristone and prostaglandin method was used in two NHS hospitals in Wales. Identifying information derived from the notification form, including the names of the hospitals concerned, may not be disclosed under regulation 5 of the Abortion Regulations 1991.

Special Needs Education

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many establishments for children with learning difficulties in Wales have section 56 status.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The information is not available centrally.

Ozone Depletion

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will implement a refrigerant recycling and reclaim policy covering all departmental equipment currently using chlorofluorocarbons and hydrochlorofluorocarbons; if he will publish targets for departmental reuse and recycling; if he will implement an equipment conversion and replacement programme for all departmental uses of CFCs and HCFCs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: My Department is currently formulating a green housekeeping strategy which will make a clear statement of our policy to govern the use of ozone-depleting substances. The statement will be followed up by an action plan for issue to departmental operational managers in implementing the policy.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will introduce a leakage prevention programme for all refrigeration and air conditioning equipment owned and operated by his Department; if he will publish targets for reductions in leakages; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given today by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, which covers refrigeration and air conditioning systems in buildings occupied by my Department.

Hospital Construction

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much has been spent in Wales in each year since 1979 on hospital construction programmes.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information in the form requested is not available but the amount of capital expended on hospital building schemes—inclusive of land purchase, design costs and plant and equipment—in the financial years 1979-80 to 1990-91 was as follows:

	£000
1979-80	9,930
1980-81	9,506
1981-82	15,027
1982-83	16,313
1983-84	15,939
1984-85	43,921
1985-86	44,573
1986-87	48,547
1987-88	47,845
1988-89	46,675
1989-90	63,627
1990-91	75,344

Source: Health authorities annual accounts.
Note:
As the result of the introduction of a new format of accounts, no comparable information is available for 1991-92.

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the new *(a)* hospitals and *(b)* hospital extensions and units opened in Wales since 1979.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Table 1 lists the new hospitals opened in Wales since 1979. Table 2 lists other hospital developments, extensions and units, costing over £1 million completed since 1979. Details of schemes costing less than £1 million are not held centrally.

New Hospitals opened in Wales since 1979

Ysbyty Gwynedd
Mold Community Hospital
The Princess of Wales Hospital, Bridgend
Morriston Hospital, Swansea
Wrexham Maelor Hospital
Ystradgynlais Community Hospital
Prince Philip Hospital, Llanelli
Chirk Community Hospital
Ysbyty George Thomas, Ystrad Fechan
Deeside Community Hospital

Hospital Extensions and Units Costing over £1 million—completed since 1979

Ysbyty Glan Clwyd Scanner Suite
Ysbyty Glan Clwyd Multi-disciplinary unit
St. David's, Carmarthen, 90 bed ward block
Brynsirjon Development
Amman Valley Development
St. Woolos Development
Tredegar General—elderly accommodation
Nevill Hall—outpatients department redevelopment
Royal Gwent, Scheme 6
Blackwood Acute Psychiatric Unit
Llanfrechfa Grange Laundry
Central College of Nursing
Llandudno Development
Cefni Hospital Development
St. Tydfil's Adaptations for elderly accommodation
Prince Charles, Merthyr, Scheme 2
Aberdare elderly unit
East Glamorgan elderly unit
Pontypridd Continuing Care Unit
Machynlleth Hospital Development
Rookwood ALAC
Llandough Obstetric Unit
UHW—Medical Genetics Centre
Remedial Works
Paediatric Cardiac Unit
Upgrading of ITU
Telephone Switchboard
Cardiac Catheter Laboratories
Velindre Linac Accelerator Suite
CRI—MRI Scanner
Neath Outpatients Department
Singleton—Sterile products unit
Pathology, PHLS and Mortuary
Physical Medicine
Main Kitchen/cook chill
Boiler House
Infrastructure works
West Ward Block
Residential Block
Gorseinon Hospital Upgrading
Tonna Development

Salmon Fishing

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what estimate has been made of the value of the Welsh economy of the tourist trade attracted to Wales by sport salmon fishing.

Sir Wyn Roberts: In 1988 a survey commissioned by MAFF estimated that visiting anglers to the National Rivers Authority's Welsh region contributed £2·4 million to the Welsh economy.

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was *(a)* the total salmon catch taken by sport fishermen in Welsh rivers and *(b)* the total commercial salmon catch taken off the coast of Wales for 1991-92.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: In the National Rivers Authority's Welsh region in 1991 anglers reported catches totalling 4,525 salmon and commercial netsmen catches totalling 3,037 salmon. Figures for 1992 will be compiled at the end of the year.

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the total revenue generated for the Welsh economy by commercial salmon fishing enterprises.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: In 1991 the first sale value of salmon taken by commercial fisheries in the National Rivers Authority's Welsh region was estimated to be £65,000.

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people in Wales are directly or seasonally employed in *(a)* commercial salmon fishing enterprises and *(b)* sport salmon fishing.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: In 1991, 436 people either held commercial licences to fish for salmon and sea trout or were endorsed on such licences. It is estimated that about 60 people are employed full or part-time by owners of fisheries which provide salmon and sea trout angling for sport.

Breast Cancer

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures are being taken to ensure women in Wales receive regular check-ups for breast cancer.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: An all Wales breast screening service for women between the ages of 50 and 64 years is provided by Breast-Test Wales. In accordance with national guidelines, women in this group are screened every three years. Women aged 65 and over will be screened on request. Regular screening for women under 50 years is currently not recommended but all women who experience symptoms which cause concern can and should seek early advice from their general practitioner.

Community Care Grants

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proportion of applications for community care grants in *(a)* Clwyd and *(b)* Wales are successful.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Under the flexible community care grant scheme introduced two years ago, the Welsh Office, in partnership with local authorities, gives grant aid to local projects aimed at developing more flexible forms of community care for elderly people and for people with physical and/or sensory disabilities. Numbers of applications and approved grants are set out in the following table.

	1991-92	*1992-93*
Clwyd		
Applications	6	12
Approved	6	8
Wales		
Applications	54	73
Approved	47	46

Traffic Calming

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to incorporate traffic calming measures in all road improvement and road building initiatives pursued by his Department.

Sir Wyn Roberts: It is already our policy to incorporate the most appropriate road safety measures in all our road schemes.

Shopping Facilities

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will list the out of town shopping centres and hypermarkets developed within each local authority area in Wales during the last two years;

(2) what proportion of supermarkets and hypermarkets in Wales are currently located *(a)* out of town, *(b)* in urban areas adjacent to the town centre and *(c)* within the town/city centre;

(3) how many empty shops there are at present within each urban settlement in Wales; and what were the equivalent figures for each of the past five years.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: This information is not held centrally.

Car Parking

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will bring forward proposals to grant additional powers to local authorities concerning the control and regulation of parking within town centres.

Sir Wyn Roberts: No. Extensive powers to meet this need are currently available.

Further Education

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many further education courses in *(a)* painting and decorating, *(b)* plumbing and welding, *(c)* electronics, *(d)* hairdressing and beauty, *(e)* journalism and *(f)* construction will be available in South Wales colleges after September 1993.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Responsibility for providing further education is currently the responsibility of the local authorities. From 1 April 1993 the Further Education Funding Council for Wales will take over the responsibility for funding further education provision. It is not possible to say at this stage how many further education courses of different kinds will be available in South Wales colleges after September 1993 since this depends on a variety of factors.

Private Sidings and Rail Schemes

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the schemes which have been granted section 8 payments for the development of private sidings and rail schemes in Wales during 1990 and 1991, or which are scheduled for 1992, indicating how much money has been allocated to each scheme.

Sir Wyn Roberts: No section 8 payments were granted in 1990 and 1991. No payments are scheduled for 1992 although Ryan Mining Ltd. has received approval for a grant of £4,247,000 which is expected to be paid in 1993 and 1994.

Bus Lanes

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list for the 12 largest urban centres in Wales by population the percentage of total route miles covered by dedicated bus lanes.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Of the 12 largest urban centres in Wales by population, only Cardiff, Newport and Caerphilly/Bedwas have dedicated bus lanes. These amount to 1 per cent. or less of their total route miles.

Women Passengers

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many incidents have been reported of *(a)* physical attacks on women passengers and *(b)* instances of sexual harrassment of women passengers (i) at railway stations in Wales and (ii) on trains in Wales in each of the last five years.

Sir Wyn Roberts: This information is not readily available and I will write to the hon. Gentleman and place a copy of my letter in the Library of the House.

Company Transport Schemes

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many company transport schemes have been established in Wales to transfer company employees to and from their place of employment.

Sir Wyn Roberts: This information is not held centrally.

Swn Dwr Farm

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what price was received by his Department following the sale of Swn Dwr farm, Northop, Clwyd.

Mr. David Hunt: Following a formal tender process, acceptable offers were received for the sale on 14 October 1992 in three lots of parts of the former Swn Dwr farm, Northop, Clwyd. The sales are currently with solicitors and completion is anticipated shortly. The price paid for each lot is considered commercially confidential information between the parties.

Running Costs

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what progress he has made in achieving the target of a reduction of 1·5 per cent. in his Department's running costs for the present financial year, in the first half of this financial year; and what specifically has been saved, by what means and in what areas of his responsibility.

Mr. David Hunt: My Department is on course to achieve a saving of 1·5 per cent. in its running costs in 1992-93. Managers throughout the Department are contributing to this saving.

Correspondence

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the average time taken by the Ministers in his Department, including himself, to answer letters from hon. Members, in each of the first three quarters of 1992, measuring the time from the receipt of the letter to the dispatch of the substantive reply.

Mr. David Hunt: The information requested is as follows:

1 January 1992 to 31 March 1992—12 working days
1 April 1992 to 30 June 1992—12 working days
1 July 1992 to 30 September 1992—14 working days

Bardsey Island

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will designate the area around Bardsey island, Cardigan bay as a marine nature reserve, in recognition of the importance of the dolphin population; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend is responsible for designating marine nature reserves following an application from the Countryside Council for Wales. There are no such applications currently before him. I understand, however, that the council has completed surveys of the area that will enable it to undertake the relevant consultation procedure.

Housing Stock

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the future of the housing stock held by the Development Board of Rural Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: I will be laying draft regulations to govern the disposal of the Development Board for Rural Wales' housing stock before the House in due course.

Assisted Area Status

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will provide a list of the 67 submissions he has received concerning assisted area status, indicating from which constituencies each submission has been received; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answers I gave him on 26 October and 24 November.

District Health Authorities (Appointments)

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the criteria according to which he is appointing members of the new area health authorities; what is the known political affiliation of those already appointed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: Appointments to district health authorities are made on the basis of aptitude and merit and irrespective of any political affiliations.

Higher Education (Research)

Dr. Moonie: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proportion of the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales's budget is expected to be spent on supporting research activities in 1992-93; and what are the planned totals for 1993-94, 1994-95 and 1995-96.

Mr. David Hunt: I will announce the allocation of resources for the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales as soon as possible. The allocation of funds for research will be determined after consultation with the funding council and in the light of the totality of funding available to it.

Health Trusts

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to provide the health trusts recently approved in Wales with the capital funding required to enable them to achieve the developments set out in their trust application in the time scale prescribed.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Announcements on the overall capital provision for hospital and community health services in Wales and its distribution between allocations to health authorities and provisional external financing limits for NHS trusts will be made during the course of the next few months.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Home Help Service

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people are in receipt of the home help service in each unit of management in the Eastern and Southern health and social services board; and what were the figures for 1 April 1990 to 31 March 1991 and *(b)* 5 April 1991 to 31 March 1992.

Mr. Hanley: Information is collected centrally only at one date each year. The number of people in receipt of the home help service in each unit of management of the Eastern and Southern health and social services boards at 31 March 1991 and 31 March 1992, the latest date for which information is available, was as follows:

Community Unit	31 March 1991	31 March 1992
Eastern board		
North and West Belfast	3,606	3,501
South and East Belfast	[1]5,569	[2]5,486
North Down and Ards	1,456	[2]1,716
Down and Lisburn	[2]2,444	[2]2,436
Southern board		
Craigavon and Banbridge	2,011	1,794
Armagh and Dungannon	1,686	1,687
Newry and Mourne	1,578	1,495

[1] This figure includes an extrapolation of data from 1990 as not all the information for 1991 is available.

[2] These figures relate to dates in either May or July of the year in question.

Ozone Depletion

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will introduce a leakage prevention programme for all refrigeration and air conditioning equipment owned and operated by his Department; if he will publish targets for reductions in leakages; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: Routine maintenance of all refrigeration and air conditioning equipment includes a leakage test. Where a leak occurs or major maintenance work is being undertaken in equipment which uses chlorofluorocarbons or hydrochlorofluorocarbons, these are replaced by ozone-friendly refrigerants. In other cases, equipment containing CFCs and HCFCs is replaced when it reaches the end of its useful life.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will implement a refrigerant recycling and reclaim policy covering all departmental equipment currently using chlorofluorocarbons and hydrochlorofluorocarbons; if he will publish targets for departmental reuse and recycling; if he will implement an equipment conversion and replacement programme for all departmental uses of CFCs and HCFCs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: In Northern Ireland the Department of the Environment has advised the public sector on the use and reduction of CFCs and halons. It has also worked closely with the district councils, which are responsible for waste collection and disposal in the Province, on the extraction and recycling of ozone-depleting gases from redundant fridges and freezers from all sectors. Each council now has access to a CFC removal facility and any gases which have been removed are recycled by ICI. It is policy that any departmental equipment which becomes redundant is replaced by more environmentally acceptable equipment and I will publish targets in a forthcoming strategy document.

Forensic Science Laboratory, Newtownbreda

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many owner-occupiers have now submitted claims for compensations as a result of damage caused by the IRA bomb at the forensic science laboratory at Newtownbreda on 23 September; in how many of these claims authorisation has been given to issue interim payments; and how many interim payments of more than £2,000 have now been made.

Mr. Mates: Responsibility for the subject in question has been delegated to the Compensation Agency under its chief executive Mr. J. Robinson. I have asked him for a reply to be given.

Letter from J. Robinson to Mr. John D. Taylor, dated 30 November 1992:

I refer to your recent Parliamentary Question concerning the criminal damage resulting from the bombing of the Forensic Science Laboratory at Newtownbreda on 23 September. The Secretary of State has asked me to respond.

In total 727 applications for compensation have been lodged in connection with this incident and 179 interim payments made. Of the total number of applications received 490 are in respect of owner/occupiers and to date interim payments have been authorised in 122 of these cases. Twenty-two of the interim payments to owner/occupiers have been above £2,000. In addition 56 offers of settlement have been made to owner/occupiers three of whom had already received interim payments.

As you may appreciate, many of the claimants are covered by household insurance policies and the Compensation Agency has to take account of this and other interests before making interim payments or settling claims.

Training and Employment Agency

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to his answer of 2 November, *Official Report*, columns *47-50*, what has been the cost to the Exchequer during the last 12 months of the chief executive of the Training and Employment Agency's visits to *(a)* Brussels and *(b)* Germany.

Mr. Atkins: Responsibility for the subject in question has been delegated to the Training and Employment Agency under its chief executive Mr. Julian Crozier. I have asked him for a reply to be given.

Letter from J. S. Crozier to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 27 November 1992:

Following the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland's answer of 2 November (*Official Report*, columns *47-50*) you have asked him to provide information on the total cost to the Exchequer during the last 12 months of the Chief Executive of the Training and Employment Agency's (T and EA) visits to *(a)* Brussels and *(b)* Germany.

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply as Chief Executive of the Training and Employment Agency which I do as follows:

Total cost to the Exchequer

Visit	£
Brussels	552·13
Germany	727·95

Cereal Production

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the current surplus or deficit in cereal production in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Hanley: Northern Ireland has a deficit in cereal production and net imports amounted to 492,000 tonnes in 1991.

Correspondence

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the average time taken by the Ministers in his Department, including himself, to answer letters

from hon. Members, in each of the first three quarters of 1992, measuring the time from the receipt of the letter to the dispatch of the substantive reply.

Mr. Mates: The information is not readily available in the form requested and could be provided only at disproportionate costs.

Running Costs

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what progress he has made in achieving the target of a reduction of 1·5 per cent. in his Department's running costs for the present financial year, in the first half of this financial year; and what specifically has been saved, by what means and in what areas of his responsibility.

Mr. Mates: We are on target to deliver the 1·8 per cent. cash releasing savings as detailed at chapter 11 of "Northern Ireland expenditure plans and Priorities 1992-93—1994-95" (Cmnd. 1917).

Higher Education (Research)

Dr. Moonie: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what proportion of the Department of Education for Northern Ireland's higher education budget is expected to be spent on supporting research activities in 1992-93; and what are the planned totals for 1993-94, 1994-95 and 1995-96.

Mr. Hanley: In the financial year 1992-93, just under 33 per cent. of the Department of Education's higher education budget is being spent on supporting research activities in the university sector in Northern Ireland. For subsequent years planned totals are not yet available as the methodology by which research funding will be determined is currently under consideration.

Nursing Homes

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many citizens of the Irish Republic are resident in nursing homes in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Hanley: The information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how the Department of Health and Social Services ensures that only British citizens are subsidised in Northern Ireland nursing homes by public funds.

Mr. Hanley: Help from public funds for people in nursing homes is provided mainly through income support but other benefits may also be payable. The maximum income support payable is generally reduced by the amount of any other available income. In certain circumstances, income support is payable to people coming to Northern Ireland from other countries, including European Community member states, which have similar obligations in relation to their corresponding benefit schemes.

Elderly People (Funding)

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what funding is available for the elderly in Northern Ireland from EEC sources.

Mr. Hanley: The individual European Community programmes, operated under the Northern Ireland community support framework, are not aimed specifically at elderly people, although the latter may benefit indirectly. As part of an European Community action programme for older people, which culminates in a European Year of Older People and Solidarity between Generations in 1993, a limited amount of funding is being made available to support mainly pan-European activities to mark the year.

Residential Care and Nursing Homes

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the role of the Client Groups Legislation Unit in respect of the Residential Care Homes Regulations N.I. and the Nursing Home Regulations and Registered Homes Tribunals Rules N.I.

Mr. Hanley: The client legislation unit is a small, time-limited unit within the Department of Health and Social Services dedicated to the preparation of new registered homes legislation, both primary and subordinate. The unit issued the Residential Care Homes Regulations (Northern Ireland), the Nursing Homes Regulations (Northern Ireland) and the Registered Homes Tribunal Rules (Northern Ireland) in draft form for consultation on 16 November. It will receive comments on all this subordinate legislation up to 14 December.

Eastern Health and Social Services Board

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether employees with the Eastern Health and Social Services Board may register their nationality under the fair employment legislation as European; and how many have done so.

Mr. Hanley: The Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Act 1989 does not make provision for employees to register their nationality. However the Eastern health and social services board does request applicants to indicate whether they are from an EC or non EC country and there are 18,995 EHSSB employees registered as EC nationals.

HEALTH

Hormone Replacement Therapy

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the cost of general practitioner prescribed hormone replacement therapy in each national health service region and family health services authority area in 1991-92; and if he will express that cost as expenditure per head of the female population for each area.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information requested is given in the table.

Note: The data included in the table are for preparations used for hormone replacement therapy as defined in the British National Formulary chapters 6.4.1.1 and 6.4.1.2. Some of the products could be used for indications other than HRT. The period covered is April 1991 to March 1992 and the figures are for the net ingredient cost of prescriptions dispensed by community pharmacists, prescriptions dispensed by doctors and prescriptions submitted by prescribing doctors for items personally administered.

Hormone replacement therapy—England 1991-92
NIC—Net Ingredient Cost
NIC—Net Ingredient Cost per head of Female Population

FHSA Name	NIC £	NIC/Head £
Cleveland	579,975	2·03
Cumbria	513,631	2·05
Durham	597,589	1·93
Northumberland	287,420	1·83
Gateshead	191,788	1·84
Newcastle upon Tyne	225,443	1·59
North Tyneside	170,745	1·68
South Tyneside	128,790	1·59
Sunderland	270,097	1·77
Northern RHA	2,965,478	1·87
Humberside	864,076	1·93
North Yorkshire	763,371	2·07
Bradford	405,128	1·68
Calderdale	176,848	1·76
Kirklees	306,322	1·57
Leeds	719,500	1·98
Wakefield	291,091	1·81
Yorkshire RHA	3,526,336	1·88
Derbyshire	866,565	1·82
Leicestershire	763,437	1·69
Lincolnshire	603,283	2,00
Nottinghamshire	912,784	1·77
Barnsley	190,450	1·67
Doncaster	321,214	2·16
Rotherham	171,854	1·33
Sheffield	457,509	1·72
Trent RHA	4,287,096	1·78
Cambridgeshire	673,611	2·00
Norfolk	906,173	2·34
Suffolk	583,899	1·75
East Anglia RHA	2,163,683	2·05
Bedfordshire	544,581	2·04
Hertfordshire	1,174,413	2·34
Barnet	279,609	1·80
Brent and Harrow	351,075	1·52
Ealing, Hammersmith and Hounslow	501,852	1·53
Hillingdon	235,285	1·97
Kensington, Chelsea and Westminster	450,608	2·67
North West Thames RHA	3,537,424	2·00
Essex	1,737,656	2·20
Barking and Havering	307,844	1·59
Camden and Islington	348,021	1·91
City and East London	371,387	1·28
Enfield and Harringey	377,723	1·57
Redbridge and Waltham Forest	368,378	1·60
North East Thames RHA	3,511,009	1·82
East Sussex	797,161	2·10
Kent	1,764,088	2·24
Greenwich and Bexley	438,645	1·98
Bromley	385,880	2·53
Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham	625,343	1·70
South East Thames RHA	4,011,117	2·10
Surrey	1,232,952	2·23
West Sussex	911,909	2·45
Croydon	363,573	2·22
Kingston and Richmond	370,512	2·38
Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth	594,536	1·90
South West Thames RHA	3,473,483	2·27
Dorset	808,695	2·35
Hampshire	1,906,760	2·40
Wiltshire	579,860	2·01
Isle of Wight	175,537	2·66
Wessex RHA	3,470,582	2·32
Berkshire	862,692	2·29
Buckinghamshire	808,863	2·51
Northamptonshire	617,377	2·07
Oxfordshire	640,275	2·21
Oxford RHA	2,929,206	2·28
Avon	974,609	1·98
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	540,141	2·20
Devon	1,233,861	2·30
Gloucestershire	576,903	2·09
Somerset	495,070	2·06
South Western RHA	3,820,584	2·14
Hereford and Worcester	769,466	2·21
Shropshire	464,404	2·22
Staffordshire	1,002,273	1·90
Warwickshire	552,465	2·23
Birmingham	879,187	1·73
Coventry	293,369	1·89
Dudley	250,033	1·60
Sandwell	173,540	1·15
Solihull	289,761	2·82
Walsall	221,067	1·66
Wolverhampton	175,972	1·39
West Midlands RHA	5,071,539	1·90
Cheshire	1,259,205	2·55
Liverpool	462,260	1·86
St. Helens and Knowsley	334,512	1·94
Sefton	346,512	2·24
Wirral	389,056	2·21
Mersey RHA	2,791,620	2·24
Lancashire	1,482,176	2·04
Bolton	243,773	1·82

FHSA Name	NIC £	NIC/Head £
Bury	196,882	2·14
Manchester	341,059	1·53
Oldham	212,248	1·88
Rochdale	219,809	2·09
Salford	238,549	2·04
Stockport	342,588	2·31
Tameside	197,317	1·75
Trafford	272,994	2·45
Wigan	323,490	2·05
North Western RHA	4,070,886	2·00
ENGLAND	49,630,313	2·02

Calcium Supplements

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the cost of general practitioner prescribed calcium supplements in each national health service region and family health services authority area in 1991-92; and if he will express that cost as expenditure per head of the female population for each area.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information requested is given in the table.

The data included in the table are for calcium supplements as defined in the British National Formulary chapter 9.5.1.1. The period covered is April 1991 to March 1992 and the figures are for the net ingredient cost of prescriptions dispensed by community pharmacists, prescriptions dispensed by doctors and prescriptions submitted by prescribing doctors for items personally administered.

Calcium supplements England 1991-92
NIC—Net Ingredient Cost
NIC/Head—Net Ingredient Cost per head of Female Population

FHSA Name	NIC £	NIC/Head £
Cleveland	58,435	0·20
Cumbria	34,204	0·14
Durham	64,425	0·21
Northumberland	33,883	0·22
Gateshead	24,882	0·24
Newcastle upon Tyne	36,334	0·26
North Tyneside	46,218	0·45
South Tyneside	20,532	0·25
Sunderland	76,075	0·50
Northern RHA	394,987	0·25
Humberside	104,125	0·23
North Yorkshire	75,560	0·20
Bradford	64,769	0·27
Calderdale	18,859	0·19
Kirklees	40,141	0·21
Leeds	74,230	0·20
Wakefield	24,809	0·15
Yorkshire RHA	402,493	0·21
Derbyshire	117,234	0·25
Leicestershire	108,224	0·24
Lincolnshire	97,693	0·32
Nottinghamshire	103,570	0·20
Barnsley	20,388	0·18
Doncaster	41,381	0·28
Rotherham	29,296	0·23
Sheffield	35,320	0·13
Trent RHA	553,107	0·23
Cambridgeshire	70,897	0·21
Norfolk	70,532	0·18
Suffolk	58,164	0·17
East Anglia RHA	199,594	0·19
Bedfordshire	38,042	0·14
Hertfordshire	148,371	0·29
Barnet	53,993	0·35
Brent and Harrow	50,594	0·22
Ealing, Hammersmith and Hounslow	90,311	0·27
Hillingdon	23,756	0·20
Kensington, Chelsea and Westminster	40,462	0·24
North West Thames RHA	440,528	0·25
Essex	145,219	0·18
Barking and Havering	37,478	0·19
Camden and Islington	40,235	0·22
City and East London	40,651	0·14
Enfield and Haringey	80,327	0·33
Redbridge and Waltham Forest	39,627	0·17
North East Thames RHA	383,538	0·20
East Sussex	81,774	0·22
Kent	176,068	0·22
Greenwich and Bexley	40,712	0·18
Bromley	23,372	0·15
Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham	37,483	0·10
South East Thames RHA	359,409	0·19
Surrey	119,487	0·23
West Sussex	120,449	0·32
Croydon	27,881	0·17
Kingston and Richmond	42,489	0·27
Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth	64,134	0·21
South West Thames RHA	374,440	0·24
Dorset	92,732	0·27
Hampshire	148,107	0·19
Wiltshire	52,851	0·18
Isle of Wight	14,866	0·23
Wessex RHA	308,557	0·21
Berkshire	54,634	0·15
Buckinghamshire	76,040	0·24
Northamptonshire	55,136	0·19
Oxfordshire	33,793	0·12
Oxford RHA	219,603	0·17
Avon	118,269	0·24
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	105,892	0·43
Devon	122,348	0·23
Gloucestershire	62,736	0·23
Somerset	53,472	0·22
South Western RHA	462,718	0·26
Hereford and Worcester	93,170	0·27
Shropshire	49,914	0·24
Staffordshire	110,275	0·21
Warwickshire	58,751	0·24
Birmingham	109,298	0·21
Coventry	97,215	0·63
Dudley	56,107	0·36
Sandwell	40,661	0·27
Solihull	24,080	0·23
Walsall	42,147	0·32

FHSA Name	NIC £	NIC/Head £
Wolverhampton	36,953	0·29
West Midlands RHA	718,571	0·27
Cheshire	154,340	0·31
Liverpool	46,592	0·19
St. Helens and Knowsley	43,084	0·25
Sefton	44,998	0·29
Wirral	51,180	0·29
Mersey RHA	340,194	0·27
Lancashire	194,165	0·27
Bolton	43,900	0·[illegible]
Bury	26,824	0·[illegible]
Manchester	43,987	0·20
Oldham	30,688	0·27
Rochdale	36,901	0·35
Salford	29,602	0·25
Stockport	35,565	0·24
Tameside	38,172	0·34
Trafford	20,653	0·19
Wigan	30,373	0·19
North Western RHA	530,831	0·26
England	5,688,569	0·23

Clinical Psychology Training

Dr. Hampson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what steps her Department is taking to increase the number of graduates applying for post-graduate clinical psychology training;

(2) what assessment her Department has made of the effect of the level of financial support available on the willingness of graduates to take up postgraduate clinical psychology training.

Dr. Mawhinney: It is a matter for regional health authorities to determine how the training arrangements for clinical psychologists are organised and funded. This includes any assessment of factors affecting the numbers of applicants for such training.

Dr. Hampson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the average level of income of a postgraduate clinical psychology trainee on *(a)* a nationally agreed salary scale and *(b)* a bursary awarded by the northern consortium of health authorities; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: The pay scale effective from 1 April 1992 for trainee clinical psychologists who are employed on Whitley terms and conditions is as follows:

£11,268
£11,718
£12,187
£12,675

Information about the current average income of trainees is not available.

I understand that the northern regional education purchasers' group has yet to decide the level at which any bursaries might be set.

Prescription Charges

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what would be the annual cost, and what would be the current charges if prescription charges had been raised in line with inflation since 1979.

Dr. Mawhinney: A cost of about £170 million in 1991-92, and a current charge of 69p.

Only one in five items dispensed in the National Health Service now attracts a charge at the point of dispensing, compared with two in five in 1979. In 1991, over 100 million more items were dispensed free of charge than in 1979. Although the prescription charge has increased, it continues to represent less than half the average total cost of a prescribed item to the NHS.

Solvent Abuse

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what her Department's planned direct expenditure is on solvent abuse in the year 1993-94.

Dr. Mawhinney: No decisions have yet been taken about expenditure in 1993-94.

NHS Staff (Pay)

Mr. Khabra: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance will be issued to enforce the 1·5 per cent. pay rise ceiling she has set for NHS staff; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms Primarolo) on 23 November at column *505*.

Residential Care Homes

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will consider imposing an obligation on local authority inspection units to make publicly available their reports on residential care homes in the private and voluntary sectors and in local authority homes; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: We expect local authorities to allow public access to the reports on individual care homes and other services prepared by inspection units, under the terms set out in chapter 5 of the policy guidance "Community Care in the Next Decade Beyond". The consultation document "Inspecting Social Services" published on 2 October 1992 contains proposals aimed at increasing the influence of inspection reports and ensuring their public availability.

Copies of both the guidance and the consultation document are available in the Library.

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many local authorities have published the reports of their inspections of registered residential care homes; and if she will provide a list of those authorities and the number of their published inspections.

Mr. Yeo: This information is not held centrally.

AIDS

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the AIDS support grant for 1992-93 and 1993-94; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 19 November to the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Bates), *Official Report*, column *387*, what reasons underlie the reduction of specific grant for AIDS/HIV from 1992-93 to 1993-94; and what assessment she has made of the effects this will have on service provision *(a)* in England, *(b)* in the west Midlands and *(c)* in Birmingham.

Dr. Mawhinney: The AIDS/HIV specific grant is £15·3 million for 1992-93 and £12·4 million for 1993-94. The grant will continue to support a maximum 70 per cent. of expenditure. For 1993-94, the grant will be targeted more effectively on those local authorities most in need of support and the funds thereby released will be used for other important priorities. The Department is currently considering how best to target the grant in the light of individual authorities' needs.

Correspondence

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the average time taken by the Ministers in her Department, including herself, to answer letters from hon. Members, in each of the first three quarters of 1992, measuring the time from the receipt of the letter to the dispatch of the substantive reply.

Mr. Sackville: We aim to reply within 28 days of receipt, and we actively monitor performance against this target. The information is shown in the table.

	Average clearance time (calendar days)	*Number of letters received*
1 January 1992 to 31 March 1992	25·93	4,866
1 April 1992 to 30 June 1992	18·03	3,320
1 July 1992 to 30 September 1992	23·75	4,073

Patients Charter

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether she will give every citizen the right of access in the patients charter to medical records held about him or herself by *(a)* an employer and *(b)* by a medical practitioner.

Mr. Sackville: The Access to Health Records Act 1990 and the Data Protection Act 1984 provide individuals with a right of access to their own health records, subject to certain safeguards. This right has been highlighted in the patients charter. The statutory right of access extends to those health records held by an individual's employer where those records have been compiled by a health professional in connection with the individual's care.

Nottingham City Hospital

Mr. Simpson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she will announce her decision on the appeal from Nottingham city hospital to be allowed to build a new day care unit at the edge of its current site and on the competing bid by the health authority to sell land for a supermarket.

Mr. Sackville: The matter has been referred to the National Health Service Management Executive for resolution. The NHSME is currently waiting for further information from the parties concerned.

Acquired Rights Directive

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimate she has made of the effects of the acquired rights directive on *(a)* services her Department contracts out and *(b)* services she plans to contract out in the future; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: To date, the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations which implement the acquired rights directive have not been applicable to any services contracted out by the central Department.

The main functions to be market tested within the Department by the end of September 1993 were published on 25 November 1992 in the citizens charter White Paper (Cm 2101). These are as follows: internal audit, internal management consultancy, library services, office services, selected statistical surveys and support, welfare foods scheme. The possible effects of the acquired rights directive will be taken into consideration in each market test.

Prescribing

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what discussions she had with ICI Pharmaceuticals prior to her announcement of the extended limited list system for national health service prescribing;

(2) what discussions she had with representatives of the pharmaceutical industry about possible alternative ways of reducing the NHS drug budget prior to her announcement of the extensions to the limited list system for national health service prescribing;

(3) what alternative methods of reducing the overall national health service drugs budget she considered prior to the recent announcement of the extensions to the limited list prescribing system; and why, in each case, those alternatives were rejected;

(4) what consultations she had with representatives of the Royal College of General Practitioners to discuss the medical implications of extending the limited list prescribing system to those categories which were included in her recent announcement.

Dr. Mawhinney: The selected list scheme has been in place since 1985, and has helped to control the growth in the national health service drugs bill, without adverse effects on patient care. Extending the scope of the scheme to ten new therapeutic categories will not affect the basic structure of the scheme. As now, decisions on individual drugs will be taken on the basis of advice from the independent advisory committee on NHS drugs, comprising doctors, dentists and pharmacists appointed after consultation with relevant professional organisations, and after the manufacturers concerned have been given the opportunity of making representations to the Committee.

Advance consultation with professional organisations, representatives of the pharmaceutical industry or individual manufacturers on the proposal to extend the scope of the scheme was not therefore, in the Government's view, appropriate. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made clear in her announcement on 12 November, we intend to have discussions with the

pharmaceutical industry, and the medical and pharmaceutical professions, about the drugs bill, and we expect other possible ways of controlling overall expenditure to be considered in the course of those discussions.

Sir Michael Grylls: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement providing full details of representations which she received prior to the announcement of an extension to and adoption of the limited list prescribing system; and which representations specifically support the inclusion in that list of each of the new categories of product which will now be included in the system.

Dr. Mawhinney: No such representations were received.

Accident and Emergency Units

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will establish an inquiry into the resourcing, planning and co-ordination of accident and emergency units in Greater Manchester; and if she will make a statement;

(2) if she will arrange for an investigation into the number of occasions during November when more than one accident and emergency unit was closed in the central and south Manchester areas, and into the impact on patients; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: North Western regional health authority co-ordinates the provision of accident and emergency services across Greater Manchester. A working party into the provision of these services has recently concluded its work. The hon. Member may wish to contact Sir Bruce Martin, the chairman of North Western RHA, for information about the working party and for details of accident and emergency services.

Homeless People

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance the Government issues to local authorities on the health and welfare of homeless people.

Mr. Yeo: Prime responsibility for the health of homeless people, as for others in its area, lies with the relevant health authority. Recent guidance to local authorities which includes references to the health and welfare of homeless people is contained in the homelessness code of guidance (published by the Department of the Environment, the Department of Health and the Welsh Office) and in this Department's guidance on the implementation of our care in the community policies.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many homeless people attended outpatients departments in each London hospital in the latest available year.

Mr. Yeo: This information is not collected centrally.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimate she has made of the number of homeless people in London who do not have access to a general practitioner.

Mr. Yeo: All homeless people, have the right of access to a general practitioner. To encourage and improve this access, the Department of Health is funding a number of special projects, in London and elsewhere, where a significant need has been demonstrated which the normal arrangements do not meet. These projects are based on a doctor, often supported by other professional staff, holding surgeries in places, such as day centres, where homeless people tend to congregate.

Dentists

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are her estimates for gross payments per dentist in 1992-93 and net income per dentist after expenses in 1992-93.

Dr. Mawhinney: We estimated that the new fee scale, introduced on 8 July 1992, would deliver a gross income of about £88,000 to the average dentist. However, the full effects of the revised fee scale are not yet apparent, and it is too early to revise the estimate of either dentists' gross earnings or net income in 1992-93. Dentists should, however, still receive several thousand pounds more than the target average net income recommended by the Review Body on Doctors' and Dentists' Remuneration.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish a table showing the average gross payments for a general dental practitioner for each of the first 10 months of 1992-93 broken down into *(a)* adult item of service, *(b)* continuing care, *(c)* child item of service and *(d)* capitation.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information requested (the latest available for the last 10 months) is set out in the table.

General dental services (England): average gross payment to dentists in 1992-93

	Adult item of service £	*Continuing care* £	*Child item of service* £	*Capitation* £	*Entry payments* £	*Gross* £
January	5,018	590	310	884	175	6,978
February	5,458	613	359	810	220	7,460
March	5,551	621	381	845	239	7,637
April	5,665	631	374	871	229	7,770
May	5,278	643	361	896	224	7,402
June	5,331	661	364	915	177	7,447
July	5,337	674	369	930	171	7,481
August	5,211	613	375	940	161	7,302
September	4,553	594	328	959	140	6,573
October	4,468	602	349	976	126	6,521
Total	51,870	6,242	3,570	9,026	1,861	72,570

Note:

The above figures were obtained by dividing expenditure on the GDS in England, excluding direct reimbursement of business rates and other payments made by FHSAs, by the number of general dental practitioners in England at 30 June 1992 (14,865). These data are not compatible with the data used by the Dental Rates Study Group.

Residential Homes

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will state the latest estimate for the number of places in *(a)* private residential or nursing homes, *(b)* voluntary residential or nursing homes and *(c)* local authority residential homes and express each element as a percentage of the total number of places.

Mr. Yeo: Information which separately identifies private and voluntary nursing homes is not available. The total number of beds in nursing homes (including beds in dual registered homes) at 31 March 1991 was 124,300.

Provisional estimates of the numbers of places in adult residential care homes (including dual registered homes) as at 31 March 1992 are:

	Places	*per cent. of total*
Private homes	172,800	52
Voluntary homes	55,400	17
Local authority homes	105,400	31

The figures include only those private and voluntary homes which have registered under the Registered Homes Act 1984, and so exclude for instance, homes with fewer than four residents. Unstaffed local authority homes are not included in the figures.

Community Care

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) in calculating the territorial distribution of the social security transfer element of the community care funding available from April 1993 what assumptions were made concerning the numbers, in percentage terms, of future residents of private or voluntary care or nursing homes who would be placed in establishments outside their own local authority boundaries;

(2) what correcting mechanisms to take account of migration have been included in the distribution arrangements for community care funding with effect from April 1993.

Mr. Yeo: The overall level of cross-boundary flows was taken into account in deciding the respective weighting to be given to the two parts of the distribution formula—whether according to standard spending assessment or according to the current pattern of income support expenditure. A standard spending assessment distribution would tend to favour those authorities most likely to place residents in homes outside their boundaries, and so the less weight that is placed on the income support element of the formula, the less need there is to adjust it for migration.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what allowance has been made for support costs after 1993-94 in the arrangements for community care funding with effect from April 1993.

Mr. Yeo: In each successive year after 1993-94, the amount of the previous year's special transitional grant for community care, including the additional amount of £140 million which has been made available in 1993-94 in respect of authorities' new responsibilities, will be included in the personal social services standard spending assessment control total and distributed through the revenue support grant.

Pharmaceutical Industry

Mr. Elletson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment her Department has made of the likely effect of the Government's proposed extension of the limited list on the pharmaceutical industry's international competitiveness and its export achievements.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) on 26 November at column *810*. The relative competitiveness of the United Kingdom pharmaceutical industry and its export achievements depend on many factors in both the United Kingdom and other key pharmaceutical markets.

ENVIRONMENT

Environmental Sustainability

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to ensure that structural fund regulations are amended to include a commitment to environmental sustainability as a vital component of regional policy during the United Kingdom's presidency of the EC.

Mr. Maclean: Draft regulations covering the future operation of the structural funds are still awaited and it is unlikely, therefore, that negotiations will start during the United Kingdom's presidency. However, when negotiations commence, the Government will be concerned to achieve closer integration between Community environmental policy and the structural funds.

Charities (Planning Applications)

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many planning applications have been received by local authorities from registered charities in each year since 1985;

(2) what plans he has to allow local authorities to waive planning application fees from registered charities; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what is the estimated cost of waiving local authority planning application fees from registered charities.

Mr. Baldry: Information on the number of planning applications and the fee revenue received from registered charities is not collected. Planning application fees are determiend by the type of development proposed rather than by the nature of the applicant. Under the existing statutory provisions, local authorities have no power to waive fees. I have no plans to allow them to do so.

Earth Summit

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the dates by which Her Majesty's Government expects to ratify each of the agreements made at the Earth summit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: We are seeking to ratify the framework convention on climate change and to establish the basis on which we can ratify the convention on bilogical diversity by the end of 1993.

Ozone Depletion

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce a leakage prevention programme for all refrigeration and air conditioning equipment owned and operated by his Department; if he will publish targets for reductions in leakages; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: My Department has a comprehensive green housekeeping strategy in place which aims to prevent leakages of ozone-depleting refrigerants through the regular servicing of refrigeration and air conditioning equipment. It deals with the scrutiny of materials used by contractors, the storage and disposal of ozone-depleting substances and compliance with the professional codes of practice.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will implement a refrigerant recycling and reclaim policy covering all departmental equipment current using chlorofluorocarbons and hydrochlorofluorocarbons; if he will publish targets for departmental reuse and recycling; if he will implement an equipment conversion and replacement programme for all departmental uses of CFCs and HCFCs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: My Department already has a policy on its use of ozone-depleting substances. It is included in its statement on green housekeeping which was published in March 1992 and, among other things, commits the Department to eliminating the use of substances such as CFCs, halons, carbon tetrachloride and 1,1,1 trichloroethane. It also stipulates that the chemicals being replaced should be recycled in products where no alternative is available.

The policy is being implemented through a comprehensive green housekeeping action plan which was issued to departmental operational managers in October.

The Department does not presently have sufficient information to publish targets for departmental reuse and recycling.

Property Services Agency

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those firms bidding by 26 June to take over the duties of the Property Services Agency; and which firms were shortlisted.

Mr. Redwood: Seven firms bid by 26 June to purchase the PSA projects of which WS Atkins; Carl Bros; the Pell Frischmann/Sir William Halcrow Consortium; and Tarmac were shortlisted. Names of those not shortlisted are regarded as commercially confidential but will of course be available to the National Audit Office.

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment on what commercial basis Tarmac was offered the contract to run the Property Services Agency.

Mr. Redwood: Tarmac was not offered a contract to run the Property Services Agency. PSA Projects was offered for sale by open competition and Tarmac was the successful bidder.

Sewage Works

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of sewage works for each water company comply with the standard set by the National Rivers Authority.

Mr. Maclean: The most recent information, relating to 1990, is contained in this year's "Digest of Environmental Protection and Water Statistics", and in my Department's recent report "The UK Environment", copies of which are in the House Library. Overall in 1990, 92 per cent. of sewage treatment works complied with their consent conditions, compared with 77 per cent. in 1986 and 83 per cent. in 1988.

Whales

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment upon what grounds EC member states can derogate from prohibitions on the killing of whales contained in *(a)* the habitats directive and *(b)* the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species regulation EEC No. 3626/82; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: I refer the hon. Member to article 16 of council directive 92/43/EEC. There are no provisions for derogations of the type described in Council Regulation (EEC) No. 3626/92.

Local Government Finance

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what amount of money he assumes will be raised in local authority capital receipts by *(a)* Wear Valley district council, *(b)* Derwentside district council and *(c)* Durham county council as a result of the measures announced in the autumn statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: I have not made any estimates of these receipts at the level of individual local authorities. Authorities have provided their own forecasts of the receipts they expect to receive during 1992-93 and this information is available in the Library of the House.

Rent Arrears, Northamptonshire

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of rent arrears in each district in Northamptonshire at the latest convenient date.

Mr. Baldry: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave on 2 July 1992 to the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) at column 675.

Travel Times

Mr. Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what measures are taken by his Department to promote zoning schemes linking residential, commercial and recreational areas so as to keep travel times to a minimum.

Mr. Baldry: The Department has issued preliminary advice to local planning authorities on how development patterns may influence the need to travel, and promote choice of more energy-efficient means of transport, in "Planning Policy Guidance" (PPG) note 12. The Department will be publishing shortly the results of research commissioned jointly with the Department of Transport on the part which land-use planning measures could play in achieving these objectives. Some of its findings will be reflected in a revised version of PPG 13 on transport and planning, a draft of which will be issued for consultation in the next few months.

Specific advice on locational policies in development plans designed to influence travel patterns in relation to industrial and commercial development and small firms was issued in November in a revised version of PPG 4. Equivalent advice for retail development is given in the consultation draft of PPG 6, issued in October.

Water

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what is the total number and percentage of English homes directly served by mains water supplies; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what is the total number of homes directly served by mains water supplies for each of the EC member countries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The "Levels of Service Report 1990-91", published by OFWAT, lists 23,594,000 domestic properties that are served by mains water supplies for England and Wales. These account for approximately 99 per cent. of the population for England and Wales. Figures are not available for properties in England separately, or for other EC member countries.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans his Department has to improve co-operation and liaison between the water companies and British Waterways; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The relationship between British Waterways and the water companies is a matter for the board and the companies.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he next plans to meet the chairman of the regional water companies; and what matters will be discussed.

Mr. Maclean: Ministers have had a number of meetings in recent months with the chairman of British Waterways, at which, among other things, matters of strategic policy and board appointments have been discussed. But the Secretary of State has at present no plans to meet him.

Sheltered Housing

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has to transfer the care element of the warden service in sheltered housing from housing accounts to the social services budget; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: A recent Court of Appeal judgment cast doubt on housing authorities' powers to provide care services and charge their costs to the housing revenue account. To avoid disruption to these important services, we are seeking powers in the Housing and Urban Development Bill to legitimise all housing authorities' arrangements in connection with care services.

The Government's policy is that the housing revenue account should be a landlord account. We therefore propose that these new powers would be temporary only. But before any decisions are taken about the timing of any change in the arrangements, or about how the services would be provided thereafter, or about how their costs would be accounted for, there will be full consultation with all parties early in the new year. When considering how best to implement any new arrangements we shall consider all the financial and administrative issues to ensure that support continues to be available to those who need it.

Running Costs

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress he has made in achieving the target of a reduction of 1·5 per cent. in his Department's running costs for the present financial year, in the first half of this financial year; and what specifically has been saved, by what means and in what areas of his responsibility.

Mr. Howard: The Department's annual report for 1993, which is currently being prepared, will show that between 1986-87 and 1991-92 the Department increased it's efficiency by about 4 per cent. a year. These figures reflect a measurement of administrative output throughout the Department and not merely of running costs. The savings have been achieved primarily by the increased use of information technology and the implementation of more efficient and effective management controls. As a consequence, the Department has been largely able to absorb the cost of additional policy initiatives. Equivalent figures for the current financial year are not yet available, but will be published in the departmental report in early 1994.

Falkland Islands

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has concerning the decision of the Property Services Agency International to withdraw from the contract to build the road from Mount Pleasant airport to Newhaven in the Falkland Islands; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: Discussions on the completion of the road are taking place between Property Services Agency International and the Falkland Islands Government in the light of the run down of PSAI's workload.

City Challenge and Urban Programme

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what resources will be available for city challenge and the urban programme in 1993-94.

Mr. Howard: City challenge and urban programme resources will rise from a total provision of £319 million in 1992-93 to £408 million in 1993-94, underlining the Government's continued commitment to urban regeneration. In addition, the 57 urban programme authorities will have an estimated £500 million in extra spending power in 1993-94 as a result of the changes I announced on 13 November in the capital receipts rules. To complement these resources, I have decided to make available up to £20 million in uncommitted urban programme resources in 1993-94 through a new urban partnership fund (UPF) which will combine with local authorities' usable capital receipts and other funding, including private finance, to promote urban regeneration. Details of the UPF are included in guidance to local authorities, copies of which have been placed in the Library of the House.

Wildlife Trade

Dr. Twinn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what changes will be made in controls on the wildlife trade from 1 January 1993; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The main controls on the wildlife trade will remain unaltered but the establishment of the single market will make it impractical to retain controls on some imports and exports. We propose to compensate for this by strengthening controls within the United Kingdom.

There are controls throughout the European Community on trade in species protected by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). These cover imports from and exports to non-EC countries of all species listed on the CITES appendices and also include prohibitions on the sale of specimens of endangered species. They are supported by systems of permits and certificates issued and recognised by all member states. This system will remain fully operational on 1 January. Within the United Kingdom, we have an extensive system of controls to restrict sales of specimens of native species. Within Great Britain, this was strengthened in October to include a further 90 species and will remain unchanged from 1 January next year.

At present, we also control the import and export of many species not listed on CITES, under the Endangered Species (Import and Export) Act 1976. From 1 January, it will no longer be possible to retain these controls in relation to trade within the European Community. Given the future freedom of movement within the Community, we have looked carefully at whether we should continue to control trade in non-CITES species with non-EC countries. We have concluded that it is only sensible to do so where most other member states have similar controls, because otherwise our restrictions could be evaded very easily by routing trade through EC neighbours. This means that from 1 January 1993 controls under the Endangered Species (Import and Export) Act 1976 will apply only to the import of the skins of harp and hooded seal pups. We are writing to traders giving details of the species which will not require import export licences.

We are determined that these changes should not result in any significant loss of protection for species which require it. We urged the European Commission last year to bring forward proposals to strengthen EC-wide controls and this they have done. We have made good progress during our presidency of the European Community towards achieving agreement on a new regulation which would extend EC controls on the wildlife trade to more species than are covered at present by the 1976 Act. We expect this regulation to be adopted next year. Further, freedom of movement within the Community will make it particularly important to have effective controls within member states and the Environment Council on 20 October took the view that a good deal of discretion on these should continue to rest with individual countries.

We therefore propose to strengthen controls applied within this country. As a first step, we propose to extend sales controls to some 200 species formerly protected by import and export restrictions and which our scientific advisers, the Joint Nature Conservation Committee, consider would otherwise be at risk from trade. We propose too to review how the operation of all our wildlife sales controls may be made more effective. We are consulting interested organisations about the scope of the review which will be undertaken over the course of the next year.

Personal Social Services SSA

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to review the children's element of the personal social services standard spending assessment and the area cost adjustment to ensure equity between local authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: *[holding answer 30 November 1992]:* My right hon. and learned Friend announced his proposals for standard spending assessments (SSAs) for 1993-94 on the 26 November 1992. There now follows a period of consultation during which representations about any aspects of SSAs will be carefully considered.

Water Industry

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the cost of regulation in 1991-92 for the water industry; and what is the expected corresponding figure for 1992-93.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 30 November 1992]:* Different aspects of quality regulation fall to the drinking water inspectorate (DWI) and National Rivers Authority (NRA). The Office of Water Services (OFWAT) regulates prices.

In addition to its regulatory functions the DWI provides technical and scientific advice to my right hon. Friends, the Secretaries of State for the Environment and for Wales. DWI's total costs for 1991-92 were £1·4 million, and for 1992-93 are expected to be £1·6 million.

The NRA spent in total £35 million in 1991-92, and expect to spend £41 million in 1992-93, on licensing and monitoring of discharges: approaching two thirds of this is attributable to water industry discharges. The NRA spent a further £8 million in 1991-92, and expect to spend £9 million in 1992-93, on licensing and enforcement of abstractions: the proportion attributable to the water industry is not readily available.

The Director General for Water Services's "Annual Report 1991", a copy of which is in the Library, records that in 1991-92 OFWAT's budget was £6·29 million, and for 1992-93 is £7·52 million.

Local Authority Capital Receipts

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the level of capital receipts held by each local authority at the end of year 1991-92 and which they are unable to spend according to current rates, together with the level of capital spending by each authority in 1991-92.

Mr. Robin Squire *[holding answer 30 November 1992]:* Local authorities are not required to identify the reserved part of capital receipts from other amounts which have been set aside as provision to meet credit liabilities (PCL). Information on the total amount set aside as PCL at 31 March 1992 is not yet available. The most comprehensive information relates to 31 March 1991: this is in the Library of the House.

I am arranging for provisional information on gross capital expenditure in 1991-92, as reported to the Department by local authorities, to be placed in the Library of the House.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will publish and place in the Library in hard copy and in machine readable form, as soon as possible after issuing his consultation paper on 1993-94 roles support grant, a table showing for each local authority its 1992-93 standard spending assessment with and without adjustments for changes in local authority functions and its 1993-94 SSA with the percentage changes, between both 1992-93 SSAs and the 1993-94 SSA;

(2) what are the cash and real terms increases for total standard spending in England in 1993-94, after adjusting for changes in local authority functions, compared with *(a)* total standard spending for 1992-93 and *(b)* local authorities' budgets for 1992-93.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 27 November 1992]:* Information on 1992-93 SSAs was placed in the Library in hard copy and in machine readable form following the announcement of the 1992-93 revenue support grant (RSG) settlement. Similar information on the proposals for the 1993-94 RSG settlement was placed in the Library, again in both hard copy and machine readable form, immediately following the announcement to the House yesterday of our intentions for 1993-94.

There are several ways in which the 1992-93 SSA figures might be adjusted to allow for the changes in local authority functions in order to facilitate comparisons with the 1993-94 information. I shall provide a set of SSAs for 1992-93 on an adjusted basis, together with a full description of the underlying assumptions shortly.

Public Buildings (Fire Damage)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the total cost to public funds arising from fire damage in public buildings in each of the last three years.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 27 November 1992]:* The total cost to public funds arising from fire damage to public buildings on the civil estate for the last three years, based on reports received by my Department, were:

	£
1989	631,439
1990	6,168,465
1991	Nil

To date fire costs reported for the current year amount to £2,000. The cost for 1990 includes £6,000,000 arising from a single incident in a storage depot at Burtonwood. One incident was reported for 1991 but no cost was incurred. Fire incidents occurring on the defence estate are not reported to my Department.

Council Tax

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the impact on the band D equivalent council tax of a single person discount of 50 per cent. instead of 25 per cent.

Mr. Robin Squire *[holding answer 26 November 1992]:* On the basis of the provisional taxbase information provided by local authorities for consultation purposes, it is estimated that a 50 per cent. single person discount would reduce the national taxbase by just over 8 per cent. This means that the headline council tax for two adults would need to be about 9 per cent. higher in order to raise any given amount of revenue. For single person households the combined effect of the increased discount but higher basic tax rates would be a reduction of about 27 per cent.

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing, for each region, the total number of band D discounted equivalents for council tax purposes form CTB1, row 11, total of columns 1 to 8 and the total number of dwellings on the valuation list, form CTB1, row 8, column 9, and a table showing comparable information for each region imputed from the illustrative council tax figures produced by his Department in 1991.

Mr. Robin Squire *[holding answer 20 November 1992]:* The information requested is as follows:

Region	*Taxbase March 1991 (millions)*	*Dwellings March 1991 (millions)*	*Taxbase September 1992 (millions)*	*Dwellings September 1992 (millions)*
Northern	0·923	1·263	0·900	1·294
North West	1·962	2·516	1·905	2·607
Yorkshire and Humberside	1·535	1·952	1·486	2·043
East Midlands	1·303	1·572	1·265	1·663
West Midlands	1·639	2·016	1·619	2·102
East Anglia	0·677	0·816	0·680	0·874
South West	1·484	1·842	1·471	2·083
South East	4·078	4·143	4·263	4·415
Greater London	2·950	2·824	2·720	2·946

Region	Taxbase March 1991 (millions)	Dwellings March 1991 (millions)	Taxbase September 1992 (millions)	Dwellings September 1992 (millions)
TOTAL	16·761	18·923	16·270	19·950

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Bananas

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about the arrangements for bananas agreed at the last meeting of Agriculture Ministers.

Mr. Curry: The Agriculture Council of 16 and 17 November discussed the Commission's proposal for the common organisation of the banana market. No agreement has yet been reached on the future arrangements for bananas. The Council will consider the issue again in December.

Mr. Channon: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what interim arrangements he is proposing to put in place to protect the position of Caribbean banana exporters during the interim period after 1 January 1993 before final decisions on the banana regime are taken.

Mr. Curry: The Government are working hard to achieve agreement on new EC banana market arrangments as soon as possible. If necessary, interim measures designed to protect our traditional suppliers in the Commonwealth Caribbean will be put in place on 1 January 1993.

Mr. Channon: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proposals he intends to make so as to achieve a successful banana regime before the end of the United Kingdom presidency.

Mr. Curry: I am reflecting on the possibilities for reconciling the wide differences of opinion between member states in a way consistent with our objectives on this dossier.

Correspondence

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the average time taken by the Ministers in his Department including himself, to answer letters from hon. Members, in each of the first three quarters of 1992, measuring the time from the receipt of the letter to the dispatch of the substantive reply.

Mr. Curry: In this Department, Ministers replied within 21 days to letters from hon. Members and noble Lords in 80 per cent. of cases in the first quarter, 91·7 per cent. of cases in the second and 78 per cent. of cases in the third quarter of this year. Numbers of letters received during the first three quarters were 1,931, 2,521 and 3,684 respectively. The Department does not hold information on the average time taken to reply to Ministers' correspondence.

Running Costs

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress he has made in achieving the target of a reduction of 1·5 per cent. in his Department's running costs for the present financial year, in the first half of this financial year; and what specifically has been saved, by what means and in what areas of his responsibility.

Mr. Curry: The main areas which contribute to the Department's running cost efficiencies are: information technology; staff inspection, to ensure the most efficient organisation of work; and purchasing.

The efficiency gains which these measures provide are monitored and reviewed on a 12-month (financial year) basis, and information is not available on a six-month basis. Information on efficiency gains will be available after April 1993.

Plant and Machinery

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what the level of investment has been on agricultural plant and machinery for each year since 1979; and if he will give a breakdown of the different areas including tractors, combine harvesters, and farm buildings.

Mr. Gummer: Latest estimates of investment by the United Kingdom agricultural industry in building and works, plant and machinery and vehicles are shown in the table. Information on tractors, and combine harvesters is not available separately.

Gross capital formation at current prices

£ million

	Buildings and works	Plant and machinery	Vehicles
1979	397	501	100
1980	557	425	82
1981	516	361	103
1982	617	484	112
1983	645	599	122
1984	661	563	129
1985	556	595	116
1986	432	495	122
1987	396	447	126
1988	447	538	140
1989	473	489	161
1990	545	431	201
1991	436	394	191

Fishermen (Incidental Catches)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many reports regarding incidental catches of marine mammals by fishermen his fisheries officers in England and Wales have received to date under the scheme set up to monitor the extent of this interaction.

Mr. Curry: There has been one report for England and Wales which recorded the incidental catch of three dead common porpoises.

GATT (General Waiver)

Mr. Channon: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what agricultural products coming from least-developed or island states have been granted a general waiver from the GATT in respect of their imports into the EC.

Mr. Curry: The draft GATT agreement on agriculture, tabled by the GATT director general in December 1991, states:

"In implementing the commitments on market access, developed countries will take fully into account the particular needs and conditions of developing countries by providing for a greater improvement of opportunities and terms of access for agricultural products of particular interest to these countries, including the fullest liberalisation of trade in tropical agricultural products, as agreed at the Mid-Term review, and products of particular importance to the diversification of production from the growing of illicit narcotic crops."

The GATT in any case provides for preferential tariff treatment to products from developing countries in accordance with the generalised system of preferences.

Horses (Exports)

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what measures he will put in place from 1 January 1993 to avoid the export of horses for slaughter under the EC trade legislation.

Mr. Soames: As indicated in the reply given on 6 November to my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby), EC Directive 91/628 provides specifically for national provisions in relation to horses, and our rules will continue to apply from 1 January 1993.

EC Agricultural Fund

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much was spent by the European Community agricultural fund, for each year from 1980 to the latest date for which figures are available on *(a)* intervention purchase and *(b)* export subsidy on those categories of oilseeds in contention in the GATT, together with an indication of quantities for each year.

Mr. Curry: Figures for costs of intervention and export refunds for oilseeds (rapeseed, sunflowerseed and soya beans) are set out in the table. I will write to the hon. Member with the information which he seeks on quantities.

Year	Intervention (mecu)[1]	Export refunds (mecu)
1980	8·9	3·7
1981	−5·3	5·4
1982	0	3·8
1983	−3·7	3·7
1984	2·1	0·4
1985	0·5	3·4
1986	0·05	2·3
1987	0·4	64·0
1988	2·4	24·9
1989	7·4	5·8
1990	3·8	1·6
1991	0·5	0·5

[1] A minus figure indicates that proceeds from sales exceeded costs of purchase and storage in the year in question.

Veterinary Medicines Directorate

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his answer of 4 November, *Official Report*, columns *286-87*, if he will list by visit for the last 12 months, the cost to the Exchequer of the international visits made by the director and chief executive of the Veterinary Medicines Directorate.

Mr. Gummer: Responsibility for this matter falls to the chief executive of the veterinary medicines directorate. I have asked him to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Dr. J. M. Rutter, to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 27 November 1992.

In his reply to your question, the Minister said that he had asked me to write to you direct.

I have attended two international scientific meetings on a fact-finding basis during the 12 months from 27 November 1991.

6-10 June 1992
Animal Health Institute/Food and Drug Administration Symposium on the Microbiological Significance of Drug Residues in Food—Rockville, USA.
Cost: £2,365·28;

21-26 June 1992
VIth International Technical Consultation on Veterinary Drug Registration—Buenos Aires, Argentina.
Cost: £3,739·46.

The costs were incurred in accordance with Treasury rules for Civil Service travel and subsistence.

DEFENCE

Technical Co-operation Programme

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 21 May, *Official Report, 256*, when the technical co-operation programme mentioned in point *(f)* was set up; what was its original purpose; and which countries were involved at the beginning.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: On 25 October 1957, the then President of the United States and the then Prime Minister of Great Britain made a declaration of common purpose part of which stated that:

"The arrangements which the nations of the free world have made for collective defence and mutual help are based on the recognition that the concept of national self-sufficiency is now out of date. The countries of the free world are interdependent and only in genuine partnership, by combining their resources and sharing tasks in many fields, can progress and safety be found. For our part we have agreed that our two countries will henceforth act in accordance with this principle."

Immediately afterwards, the Canadian Government declared themselves ready to join in this common effort. The resulting organisation was called the tripartite technical co-operation programme.

Chemical and Biological Warfare

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) pursuant to his answer of 26 June, *Official Report*, columns *357-58*, what is the future of the collaborative work between Canada and Britain in the field of chemical and biological warfare carried out since 1962.

(2) pursuant to his answr of 26 June, *Official Report*, column *359*, from what source his Department obtained the sample of shellfish toxin for the study in 1982;

(3) pursuant to his answer of 29 June, *Official Report*, column *411*, under which defence agreement the environmental testing of the S10 respirator in Australia was organised; and what other chemical and biological warfare equipment has been tested in Australia through this agreement since 1962;

(4) pursuant to his answer of 16 July, *Official Report*, column *936*, under which specific international agreement or agreements named in the *Official Report*, 21 May, columns *255-56*, technical and scientific information on VX nerve gas and possible binary gases was exchanged; with which countries this information was exchanged; in what form it has been exchanged; and when the first information was exchanged;

(5) pursuant to his answer of 26 June, *Official Report*, columns *358-59*, how often the CB defence sub-group of the technical co-operation programme meets; when and where the last meeting of the sub-group was held; how many times the sub-group has met since 1967; and when each of the four countries joined the sub-group.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Responsibility for the subject of the questions has been delegated to the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment DSA under its chief executive, Dr. Graham Pearson. I have asked him to arrange for replies to be given.

Letters from Dr. Graham Pearson to Mr. Ken Livingstone, 1 December 1992:

1. Your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Defence asking him pursuant to his answer of 26 June, Official Report, Columns 357-8, what is the nature of the collaborative work between Canada and Britain in the field of chemical and biological warfare carried out since 1962 (Question 9, Order Paper, 19 November 1992) has been passed to me to answer as Chief Executive of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment.

2. The United Kingdom abandoned work into offensive chemical and biological weapons in the 1950s as has Canada and collaboration between the two countries since 1962 has been into the provision of effective protective measures for the members of the Armed Forces of the UK and Canada against the threat that chemical or biological weapons may be used against them.

3. In both countries, the approach to the provision of such protective measures is made up of:

a. assessments of the hazard which involve evaluation of the potential agents that may be used against our Armed Forces and provide information on the sensitivity levels required for detection and protection,

b. techniques for detection, identification, monitoring and warning,

c. physical protection including respirators, individual protective ensembles and suits as well as collective protection,

d. decontamination of persistent agents to reduce the hazard and,

e. medical countermeasures to enhance the ability of the body to survive should exposure to chemical or biological warfare agents occur.

4. Such collaboration is carried out under the various collaborative arrangements detailed in the answer of 21 May 1992, Official Report, Columns 255-256. These involves meetings, visits to the respective Establishments and Headquarters involved and the exchange of information, personnel and equipment. The benefits from such collaboration include the sharing of limited resources and thus better value for money as well as the achievement of more robust conclusions as a result of peer review by our counterparts in Canada.

1. Your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Defence asking him pursuant to his answer of 26 June, *Official Report*, column *359* from what source his Department obtained the sample of shellfish toxin for the study in 1982 (Question 4, Order Paper, 19 November 1992) has been passed to me to answer as Chief Executive of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment.

2. In my previous letter of 10 August 1992 to you I said that

> "The role of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment at Porton Down is to ensure that the UK Armed Forces have effective protection measures against the threat that chemical or biological weapons may be used against them. As part of this work, it is necessary to investigate the effectiveness of protective measures against the range of potential agents. As stated by the Minister of State for the Armed Forces, Mr. Archie Hamilton, MP, in his answer of 26 June 1992, *Official Report*, column *359*, a study on shellfish toxins was carried out in 1982 to establish whether such toxins have any effect on medical countermeasures against nerve agents.
>
> This work into the evaluation of the effectiveness of protective measures against the range of potential chemical and biological warfare agents forms part of the United Kingdom chemical and biological defence programme on which information is exchanged with the United States Department of Defence under the international agreements referred to by the Minister of State for the Armed Forces, the Rt. Hon. Archie Hamilton, MP in his answer of 21 May 1992, *Official Report*, columns *255-256*. In this instance, the study was carried out using material supplied by the US Army Chemical Research, Development and Engineering Centre at Edgewood, Maryland."

3. The sample of shellfish toxin was therefore provided by the US Army Chemical Research and Development and Engineering Centre at Edgewood, Maryland which has from 1 October 1992 been renamed as the US Army Chemical and Biological Defense Agency located at the Edgewood Research, Development and Engineering Centre.

1. Your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Defence asking him pursuant to his answer of 29 June, Official Report, Column 411, under which Defence agreement the environmental testing of the S10 respirator in Australia was organised; and what other chemical and biological warfare equipment has been tested in Australia through this agreement since 1962 (Question 5, Order Paper, 19 November 1992) has been passed to me to answer as Chief Executive of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment.

2. The environmental testing of the S10 respirator was carried out at the Joint Tropical Trials Research Establishment (JTTRE) under a Memorandum of Agreement between the UK and Australia relating to a joint programme of research, investigation and material testing at the JTTRE which was an outstation of the Materials Research Laboratory (MRL) of the Australia Department of Defence and is now designated as MRL-Queensland.

3. Some carbon-impregnated overgarmets were tested in the late 1960s and early 1970s in an indoor storage trial at the Joint Tropical Research Unit (JTRU) under an earlier UK/Australian Memorandum of Understanding which set up JTRU in 1962. The JTRU was subsequently incorporated into the JTTRE.

1. Your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Defence asking him pursuant to his answer of 16 July, Official Report, Column 936, under which specific international agreement or agreements named in the official report, 21 May, Columns 255-6, technical and scientific information and VX nerve gas and possible binary gases was exchanged; with which countries this information was exchanged; in what form it has been exchanged; and when the first information was exchanged (Question 8, Order Paper, 19 November 1992) has been passed to me to answer as Chief Executive of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment.

2. VX nerve gas was synthesised in the early 1950s and information was first exchanged in the early 1950s between

the UK, US and Canada under the Tripartite Cooperation Programme which involved the United Kingdom, United States and Canada and subsequently became the Technical Cooperation Programme referred to in the Official Report, 21 May, Columns 255-6. The form of the information was in oral presentations and papers presented at the cooperation meetings, the exchange of reports and through the exchange of information on a more informal basis between individual scientists and during exchange postings arranged under the auspices of this collaborative arrangement. In the 1970s, the chemical, physical and general physiological properties of VX became unclassified. Patents on VX were also unclassified.

3. Insofar as possible binary gases are concerned, this has been the subject of much less exchange as the binary concept was developed by the United States in the 1970s and 1980s at a time when the UK no longer had an interest in retaliatory capabilities. Such information as has been exchanged of relevance to assessment of the potential hazard from binary gases has been largely under the UK/US/Canada MOU on Chemical and Biological Defence and the Technical Cooperation Programme.

1. Your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Defence asking him pursuant to his answer of 26 June, Official Report, Columns 358-9, how often the CB Defence sub-group of The Technical Co-operation Programme meets; when and where the last meeting of the sub-group was held; how many times the sub-group has met since 1967; and when each of the four countries joined the sub-group (Question 6, Order Paper, 30 November 1992) has been passed to me to answer as Chief Executive of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment.

2. The Sub Group E on chemical and biological defence has met 15 times during the period 1967-1992 and the last meeting was held in the UK at the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment in June 1992. The frequency of meetings is about once every 12 to 18 months and is as often as necessary to meet the objectives of the sub-group to promote collaboration in chemical and biological defence research. The UK, US, Canada and Australia were founder members of the sub-group when it was activated in 1967.

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many memoranda of understanding have been agreed in the field of chemical and biological warfare involving Britain and the United States of America since 1963; what was the subject and nature of each memorandum of understanding; and in which year each memorandum was signed.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The United Kingdom abandoned all offensive chemical and biological weapons in the late 1950s, since when the United Kingdom has been solely concerned with the provision of effective protective measures for the United Kingdom armed forces. It therefore follows that no memoranda of understanding on chemical and biological warfare have been agreed since 1963.

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 21 May at column 255 for details of general defence agreements between the United Kingdom and the United States of America in the field of chemical and biological defence.

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what contingency plans his Department established in association with the United States of America following the United Kingdom's decision to abandon offensive work in the field of chemical and biological warfare.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the answers I gave him on 21 May at columns 255-6 and on 26 June at column 358.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has concerning the use of chemical or biological weapons in the former Yugoslavia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There is no clear evidence to suggest that any of the republics of former Yugoslavia possesses chemical or biological weapons, although the Yugoslav Army does have quantities of tear gas.

Toxicological Warfare

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when and where the 15th tripartite conference on toxicological warfare was held; which countries participated; what were the conclusions and recommendations of the conference; and under which defence agreement the conference was organised.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The 15th tripartite conference on toxicological warfare was held in the United Kingdom in 1960. The participant countries were the United Kingdom, the United States of America and Canada, and the conclusions and recommendations of the conference have not been published. The conference was organised under an informal 1947 agreement to discuss like programmes of a chemical, biological and radiological nature.

CR Gas

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 16 July, *Official Report*, column *936*, what are the main points of the draft text of the chemical weapons convention which relate to CR gas; and what implications it would have for the United Kingdom stock of CR gas.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The main points of the draft chemical weapons convention which relate to CR gas are:

Article I, paragraph 5	Use of Riot Control Agents
Article II, paragraph 7	Definition of Riot Control Agents
Article II, paragraph 9d	Purposes not prohibited under the Convention
Article III, paragraph 1e	Declaration of Riot Control Agents required under the Chemical Weapons Convention
Annex 2, Appendix 1, Part XI	Allegations of use of Riot Control Agents

The chemical weapons convention has no implications for the United Kingdom stocks of CR gas.

RAF Regiment

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the present strength of the Royal Air Force Regiment; and if he will make a statement on the role of this branch in the defence and security of RAF establishments and the maintenance of military skills in this service.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The RAF Regiment is undergoing force reductions from just over 3,000 regular personnel in 1991 to about 2,400 personnel in 1995, a reduction of over 20 per cent. It is responsible for the defence of RAF airfields and installations at home and overseas against ground and low-level air attacks; for counter-terrorist measures; for measures to mitigate the

effects of nuclear, biological, chemical and conventional weapons; for the training of all RAF personnel in ground defence skills, and counter-terrorist guarding duties at stations in the United Kingdom and overseas. The RAF Regiment's volunteer reserve programme has led to the formation of eight auxiliary-manned squadrons for the ground and low-level air defence of stations and installations in the United Kingdom.

Regular units of the RAF Regiment continue to perform operational duties in Northern Ireland, Belize, Cyprus and the Falkland Islands. Officers are also currently deployed on United Nations duties in Cambodia, Kuwait, Iraq and the former Yugoslavia.

Correspondence

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the average time taken by the Ministers in his Department, including himself, to answer letters from hon. Members, in each of the first three quarters of 1992, measuring the time from the receipt of the letter to the dispatch of the substantive reply.

Mr. Rifkind: The performance of my Department in meeting targets laid down for replies to letters from hon. Members will be reported in our departmental report, due to be published early next year. The figures given will relate to the period 1 December 1991 to 30 November 1992.

Running Costs

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress he has made in achieving the target of a reduction of 2·5 per cent. in his Department's running costs for the present financial year, in the first half of this financial year; and what specifically has been saved, by what means and in what areas of his responsibility.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Data for the current financial year are not yet available. In the financial year to 31 March 1992, however, the Department made efficiency improvements to a value of £234 million against a target of £192 million. The outturn in each of the Department's main management areas and by means of achievement was as follows:

Area	*Target £ million*	*Performance £ million*	*+/− £ million*
Navy	45·0	62·2	+17·2
Army	66·0	56·0	−10·0
Air Force	51·0	61·9	+10·9
PE	10·8	30·7	+19·9
Centre	19·1	23·1	+4·0
Total	191·9	233·9	+42·0

Means of Achievement	*As percentage of Total*
Organisational Changes	24
Contractorisation	5
Changes in Manpower Mix	6
Rationalisation	14
Relocation to lower cost areas	1
Utilities and Energy	1
ADP and IT	1
Asset Management	18
Design/Engineering	1
Purchase Improvements	3
Capacity Management	25
Entrepreneurial Activity	1

This related not only to running costs but to Defence expenditure generally, apart from pensions and capital equipment.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the United Kingdom troops in Bosnia have clothing to protect them from the consequences of chemical and biological weapons.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: All United Kingdom troops deployed in Bosnia have NBC respirators and protective suits, which give protection against normal chemical weapon agents. They also have detection equipment and wind indicators.

Yugoslavia

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consulation is undertaken by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and UNPROFOR prior to the departure of each convoy in the former Yugoslavia.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Prior consultation about individual convoys is conducted between Bosnia-Herzegovina command and UNHCR officials at Kiselink. Instructions about convoy tasks and delivery points are passed to UNHCR warehouses and to the national contingents. This is supplemented by constant liaison at working level.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what action is being taken by UNPROFOR in the former Yugoslavia to protect the chemical plant near Tuzla; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: UNPROFOR is deployed in Bosnia-Herzegovina under the terms of United Nations Security Council resolutions 770 and 776 for the purpose of escorting humanitarian convoys. The mandate does not include the protection of any part of the local infrastructure or facilities, such as the industrial chemical plant at Tuzla.

Iraq and Iran

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the effect of British defence equipment exports on *(a)* Iraqi and *(b)* Iranian military capabilities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: The Ministry of Defence studies Iraqi and Iranian military capabilities and their military procurement activities. Apart from case by case assessments of individual export licence applications, no specific studies have been undertaken on the effect of United Kingdom defence equipment exports on the Iraqi and Iranian military capabilities.

Gulf Trust

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what contribution has been made to the Gulf Trust from the polo day at Windsor in July 1991; what representations his Department has made on the matter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The event did not generate any income for the Gulf Trust.

Historic Military Buildings Committee

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the membership, responsibilities and achievements of the Historic Military Buildings Committee since its inception.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Historic Military Buildings Committee was formed in October 1987 and comprises members who are experts in their fields from both the private and public sectors. It is an advisory group and its terms of reference are

"To consider issues concerning the upkeep of historic buildings on the Defence Estate; to consider the future of historic buildings on the Defence Estate for which there is no current defence use; and to advise on ways in which they might be preserved, either through a new defence use or through disposal in a manner sympathetic to their character".

The committee has provided advice on a number of individual sites as well as advising on more general issues such as maintenance of historic buildings. Current membership is:

Viscount Cranborne—Under Secretary of State for Defence.
Professor W. Whitfield—Architect, William Whitfield and Partners and Commissioner, Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission.
Mr. S. A. Lipton—Chief Executive, Stanhope Properties Plc.
Dr. J. R. B. Taylor—Architect and Research Consultant.
Head of London Region, English Heritage.
Head of Heritage Division, Department of the Environment.
Director General of Design Services and Adviser on Architectural Matters, Department of the Environment.
Head of Infrastructure and Logistics (Infrastructure), Ministry of Defence.
Head of Defence Lands Service, Ministry of Defence.

Additional representatives from within the Ministry of Defence attend as required.

Historic Buildings

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which organisations are responsible for advising his Department on the care of historic buildings and ancient monuments in the ownership of his Department; and what role is played by the statutory bodies with general responsibilities in this area in *(a)* England, *(b)* Scotland, *(c)* Wales and *(d)* Northern Ireland.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The organisations which advise the Ministry of Defence on the care of historic buildings are:

(a) The Department of National Heritage;

(b) The Department of Environment (Conservation Unit);

(c) English Heritage;

(d) Historic Scotland;

(e) Cadw;

(f) Department of Environment for Northern Ireland.

The Department obtains advice and clearance from the relevant bodies when it intends to either demolish, alter or extend an historic building.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy to ensure that historic buildings and ancient monuments in his Department's ownership or care are maintained and protected to the same standards as if they were in private ownership.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My Department is fully aware of the important responsibilities which come with the ownership of historic buildings on the defence estate and aims for the highest standards of conservation.

British Legion Centre, Tidworth

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proposals he has to provide financial support for the British Legion training centre at Tidworth.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My Department has no such proposals. The Royal British Legion has however, been successful in securing a grant from the European Community PERIFRA programme towards the cost of building the centre.

Departmental Properties

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 13 November, *Official Report*, columns *1005-6*, how much revenue his Department hopes to raise from *(a)* the sale of 97 housing properties at Finningley and *(b)* the transfer of the additional 119 housing properties at Finningley to a housing association; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The method of sale for the 97 housing properties at Finningley has yet to be decided and it would be inappropriate to disclose a figure which could prejudice any negotiations or tender action. The price for the sale of the 119 housing properties at Finningley has been recommended by the district valuer, but it remains commercial in confidence.

Iraq

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has about the use of United Kingdom technology in the Iraqi centrifuge uranium enrichment plant at Al-Farat.

Mr. Aitken *[holding answer 25 November 1992]:* As indicated in the IAEA reports which are available in the House of Commons Library, the Al-Farat sites intended use was as a centrifuge machine manufacturing plant. It was still under construction at the start of the Gulf War. No United Kingdom manufacturing equipment has been found at the facility.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has about the role of the Taji and Hutteen factories in Iraq prior to 15 January 1991.

Mr. Aitken *[holding answer 25 November 1992]:* From United Nations inspection reports, we now know that Taji was a military installation serving armaments production as well as missile storage, support and modification. Al Hutteen was an ammunition plant producing and testing a variety of armaments including artillery rockets and shells.

Space Research Corporation

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on all meetings held between Ministers and officials of his Department and the Space Research Corporation since 1985.

Mr. Aitken *[holding answer 25 November 1992]:* I am not aware of any such meetings.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Information Technology

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer of 30 October, *Official Report*, columns *922-23*, what has been the cost to the Exchequer of the Information Technology Services Agency's visits to the United States Social Security Administration during the last 12 months; and what was the purpose of the visits.

Miss Widdecombe: Responsibility for the administration of the Information Technology Services Agency is a matter for the chief Executive, Mr. F. J. Kenworthy. He will reply to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from F. J. Kenworthy to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 1 December 1992.

The Secretary of State has asked me to respond to the Parliamentary Question tabled by you on 24 November 1992, concerning my fact finding visit to the United States Social Security Administration. As Chief Executive of the Information Technology Services Agency I have responsibility for the Agencys travel expenditure.

The visit referred to in the Secretary of States answer of the 30th of October, Official Report, columns 922-3, took place in July 1992. The main purpose of the visit was to attend a meeting of the 5 Countries IT sub-committee which took place in Ottawa, Canada. This is a group comprised of representatives from the Information Technology Divisions of the Social Security Departments of the USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the UK. The purpose of setting up the 5 countries meetings was to create a forum which is conducive to the sharing of knowledge and pooling of experience. The sub-committee meets a little less than once a year.

Whilst in North America, I took the opportunity to visit the offices of the United States Social Security Administration in Baltimore to look at some of the technical advances that they have made in their utilisation of Information Technology. I was particularly interested in their use of kiosk technology and optical imaging and was keen to look at the improvements in service that this type of technology could offer to the public.

Also during my visit to the US SSA I met with the Deputy Commissioner of Systems, Mr. DiPentima, to discuss the possibility of an exchange of technical staff between our two organisations. ITSA has already been involved in a number of exchanges with the other members of the 5 Countries and these have proved extremely worthwhile; resulting in a sharing of expertise which could otherwise only have been gained through the employment of consultants at a considerable greater cost.

The total cost of my visit to Canada and America was £5,341.03.

Independent Living Fund

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has for the future of the independent living fund.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend, the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier) on 24 November at column *597*.

Mr. Simpson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what arrangements have now been made to replace the independent living fund in Nottingham after March 1993; and if he will state whether *(a)* the replacement for the ILF will continue to be based in Nottingham, *(b)* curent levels of staffing and finance will be maintained and *(c)* existing staff in the ILF will be transferred to the replacement unit.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend, the Member for Canterbury on 24 November (Mr. Brazier) at column *597*.

Details of the administrative arrangements for the two bodies will be announced in due course.

Child Support Act 1991

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proposals he has to ensure that a woman will not be compelled to claim maintenance from her child's father *(a)* before the implementation of the Child Support Act 1991 and *(b)* afterwards.

Mr. Burt: There is currently no requirement for a mother to co-operate with the Department of Social Security in seeking maintenance from the father of her child, though the great majority do so willingly. From April 1993, parents with care who are getting income support, family credit or disability working allowance will be required to co-operate with the Child Support Agency in seeking maintenance, unless the agency is satisfied that compliance would risk causing harm or undue distress to the parent with care or to any child living with her.

Agencies

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proposals he has to amend targets set for his next steps agencies for 1992.

Miss Widdecombe: By a combination of increasing expertise and improved efficiency, the Contributions Agency is having increasing success in identifying the previously unregistered self employed. Accordingly my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State, has raised the agency's 1992-93 target to identify those with class 2 liability from 40,000 to 70,000 persons. This will be a more challenging target for the agency's staff to meet.

War Pensions

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations his Department has received from the national chairman of the Royal British Legion concerning his announcement on 12 November on the uprating of war pensions and allowances; what reply is being sent; what action he will be taking; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: A letter on the subject has been received from the national chairman of the Royal British Legion. A reply has been sent advising that the views expressed in that letter, and the views of others representing the interests of ex-servicemen and women, will be discussed at the meeting of the Central Advisory Committee on War Pensions on 3 December.

Correspondence

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the average time taken by the Ministers in his Department, including himself, to answer letters from hon. Members, in each of the first three quarters of 1992, measuring the time from the receipt of the letter to the dispatch of the substantive reply.

Miss Widdecombe: This information is in the table:

Quarter	*Number of letters*	*Average working days taken*
1 January 1992-31 March 1992	4,464	19·0
1 April 1992-30 June 1992	2,284	18·5
1 July 1992-30 September 1992	3,169	21·0

Running Costs

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what progress he has made in achieving the target of a reduction of 1·5 per cent. in his Department's running costs for the present financial year, in the first half of this financial year; and what specifically has been saved, by what means and in what areas of his responsibility.

Miss Widdecombe: The Department is well on the way to achieving its target of 1·5 per cent. efficiency savings in 1992-93. Approximately £66 million has already been achieved to meet the cash target of £78 million and we expect to exceed that by around £20 million by the end of the year.

The main achievement in efficiency measures to date include, within the Benefits Agency, staff savings from computerisation of IS and pensions. Better education for the Contributions Agency's customers has led to greater efficacy in NIC collection whilst further savings have been made in the transfer of work from IT consultants to civil servants and contractors.

Families

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what is the cost of the survey on families with children being carried out on behalf of his Department by the Policy Studies Institute;

(2) what is the purpose of the survey of families with children being carried out for his Department by the Policy Studies Institute; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: The survey of families with children is being carried out for the Department as part of a programme of studies by the Policy Studies Institute. The programme looks at the role of family credit for a range of different families, and will provide better information than is presently available on movements in and out of low income.

The cost of the survey is £20,000.

Child Support Act

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate the numbers of parents with care who will incur the 78-week benefit penalty under the Child Support Act 1991.

Mr. Burt: It is not possible to estimate this number within acceptable levels of accuracy. However, it is anticipated that in all but a tiny minority of cases of parents with care on benefit will either voluntarily co-operate with the Child Support Agency or will not be required to co-operate because there would be a risk of harm or undue distress to her or her children, were she to do so.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate the numbers of families divided into lone parents and couples, who will be lifted off income support as a result of receiving child support maintenance under the Child Support Act 1991 in the first year of implementation and the following three years.

Mr. Burt: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend, the Member for Staffordshire, Moorlands (Mr. Knox) on Thursday, 26 November at column *803*.

EMPLOYMENT

Wages Councils

8. Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations she has received against her proposal to abolish the wages councils.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Since 5 November, I have received a number of representations for and against the proposal. Some 94 per cent. of representations from employers support abolition of the wages councils.

18. Sir Fergus Montgomery: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will make a statement on the impact on incomes following the abolition of wages councils.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The abolition of wages councils will free up the labour market, increase job opportunities and improve the prospects for many individuals to increase their income.

26. Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many employees have conditions of work and remuneration covered by wages councils; and what percentage of these employees are women.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: It is estimated that the wages councils set minimum pay and overtime rates which cover some 2,561,000 workers, aged 21 or over, about two thirds of whom are women.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to her answer of 19 November, *Official Report*, column *332*, if she will estimate *(a)* the number of wages councils employers in 1988, *(b)* the number of them who responded directly with support for abolition and *(c)* the ratio of *(b)* to *(a)*.

Mr. McLoughlin: It is estimated that some 250,000 employers were covered by wages councils in 1988. The 1988 consultation document, resulted in 36 individual employers and 37 employers' organisations writing in support of abolition. It is not possible to estimate the ratio of all employers covered by the councils which these letters represent.

Labour Statistics

15. **Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of Britain's work force is currently unemployed; and what percentage of the European Community's work force is currently unemployed.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The latest available and most up to date figures are published by the OECD. These show an unemployment rate for the United Kingdom of 10·2 per cent. for October 1992 compared with an EC average, excluding Denmark, Greece and Luxembourg, of 9·4 per cent. for September 1992.

16. **Ms. Estelle Morris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many redundancies there have been in the west midlands in the last three months.

Mr. McLoughlin: The latest available figures from the quarterly labour force survey show that 32,000 people were made redundant in the west midlands in the three months prior to the spring 1992 survey.

19. **Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what the change has been in the numbers unemployed for a year or longer since 1 December 1991.

Mr. McLoughlin: Claimant unemployment figures by duration are available on a quarterly basis and are not adjusted for seasonal influences. Between January 1992 and October 1992 the number of claimants unemployed for more than one year rose by 208,635.

20. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the total number of unemployed people in the United Kingdom, using the same counting base as in May 1979.

Mr. McLoughlin: No such figures are available from the Department. Attempting to estimate how many people would now be registered as unemployed at jobcentres and careers offices if voluntary registration had not been introduced in October 1982 would involve speculation about economic, demographic and other factors.

25. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the latest unemployment figures; and what the figures were in May 1979.

Mr. McLoughlin: On the consistent, seasonally adjusted basis, there were 2,867,600 claimant unemployed people in the United Kingdom in October 1992 compared with 1,087,000 in May 1979.

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many young people in the Carlisle travel-to-work area are not in employment, not on a youth training scheme and not in full-time education.

Mr. McLoughlin: In October 1992 there were 1,143 unemployed claimants aged under 25 in the Carlisle travel-to-work area.

Job Clubs

21. **Mr. Broadbent:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will make a statement on the performance indicators used in the evaluation of job clubs.

Mr. McLoughlin: The overall indicator for job clubs is the degree to which they improve unemployed people's chances of finding work. Our most recent survey (1989), found that attending a job club increased an individual's chance of finding a full-time job by about 50 per cent. Information is also collected monthly to measure the performance of individual job clubs. This includes the number of entrants to the programme and the number of job placings. Information on costs is collected quarterly.

Pay Levels

22. **Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when she last met representatives of the Low Pay Unit to discuss average pay levels in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: There has been no meeting with the Low Pay Unit.

TECs

23. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the contribution of the training and enterprise councils covering Surrey in helping those out of work.

Mr. McLoughlin: Surrey TEC has developed a range of innovative approaches to help people get back into work. This is true of TECs up and down the country.

24. **Mr. Clifton-Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what measures she is taking to meet the concerns which have been expressed by TECs.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply given earlier to my hon. Friend the Member for Eastleigh (Mr. Milligan).

Careers Service

27. **Mr. Pope:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations she has received regarding the future of the careers service.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Following public consultations on the future of the careers service in spring 1991, my right hon. Friend has received representations from local education authorities, training and enterprise councils, the Institute for Careers Guidance, local authority associations and others.

Coal Industry (Health and Safety)

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment she has made of the reasons for the increase in the death and injury rate in the coal mining industry for the years 1987-88 and 1989-90.

Mr. McLoughlin: Any increase in accident rates is of concern, but it is not appropriate to compare two years in isolation. A relatively small change in the number of accidents can disproportionately effect accident rates.

The British Coal "all accident rate" for 1990-91 of 29·34 per 100,000 manshifts is the lowest ever recorded and this is the clearest indication of the continuing progress in reducing accidents achieved by British Coal in co-operation with the workforce, worker's representatives and the Health and Safety Executive's mines inspectorate.

Pesticides

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to her answer of 19 November, *Official Report*, column *337*, when she expects the review of the pesticides incident appraisal panel to be complete; and if she will publish its findings.

Mr. McLoughlin: The review by the Health and Safety Executive of the pesticide incidents appraisal panel is now underway. Details of the findings will be made publicly available, and an interim statement of progress is anticipated by the end of June 1993.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to her answer of 19 November, *Official Report, column 336*, if she will give the procedural changes undertaken by the Health and Safety Executive in its dealings with the public.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Health and Safety Executive has introduced the following procedural changes relating to its dealings with members of the public:

guidance on the procedure for dealing with complaints has been revised and re-issued to all staff in the Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) Field Operations Division (FOD);

new instructions have been issued to all professional staff in FOD on responsible and considerate relations with private individuals; and

arrangements have been made to improve the internal organisations of HSE area offices to provide nominated public inquiry officers and duty inspectors.

HSE has also issued two booklets which tell both the general public and the employer about the HSE and about the way its staff go about their work. They explain what the public can expect from HSE and what to do if they are not happy with the way they have been dealt with.

Passenger Congestion

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proposals her Department has to encourage employers to stagger the work hours of employees as a means of alleviating passenger congestion.

Mr. McLoughlin: None. It is for employers and employees to agree between themselves what patterns of work best suit their needs.

Youth Training

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment by reference to what costs to the trainee the youth training allowance is calculated; and when it was last increased.

Mr. McLoughlin: The minimum weekly allowances paid to young people on youth training are £29·50 for 16-year-olds and £35 for those who are 17 or older. The minimum allowance for 16-year-olds was last increased in July 1988; the £35 was set in April 1986.

Many trainees receive more than these minimum allowances because employers are encouraged to supplement payments to trainees. It is in their interests to do this because it helps them to recruit and retain trainees in whom they are investing quality training.

A young person who is living at home with their parents should find the allowance adequate for their needs. Young people who find the allowance to be insufficient may be able to obtain additional support by making a claim for income support.

Training

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what funds will be made available for further employment training schemes in areas affected by coal mine closures; and if she will make a statement concerning allocations to Seaham and Easington.

Mr. McLoughlin: A total of £75 million will be made available for additional labour market measures to alleviate the effects of the colliery closures. Final details of the action plan for County Durham training and enterprise council for the Seaham—Vane Tempest—colliery and Easington areas, including the proportion of the £75 million available, have yet to be agreed and will depend on the closures going ahead.

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list all the Government and Government-financed agencies which have provided employment, skills training, or other courses, to job seekers in the Seaham and Peterlee areas during the past five years.

Mr. McLoughlin: County Durham training and enterprise council and formerly the Employment Department's Durham area office have provided training programmes in Seaham and Peterlee areas through a wide range of organisations during the past five years. These are listed. The list also includes other Government Departments and Government supported organisations which have been active in Employment creation and enterprise support in these areas.

1. *Training providers in Seaham/Peterlee in last five years*
   - Northern Training Trust
   - Peterlee College
   - Key Colleges
   - Easington District Council
   - Council for Voluntary Services
   - Easington Unemployment Committee
   - Seaham and District Adult Training Trust
   - Seaham Action

2. *Training providers based outside Peterlee/Seaham but Operating in these areas*
   - LINK
   - AC Training
   - Action Training
   - ASTRA Training
   - Sedgefield District Council

3. *Other Employment Departments/Government supported organisations*
   - Department of Trade and Industry
   - Employment Department
   - Employment Service
   - County Durham Training and Enterprise Council
   - The Northern Development Company
   - East Durham Development Agency
   - East Durham Task Force
   - British Coal Enterprise Ltd
   - English Estates North

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations she has received from organisations within the Easington constituency to increase and improve employment training schemes.

Mr. McLoughlin: I understand that several recent representations relating to employment training provision have been made by Easington organisations to the County Durham training and enterprise council.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many *(a)* informations were laid and

(b) convictions were obtained under the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974 in the coal mining industry in each of the last five years; and what was the average fine.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information requested is as follows:

Year	Informations laid	Convictions
1987	9	3
1988	3	2
1989	51	6
1990	24	3
1991	0	0

The average fine for the convictions was £1,543.

Ozone Depletion

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will implement a refrigerant recycling and reclaim policy covering all departmental equipment currently using chlorofluorocarbons and hydrochlorofluorocarbons; if she will publish targets for departmental reuse and recycling; if she will implement an equipment conversion and replacement programme for all departmental uses of CFCs and HCFCs; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: It is part of the Department's environmental policy to eliminate where possible the use of toxic or ozone-depleting chemicals. This is being achieved by replacing equipment which uses such substances with alternatives which do not contain ozone-depleting chemicals, as and when they are due for replacement. The use by the Department of ozone-depleting chemicals is minimal but we pay due regard to proper disposal methods and are taking steps to ensure that all staff are aware of them.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will introduce a leakage prevention programme for all refrigeration and air conditioning equipment owned and operated by her Department; if she will publish targets for reductions in leakages; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: Where such systems are a part of properties occupied by the Department they are regularly checked as a part of planned maintenance.

Women

Ms. Hoey: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what measures the Government are taking to improve training and promotion prospects for women.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Government are committed to the improvement of training and promotion prospects for everyone in the labour market. It has welcomed the national education and training targets and the emphasis they place on acquiring skills.

The introduction of the training and enterprise councils (TECs) has meant a training environment which is flexible and geared towards the achievement of vocational qualifications for everyone. The work that has been done on the accreditation of prior learning is particularly helpful to women who are less likely to have achieved vocational qualifications in their working lives.

Labour market returners, the majority of whom are women, have and will continue to have special access arrangements within adult training programmes run by TECs. The programmes also provide flexible training that allows women to reconcile their domestic commitments with their training.

The Government take every opportunity to encourage employers to make the best use of their resources. This includes supporting the employer-led Opportunity 2000 campaign. We promote the development of people in work through the investors in people initiative, which applies to all people. In addition this year, we have introduced a new national training award that recognises training and development of specific benefit to women.

In the new year, my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State, intends to launch a series of regional 'opportunity shops' to promote women's participation in the world of work and beyond.

European Community Social Affairs Council

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what matters will be discussed at the next EC Social Affairs Council; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: At the meeting of the Social Affairs Council on 3 December, among the main items to be considered are the United Kingdom presidency initiatives concerning employment growth; effective implementation and enforcement of Community legislation; vocational qualifications; and the portability of occupational pensions.

A number of other important matters will be on the agenda, including Community instruments on:

free movement of workers;
the posting of sub-contracted workers in the Community;
health and safety in mines and quarries;
the proposed European Health and Safety Agency;
action for the disabled.

This agenda will take forward the aim of the United Kingdom presidency of making sensible progress on the business of the Community and of securing a positive social dimension that brings real benefits to the citizens of the Community.

The Council will also discuss the current state of play on the working time directive.

Health and Safety Research

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how much money was received from the European Commission in respect of health and safety research undertaken for the Commission by the Health and Safety Executive; who was the recipient of that money in each year since 1990-91; and what is the corresponding information for the current year.

Mr. McLoughlin: Money received from the European Commission in each year for research related projects was:

	£000s
1990-91	50
1991-92	176
1992-93	100

These receipts were retained by the Health and Safety Executive.

Agricultural Inspectors

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list the number of agricultural inspectors in the Health and Safety Executive area offices in Scotland in each year since 1978.

Mr. McLoughlin: The number of agricultural inspectors employed in Scotland in each year since 1978 was:

	Number
1978	15
1979	16
1980	18
1981	17
1982	15
1983	17
1984	16
1985	16
1986	18
1987	21
1988	20
1989	19
1990	19
1991	18
1992	23

Note: Figures are for 1 April each year and show full-time equivalent staff.

Health and Safety Executive

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of the money allocated to the Health and Safety Executive following the transfer of the offshore safety division was spent in 1991-92; and what proportion of it has been spent in 1992-93.

Mr. McLoughlin: Information is not available in the precise form requested. However HSC/E's direct expenditure on its offshore safety division in 1991-92 was £11·5 million; the forecast for 1992-93 is currently £19·9 million.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list the number of factory inspectors in the Health and Safety Executive area offices in Scotland in each year since 1978.

Mr. McLoughlin: The number of factory inspectors employed in Scotland in each year since 1978 was:

Year	Number
1978	62
1979	65
1980	67
1981	64
1982	63
1983	55
1984	51
1985	53
1986	48
1987	48
1988	46·5
1989	46
1990	49
1991	50·5
1992	62·5

Note:
Figures are for 1 April each year and show full-time equivalent staff.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the contribution for the Health and Safety Executive to the European Commission in relation to European health and safety directives and standards for each year since 1990-91; and what is the contribution for the current year.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information is not available in the form requested.

The HSE plays a very active part in the development and negotiation of all health and safety directives and standards at European level.

Employment Prospects

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations she has received about the effect of the autumn statement on future employment prospects.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State has not, as yet, received any representations about the effect of the autumn statement on employment prospects. However it is our belief that the series of measures proposed in the autumn statement aimed at rebuilding confidence, helping industry and strengthening the economy will help to boost employment prospects.

Employment Action

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the implementation of the employment action programme.

Mr. McLoughlin: Since its introduction in 1991 employment action has played a valuable role in providing temporary work to help unemployed people maintain their existing skills. This will continue to be one of the options in the new training for work provision that will be introduced in April 1993.

Correspondence

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the average time taken by the Ministers in her Department including herself, to answer letters from hon. Members, in each of the first three quarters of 1992, measuring the time from the receipt of the letter to the dispatch of the substantive reply.

Mr. McLoughlin: The average time taken to reply to hon. Members letters in the first three-quarters of 1992 was as follows: first quarter 9·28 working days; second quarter 8·57 working days; third quarter 10·4 working days.

Running Costs

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what progress she has made in achieving the target of a reduction of 1·5 per cent. in her Department's running costs for the present financial year, in the first half of this financial year; and what specifically has been saved, by what means and in what areas of her responsibility.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Department's spending plans for 1992-93, including its proposals for achieving at least a 1·5 per cent. reduction in administrative costs through efficiency gains during 1992-93 are summarised in the departmental report (Cm 1906) published in February 1992. We hope to make efficiency gains in a number of areas including:

Improved procurement procedures;

Rationalisation of the estate;

Improved administration procedures;

Investment in and better control of telecommunications;

Implementation of Internal Audit and Management Services reviews;

Improvements in staff training;

Investment in Information Technology.

Savings will be generated over a full 12-month period and the attainment of planned targets is assessed following the end of each financial year. Specific figures on savings to date are unavailable. However, at the end of the first six months of the current financial year there is every indication that the anticipated savings will be realised.

Medical Examinations

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether she will introduce proposals to require that individuals whose application for employment is refused on the basis of a medical examination, are sent the results of such an examination and informed of the medical reason why employment has been refused.

Mr. McLoughlin: No. This is a matter for employers to decide.

Long-term Unemployment

Mr. Turner: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will visit Bradley redundancy action group to discuss the psychological and emotional effects of long-term unemployment.

Mr. McLoughlin: Employment Ministers have no plans to visit this group; but the employment service regional director will shortly be arranging for contact to be made with the group, as will Wolverhampton training and enterprise council.

Unemployment

Mr. Waterson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans she has to increase the opportunities available to help unemployed people.

Mr. McLoughlin: On 12 November, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, announced a new framework of employment and training measures to help unemployed people back to work. The new arrangements, which will begin in April 1993, offer the widest range of help to unemployed people that we have ever provided. We expect there to be almost half a million more opportunities on our programmes in 1993-94 than in this year.

Acquired Rights Directive

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what estimate she has made of the effects of the acquired rights directive on *(a)* services her Department contracts out and *(b)* services she plans to contract out in the future; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: The possible effects of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981, which implement the acquired rights directive in the United Kingdom, have always been taken into account in any consideration of the contracting out of my Department's services.

The main functions to be market tested to September 1993 were published in the citizens charter White Paper (Cm 2101) on 25 November.

SCOTLAND

Glasgow

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will discuss with the Glasgow city liaison group the needs of those who are victims of violence.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. Friend recognises the needs of victims of violence but has no plans to meet the Glasgow city liaison group. Government funding of some £642,000 is being provided in the current financial year for the Scottish Association of Victim Support Schemes. The association provides general assistance and counselling for all victims of crime through a network of local support schemes. There are a number of such schemes based in Glasgow.

Fact-finding Visits

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his answer of 3 November, *Official Report*, columns *156-57*, if he will list for each of his Department's agencies, and by date and venue for the last 12 months, the cost to the Exchequer of the chief executives' fact-finding visits.

Mr. Lang: The hon. Member's earlier question elicited replies from the four agencies for which I am responsible, indicating that only the chief executive of Historic Scotland had made such fact finding visits. I have therefore asked Mr. G. Munro, chief executive of Historic Scotland to reply to the hon. Member directly.

Letter from Graeme N. Munro to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 1 December 1992

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your recent question about the costs of 'fact-finding' visits.

My reply of 30 October sought to explain in general terms the types of visit I have undertaken in the last 12 months from which I have gained useful insights into various matters relating to my responsibilities as Director and Chief Executive of Historic Scotland. However, none of these visits was arranged specifically as a 'fact-finding' visit.

I should be very happy to provide further information on any particular area of our work of interest to you.

Forest Policy

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to develop an integrated forest policy for Britain, ensuring that all aspects of deforestation at home and abroad are taken into account; and what mechanism exists to ensure that each Government Department adopts a coherent and complementary approach to forestry and deforestation issues.

Sir Hector Monro: I refer the hon. Member to the answer the Prime Minister gave the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) on 3 November at column *133*.

Correspondence

Mr. Spreat: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the average time taken by the Ministers in his Department, including himself, to answer letters from hon. Members, in each of the first three quarters of 1992, measuring the time from the receipt of the letter to the dispatch of the substantive reply.

Mr. Lang: The Scottish Office has a target of issuing replies to letters from hon. Members within 17 days of their receipt. My Department's performance in meeting this target during 1992 will be published in the *Official Report* in due course, and be made available to the House Libraries.

Running Costs

Mr. Spreat: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what progress he has made in achieving the target of a reduction of 1·5 per cent. in his Department's running costs for the present financial year, in the first half of this financial year; and what specifically has been saved, by what means and in what areas of his responsibility.

Mr. Lang: The overall level of running costs for my Department is agreed with Treasury each year on the basis that efficiency gains of 1·5 per cent. must be delivered. Departments must then ensure they operate within the overall running cost limit set, and my Department are on target to do so in 1992-93.

Delivery of specific savings and improvements in efficiency is the responsibility of managers throughout each of my Departments working within designated budgets and performance targets which reflect the need to produce efficiency gains through increased output and reduction in costs. In identifying opportunities for savings, managers can call on support and expert advice from specialists in areas such as organisation of work and purchasing. Internal management plans define prospective savings and check on the delivery of what was planned for the previous year. The specific details requested are not readily available and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Higher Education

Dr. Mawhinney: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proportion of the Higher Education Funding Council for Scotland's budget is expected to be spent on supporting research activities in 1992-93; and what are the planned totals for 1993-94, 1994-95 and 1995-96.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Scottish Higher Education Funding Council will not begin distributing funds to higher education institutions until 1 April 1993. It therefore has no budget to support research activities in 1992-93. Decisions on the level of support for research in future years will be made after my right hon. Friend has announced in the near future his decisions on expenditure on higher education from 1993-94 onwards and in the light of the council's assessment of the needs of the higher education sector in Scotland.

Forestry Commission Land

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list *(a)* the name, location and Ordnance Survey map reference and *(b)* the area in hectares of each piece of Forestry Commission land in North Yorkshire; and which of these are currently for sale.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 16 November 1992]*: On 31 March 1992, the Forestry Commission managed 23,200 hectares of land in north Yorkshire, of which 20,300 hectares were woodland. The detailed information about each piece of land is not available in the form requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

The woodlands which are currently for sale on the open market are listed; the sales of a further seven woodlands are currently being negotiated.

Name of property	*Area (ha)*	*Grid reference*
East Bank, Chop Gate	27·0	NZ 575 001
Gatesforth (East), Selby	28·0	SE 568 283
Gatesforth (Main/West), Selby	46·5	SE 548 283
Kelfield, York	14·0	SE 586 395
Longrush, York	12·5	SE 592 418
Low Paradise Wood and Grazings, Bolthy	19·1	SE 504 883
Raindale Estate, Scalamley	180·0	NZ 529 027
Stillingfleet, York	10·5	SE 585 410

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list *(a)* the name, location and Ordnance Survey map reference, *(b)* the area in hectares, *(c)* the price obtained, *(d)* the name and address of the purchaser and *(e)* the date of sale for each piece of Forestry Commission land sold in the county of North Yorkshire since 1 January 1988.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 16 November 1992]*: The areas of forest land sold between 1 January 1988 and 30 September 1992 are listed; details of sales of land other than forest land, and the grid references of forest land, are not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. The Forestry Commission sought the purchaser's permission in each case to disclose the price paid and the name (but not the address) of the purchaser. Where such permission was given, the information is provided.

Year Sold	*Name and Location of Property*	*Area (ha)*	*Name of Purchaser*	*Sale Price*
1988	Grinkle Park (part), Whitby	134·5	Ibas North Ltd	£40,000
1988	Grinkle Park (part), Whitby	35·0	Cleveland Potash Ltd	£20,000
1988	Skipster Heigs Wood, Pickering	10·0		
1989	Arden, Hawsley and Blindale, Helmsley	225·0		
1989	Basil Plantation, Skipton	13·4	H. R. Davidson	
1989	Birk Bank Wood, Helmsley	14·0		
1989	Black Beck Wood, Scarborough	9·7		
1989	Bollin Wood, Tadcaster	17·1	Mr. and Mrs. [illegible] Wheeler	£21,501

Year Sold	Name and Location of Property	Area (ha)	Name of Purchaser	Sale Price
1989	Cambleforth Woodlands, Selby	43·8		
1989	Constable Burton, Northallerton	74·3	M. C. A. Wyvill	£130,000
1989	Elleron Ledge, Flamborough	13·6		
1989	Hollin Head and Piney Moor, Ripon	29·9		
1989	Pits Wood, Scarborough	9·0		
1989	Plumpton Wood, Helmsley	7·7		
1990	[No sales recorded]			
1991	Burnt Gill Plantation, Helmsley	11·4		
1991	Darncombe Shelter Belt, Scarborough	0·2		
1991	Grimston Woods Lot 1, York	5·0	Landmatch PLC	£26,527
1991	Grimston Woods Lot 2, York	24·6		
1991	Grove Wood, Terrington	5·9		
1991	Hambleton Hough, Selby	1·0		
1991	Hornby Freehold, Bedale	56·1		
1991	Naburn Wood, York	18·0		
1991	Osmotherley Catchment, Northallerton	93·4		
1991	Staker Wood, Selby	4·0		
1992	High Plumps, York	8·3		
1992	Miry Sike Wood and Paddock, Darncombe	5·0	Mr. A. Harford	£18,000
1992	Fish Pond, Wet Carr and Hebdon Woods, Sawley	27·6		

Community Care

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next plans to meet representatives of local authority social work authorities to discuss the implementation of care in the community legislation in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 27 November 1992]:* The secretary of State has no plans but Lord Fraser of Carmyllie met representatives of the COSLA social work committee on 2 October and the Association of Directors of Social Work on 20 November for discussions on community care matters. Further meetings will be arranged as the need arises.

Land and Buildings

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the present capital values of land and buildings at *(a)* Stracather hospital, *(b)* Arbroath infirmary and *(c)* Tayside health board.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 26 November 1992]*: The information requested is shown as at 1 April 1992.

	Land	Buildings	Non Operational Property	Total
	£000	£000	£000	£000
Stracathro Hospital	210	9,629	—	9,839
Arbroath Infirmary	225	3,175	—	3,400
All other Tayside Health Board Property	18,077	255,321	2,548	275,946
Tayside Health Board Total	18,512	268,125	2,548	289,185

Recycling

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he is taking to encourage the newspaper and textile industries to promote and participate in recycling schemes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 27 November 1992]:* The Government encourage recycling wherever it makes commercial and environmental sense, and have set the target of recycling 50 per cent. of the recyclable fraction of domestic waste by the year 2000. Paper accounts for approximately 33 per cent. of the domestic waste stream and textiles for around 5 per cent; high recycling rates for both materials will make a significant contribution towards achieving the target. In 1991, following discussions with the Government, the Newspaper Publishers Association agreed to aim to increase the proportion of waste paper used in newsprint consumed in the United Kingdom to at least 40 per cent. by 2000. I am also aware that the textile reclamation industry has been actively pursuing with local authorities the means of increasing existing re-use and recycling rates.

Children's Hospice

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to encourage or assist the development of a Scottish children's hospice; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 27 November 1992.]* At the request of my right hon. and noble Friend the Minister of State, the Scottish Office Home and Health Department has been actively encouraging the various voluntary sector groups seeking to establish a children's hospice in Scotland

to combine their efforts. We hope that, as a result, agreement can be reached on a co-ordinated and united approach which provides a national facility conveniently located and fully integrated with local networks of care. We believe that this initiative is primarily for the voluntary sector, but the Government will continue to monitor developments. Until more definite proposals emerge any consideration of further Government assistance would be premature.

Hospital Beds

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the current numbers of staffed beds for *(a)* orthopaedic surgery, *(b)* general surgery and *(c)* general medicine for (i) each Scottish health board, (ii) in total for Scotland and (iii) for each hospital.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 26 November 1992]:* The information requested is shown in the table.

National health service
Average available staffed beds by selected specialty
By health board area and hospital
Quarter ending 30 June 1992

Health board area/hospital	*General surgery*	*Orthopaedic surgery*	*General medicine*[1]
Scotland	3,241	2,302	4,641
Argyll and Clyde	304	141	399
Oban County Hospital	—	—	41
Dunoon and District General Hospital	6	3	—
Victoria Hospital	6	—	—
West Highland Hospital	32	1	—
Vale of Leven District General Hospital	48	3	74
Inverclyde Royal Hospital	100	61	119
Royal Alexandra Hospital	112	75	166
Ayrshire and Arran	238	200	302
Ayrshire Central and Maternity Hospital	—	—	1
Crosshouse Hospital	118	107	167
Ballochmyle Hospital	45	45	43
Ayr Hospital	74	48	92
Borders	68	46	82
Bordes General Hospital	68	46	82
Dumfries and Galloway	107	64	93
Dumfries and Galloway Royal Infirmary	86	64	93
Garrick Hospital	21	—	—
Fife	168	130	170
Cameron Hospital	8	17	—
Victoria Hospital	76	59	90
Hunter Hospital	14	—	—
Adamson Hospital	—	1	—
St. Andrews Memorial Hospital	1	1	—
Randolph Wemyss Memorial Hospital	2	—	5
Dunfermline and West Fife Hospital	57	43	—
Milesmark Hospital	9	10	75
Forth Valley	138	106	181
Falkirk and District Royal Infirmary	64	55	88
Stirling Royal Infirmary	74	51	93
Grampian	266	228	475
Aberdeen Royal Infirmary	191	78	341
Woodend General Hospital	—	132	40
City Hospital	—	—	31
Hyperbaric Centre	—	—	1
Royal Aberdeen Childrens Hospital	—	9	—
Tor-na-dee Hospital	15	1	21
Jubilee Hospital	—	—	—
Chalmers Hospital	—	—	—
Dr. Grays Hospital	60	—	17
Leanchoil Hospital	—	—	24
Greater Glasgow	664	449	1,181
Glasgow Royal Infirmary	154	92	296
Ruchill Hospital	—	—	16
Stobhill Hospital	98	36	162
Philipshill Hospital	—	69	—
Royal Samaritan Hospital	35	—	54
Victoria Infirmary	120	9	135
Southern General Hospital	84	70	174
Gartnavel General Hospital	95	99	144
Glasgow Homeopathic Hospital	—	—	20
Royal Hospital for Sick Children	—	25	34

Health board area/hospital	General surgery	Orthopaedic surgery	General medicine[1]
Glasgow Western Infirmary	77	40	145
Highland	197	99	200
Caithness General Hospital	24	—	24
Lawson Memorial Hospital	7	—	—
Raigmore Hospital	119	99	122
Town and County Hospital Nairn	—	—	10
Belford Hospital	29	—	17
Mackinnon Memorial Hospital	18	—	2
Ross Memorial Hospital	—	—	10
Nicolson Mackenzie Hospital	—	—	15
Lanarkshire	341	249	412
Monklands District General Hospital	83	72	91
Law Hospital	119	99	164
Hairmyres Hospital	97	45	93
Stonehouse Hospital	43	33	63
Lothian	371	333	711
Eastern General Hospital	52	—	95
Edenhall Hospital	—	—	15
Roodlands General Hospital	8	—	14
Western General Hospital	89	—	166
Astley Ainslie Hospital	—	24	—
Liberton Hospital	8	—	—
Princess Margaret Rose Hospital	—	184	—
Royal Infirmary	151	88	345
St. Johns Hospital at Howden	63	36	75
Orkney	39	—	—
Balfour Hospital	39	—	—
Shetland	26	—	20
Gilbert Bain Hospital	26	—	20
Tayside	272	258	379
Ninewells Hospital	144	—	194
Dundee Royal Infirmary	—	113	—
Royal Victoria Hospital	2	2	3
Dundee Limb Fitting Centre	—	17	—
Bridge of Earn Hospital	—	74	—
Perth Royal Infirmary	77	6	86
Arbroath Infirmary	—	—	26
Forfar Infirmary	14	—	—
Stracathro Hospital	34	47	71
Western Isles	42	—	35
Lewis Hospital	35	—	27
Daliburgh Hospital	7	—	8

[1] Includes the following sub-specialties: Cardiology, Metabolic diseases, Gastroenterology, Poisons, Nephrology, Rheumatology, Genito-urinary medicine, Medical oncology, Haematology, Homeopathy.

Foreign Landowners

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what estimate he has made of the proportion of the land area of Scotland, by region, owned by foreign nationals.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 27 November 1992]:* None. Information on land transactions is however available from the registers of Scotland Executive Agency.

Disability

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what measures he has in place to liaise regularly with representatives of disability interests; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 27 November 1992]:* Officials have frequent contact, in meetings and more informally, with many of the voluntary sector organisations representing people with disabilities. In particular, officials sit as assessors on the executive committee of Disability Scotland and on the council of the Scottish Society for Mental Health. They also sit as observers on Disability Scotland's Access and Mobility Committee and on the Disabled Person's Transport Advisory Committee.

Police

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next plans to meet representatives of serving *(a)* chief police officers and *(b)* the Scottish Police Federation to discuss community policing and combating crime; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 27 November 1992]:* My right hon. Friend meets chief police officers and representatives of the Scottish Police Federation from time to time but has at present no plans for meetings on the lines proposed.

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next plans to meet the Chief Constable of Strathclyde police to discuss community policing and initiatives to combat crime; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 27 November 1992]:* My right hon. Friend meets the chief constable of Strathclyde police from time to time, but has at present no plans for a meeting on the lines proposed.

Court Refurbishment

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) when Aberdeen sheriff court will be equipped with closed circuit television and video recording equipment for use in trials;

(2) how many sheriff courts in Scotland have *(a)* closed circuit television and *(b)* video recording equipment for use in trials.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 27 November 1992]:* I refer to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) on 17 November at column *377* about closed circuit television links for child witnesses. Video playback equipment is provided by the party which wishes to use video material in evidence.

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what has been the total cost of court refurbishment work in Scotland since 1990;

(2)what was the final cost for the refurbishment of Aberdeen sheriff court.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 27 November 1992]:* I refer to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) on 17 November at column *377*.

Licensing Laws

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has available on any correlation between crime and licensing laws; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 27 November 1992]:* Liquor licensing statistics for 1991 were published in August this year (Scottish Office Statistical Bulletin CRJ/1992/5) following the enactment of stricter statutory controls in the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Act 1990. Since 1 January 1991, licensing boards have been required to take account of tighter criteria for the grant of extensions of permitted hours and of any observations made on an application by the chief constable. There are indications that some boards have already reduced the numbers and/or length of regular extensions awarded in their areas. Any trends may become clearer when 1992 figures are available.

Manufacturing Output, Paisley

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the percentage change in the output of the manufacturing sector in the Paisley postcode area for each of the past 15 years.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 27 November 1992]:* Gross output data for the manufacturing sector are available for the Paisley postcode area from 1984 onwards. These are set out in the table.

	Gross output[1] £m	Per cent. change
1984	372·2	—
1985	368·8	−0·9
1986	356·3	−3·4
1987	432·1	21·3
1988	501·1	16·0
1989	513·0	2·4

[1] Only available in current prices.
Source: Annual Census of Production 1984-1989.

Poll Tax

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish, for the last three years for which information is available, a breakdown by poll tax collecting authority showing the number of warrants taken out against poll tax payers in arrears, the total cost involved in pursuing these warrants, the number and amount involved in warrants abandoned and subsequently written off, the number and value of warrants withdrawn due to error on the part of the local authority and the number and value withdrawn due to error on the part of the sheriff officials.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 27 November 1992]:* This information is not available centrally.

Carpet Industry

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the state of the carpet manufacturing industry in Scotland.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 27 November 1992]:* Six carpet manufacturing plants currently operate in Scotland —four of which are owned by Stoddart Sekers International plc. Scotland also has several yarn spinning and dyeing companies which supply the carpet industry. Employment in the industry in Scotland is approximately 1,600.

Community Care

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to ring-fence or earmark resources allocated under the care in the community legislation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 30 November 1992]:* The sums announced by my right hon. and noble Friend the Minister of State on 2 October for implementation of our community care reforms will not be formally ring fenced but will be clearly identified in the distribution of grant-aided expenditure as resources which have been made available for local authorities to spend on community care. We expect local authorities in Scotland to spend all these resources on community care and will be monitoring the use of these resources carefully.

Industrial Policy

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the initiatives taken on industrial policy and the governance of Scotland by him during the United Kingdom's presidency of the EC; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 30 November 1992]:* On 12 November following the Chancellor's autumn statement, my right hon. Friend announced initiatives totalling some £340 million to boost the construction industry, to increase resources for housing and to reduce the rate burden on Scottish business.

In the course of his stock taking on constitutional issues, the Prime Minister heard a useful range of views when he visited Scotland in September. He will be announcing his conclusions in due course.

As the hon. Member will be aware, the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs has been re-established.

Forestry Commission Land

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the lands in Scotland proposed for sale by the Forestry Commission, access to which is over private land and for which agreements for continuation of access will not be concluded.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 25 November 1992]:* The information is not available at present in the detail requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. I shall write to the hon. Member with the information within the next two months.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 2 December 1992

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Ozone Depletion

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Attorney-General if he will introduce a leakage prevention programme for all refrigeration and air conditioning equipment owned and operated by his departments; if he will publish targets for reductions in leakages; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The premises occupied by the Law Officers' departments all form part of the estate of Property Holdings, which is part of the Department of the Environment, and is responsible for any refrigeration and air conditioning equipment incorporated in those premises.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Attorney-General if he will implement a refrigerant recycling and reclaim policy covering all departmental equipment currently using chlorofluorocarbons and hydrochlorofluorocarbons; if he will publish targets for departmental reuse and recycling; if he will implement an equipment conversion and replacement programme for all departmental uses of CFCs and HCFCs; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The Law Officers' departments have no current plans for introducing a refrigerant recycling and reclaim policy. However, the departments are replacing halon fire extinguishers with ozone-friendly alternatives. Consideration will be given to the phasing-out of equipment such as refrigerators using CFCs and HCFCs where practicable alternatives exist. Small items of equipment using CFCs and HCFCs, such as refrigerators, will be disposed of in an approved manner which ensures the secure recovery of the gas.

Matrix Churchill

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Attorney-General what precedents he considered in preparing his advice for Ministers to sign public interest immunity certificates in relation to the Matrix Churchill case.

The Attorney-General: I have already told the House of my legal advice on public interest immunity. The signing of the certificates falls within Lord Justice Scott's terms of reference and detailed questions about this matter are now a matter for his review.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Bereavement Training

Mr. Abbott: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what training is made available to judges and magistrates in relation to defendants who may have suffered a bereavement; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: No specific training is given. However, all members of the professional and lay judiciary are encouraged to be sensitive to the needs of those appearing before them.

Ozone Depletion

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will implement a refrigerant recycling and reclaim policy covering all departmental equipment currently using chlorofluorocarbons and hydrochlorofluorocarbons; if he will publish targets for departmental reuse and recycling; if he will implement an equipment conversion and replacement programme for all departmental uses of CFCs and HCFCs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: It is already departmental policy not to procure new or replacement equipment which uses CFCs, and for existing equipment which uses them to be disposed of by qualified contractors when it is replaced. It is also departmental policy to convert and replace this equipment as the opportunity arises. The Department is committed to the targets for the reduction and elimination of CFCs and HCFCs established by the Montreal protocol.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will introduce a leakage prevention programme for all refrigeration and air conditioning equipment owned and operated by his Department; if he will publish targets for reductions in leakages; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The operation and planned maintenance contracts for the Department's estate provide for the routine testing, including leak detection, of refrigeration and air conditioning equipment owned and operated by the Department. Since these arrangements are intended to reduce leakage to the minimum, ultimately the target is nil.

Land Registry

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, pursuant to his answer of 2 November, *Official Report*, column 26, what has been the cost to the Exchequer of the chief executive of Her Majesty's Land Registry's visits to Australia and New Zealand during the last 12 months.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The hon. Member's question concerns a specific matter on which the chief executive of Her Majesty's Land Registry is best placed to provide an answer and I have accordingly asked the chief executive to reply direct.

Letter from John Manthorpe to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 1 December 1992:

The Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, has asked me to reply to your question concerning the cost of the Exchequer of my fact finding visit to land registries in Australia and New Zealand in October 1991.

The Land Registry is a self-financing agency that makes no call on the Exchequer. The visit, which was in response to an invitation to address the 19th Conference of Registrars of Title, was made at a total cost of £5,199.55.

Records

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what assessment the Public Record Office has made of the contribution made by family historians and genealogists to the world of archives and records in the United Kingdom since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The hon. Member's question concerns a specific matter on which the chief executive of the Public Record Office is best placed to provide an answer and I have accordingly asked the chief executive, the Keeper of Public Records, to reply direct.

Letter from Sarah Tyacke to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 30 November 1992:

As Chief Executive of the Public Record Office I am answering your Parliamentary Question, since it is a matter delegated to me under the terms of the Agency's Framework Document.

My responsibilities as the Keeper of Public Records in the world of archives and records in the United Kingdom principally involve the supervision of the care and preservation of public records, as defined in the Public Records Acts and the management of the Public Record Office. The public records include those in places outside the Public Record Office appointed as places of deposit, for the most part local authority record offices. Such local places of deposit are under the management of the responsible local or other authority; and they hold many other historical records which are used by family historians and benefit greatly from their voluntary activities in cataloguing and indexing such records. The wider ambit of local record offices and other repositories means that it would not be appropriate for the Public Record Office to make an assessment of the kind which you envisage.

Family historians and genealogists have since 1979, and earlier, represented an increasingly strong element in the readership of the Public Record Office as well as other record offices. The Office has well established links with the major societies and other institutions representing interests in this field. It takes into account these interests in its approach to the selection of records. The growing interest in using the records for these purposes has been a major factor in the making of improvements to the finding aids to the records, and in the planning of reader services both at Kew and Chancery Lane, most notably in the opening of new reading rooms at Chancery Lane for the population census returns in 1990, in their expansion in 1991, and their opening on Saturdays from July 1992.

Family history interest is represented on the Advisory Council on Public Records and also among the Friends of the Public Record Office, set up in 1983, whose secretary is currently also a member of the Advisory Council. Much valuable work is being undertaken by volunteers, many of whom are family historians, under the aegis of the Friends, in indexing and listing records in the Public Record Office. The contribution made by family historians in their own right and the benefit in the field of historical research.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what arrangements he is considering to safeguard county record offices for local historians and genealogists in the event of local government reorganisation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: No decisions have yet been made on local government reorganisation in either England or Wales. It is, therefore, too early to be able to assess the implications of reorganisation for county record offices. In the context of the Lord Chancellor's responsibility for public records, the Lord Chancellor will in due course be considering any advice offered to him by his Advisory Council on Public Records about any implications for the provision of archive services.

Mortgage Repossessions

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will list the number of mortgage repossession orders in each local authority in England and Wales in each year since 1987.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Information cannot be provided on the basis of local authority areas. Mortgage possession statistics are collected from county courts the catchment areas of which cannot be easily related to the boundaries of local authority areas. The number of orders for each court, county and standard economic region are published quarterly and placed in the House of Commons Library.

Fraud Cases

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what plans he has to accept the recommendation of the Roskill report that complex fraud cases should be tried by a tribunal comprising a judge and two lay members.

Mr. Jack: Legislation would be required before this recommendation could be implemented. We have no current plans to introduce such legislation, but the procedures for serious fraud cases will be kept under review, taking into account any relevant conclusions or recommendations from the Royal Commission on criminal justice when it reports next year.

Jurors (Challenges)

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will introduce legislation to restore the right of defendants to challenge jurors without giving reasons.

Mr. Jack: I have been asked to reply.

We have no plans to do so.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Alerce Timber (Customs Seizure)

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he intends to take legal action following the Customs and Excise's seizure of a quantity of alerce timber in Oxfordshire in May; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope: Decisions on whether to institute legal proceedings are a matter for the Commissioners of Customs and Excise. I understand that the commissioners, on the basis of the evidence before them, do not feel that they would be justified in instituting criminal proceedings in this case.

Mortgage Interest Tax Relief

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the costs to the Treasury of mortgage interest tax relief and its year-on-year projected costs through to 1995-96, displayed at current prices; and what would be the effect on these costs of a 1 per cent. fall in interest rates.

Mr. Darrell: The cost of mortgage interest tax relief in 1992-93 is provisionally estimated to be £5·2 billion based on the conventional assumption of no further changes in interest rates. A further one percentage point fall in interest rates—if assumed to take effect from 1 January 1993—would reduce the cost to about £5·1 billion.

The cost in future years will depend on the pattern of borrowing, the eligibility of borrowers for mortgage interest tax relief, tax rates and interest rates.

Imports

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the United Kingdom percentage deficit total in trade of imports for the current and last financial year; and what percentage of this deficit derives from EEC partners.

Mr. Nelson: Information about visible trade is published regularly in the Central Statistical Office's "Monthly Review of External Trade Statistics", and is also available on the Central Statistical Office database, which may be accessed by the House of Commons Library.

Manufacturing Output

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the percentage rise in the United Kingdom's manufacturing output during 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Mr. Nelson: Indices of United Kingdom manufacturing output can be found on the CSO databank, which can be accessed by the House of Commons Library. Information is currently available for months up to September 1992.

Public Expenditure

Mr. Straw: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the planned real terms increases in the following components of public expenditure for 1993-94 compared with the latest estimates for 1992-93 of *(a)* general Government expenditure excluding privatisation proceeds, *(b)* the new control total, *(c)* central Government expenditure, *(d)* central Government support for local authorities in England, *(e)* local authorities' self-financed expenditure in England and *(f)* total standard spending for local authorities in England.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 27 November 1992]:* The information requested, consistent with the autumn statement, is set out in the table.

Per cent. real growth in 1993-94 on 1992-93

Public expenditure plans and projections	*Estimated outturn*
Central Government expenditure (excluding privatisation proceeds)	3·75
New control total	2·30
Central Government expenditure within the new control total	[1]0·40
Support for local authorities in England	[2]n/a
Local authorities' self-financed expenditure in England	[3]n/a
Local authorities' standard spending in England	[4]0·4

[1] Growth rate after adjusting for transfers and classification changes.

[2] Figures for total central Government support for local authorities in England are not available at this stage. A detailed break-down will be published in the Statistical Supplement to the Autumn Statement.

[3] Local authorities self-financed expenditure is projected on a United Kingdom basis, and no figures are available for England alone.

[4] Growth on TSS set in 1992-93, after allowing for transfers of functions.

Independent Taxation

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many new offices were built to accommodate staff handling the work flowing from the changes introduced in 1990 in relation to independent taxation for married women and the associated changes relating to bank and building society interest; where these new offices are located; what the cost of these offices was; and how many of these offices have subsequently been closed.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 30 November 1992]:* Twenty-four Inland Revenue offices were set up to deal with the very substantial growth in claims for tax repayments that was expected to follow the introduction of independent taxation in 1990 and the abolition of composite rate tax on bank and building society interest in 1991. These offices are located in Barnsley; Barnstaple; Belfast (two offices); Birkenhead; Bolton; Bootle; Dundee; Falkirk; Glenrothes; Great Yarmouth; Hull; Leicester; Manchester; Middlesbrough; Nottingham (two offices); Plymouth; St. Austell; Southampton; Sunderland; Swansea; Telford; and Wrexham.

Eleven of the buildings that house these offices were purchased, for a total cost of some £55 million, with the remainder being rented. Nineteen offices are to be closed, because tax repayment claims have not been received on the scale we expected. In all but four cases, the Inland Revenue is to re-use the buildings for other work.

HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION

Health and Safety

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick-on-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission what steps have been taken to implement new health and safety measures in the Palace of Westminster in respect of the provision of suitable office furniture, lighting and ventilation as well as eye tests in respect of VDU users for *(a)* staff employed by the Commission and *(b)* staff employed by hon. Members.

Mr. Beith: All possible steps are being taken to ensure that the House complies with the new health and safety measures in respect of the provision of suitable office furniture, light and ventilation in the Palace of Westminster and the parliamentary outbuildings. All office furniture being purchased for use in conjunction with VDUs in the Palace of Westminster complies with the minimum requirements set out in European Community Council directive 9/270/EEC.

An expanded occupational health service has been in place in the Palace of Westminster since September 1991, to deal with health and safety issues with particular emphasis on pending legislation including the EC directive on VDU users. The occupational health adviser is available to all staff employed by the House of Commons Commission and staff employed by right hon. and hon. Members to assess and advise on working environments,

light and ventilation, the ergonomics of individual work stations and work patterns, with a view to making recommendations as appropriate. In addition, VDU eye tests are freely available to all the above staff; appointments for these should be made direct with the occupational health adviser.

Official Report (CD-ROM)

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Chairman of the Information Committee when the *Official Report* for 1991-92 will be available to hon. Members on CD-ROM.

Mr. Waller: A CD-ROM version of the *Official Report* for 1991-92 is expected to be available for purchase by individuals later this month and will be made accessible to hon. Members via the Library in early 1993. The question of supply through the Vote Office to those hon. Members who wish to receive it, as an alternative to the bound volumes, is under consideration.

ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

Early-day Motions

Mrs. Lait: To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee what was the estimated cost to the House of printing and publishing early-day motions in *(a)* Session 1991-92 and *(b)* Session 1992-93 up to the summer adjournment.

Mr. Michael Martin: The estimated cost to the House of printing and publishing early-day motions in:*(a)* Session 1991-1992 is £860,000, and *(b)* Session 1992-1993 up to the summer adjournment is £485,000.

TRANSPORT

Passenger Rail Services

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received concerning the consultation document "The Franchising of Passenger Rail Services"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Over 100 responses have been received to the consultation document, including more than 50 expressing interest in operating passenger rail services under franchise. The replies are being considered and various points are being pursued and clarified with some of the respondents. We hope to be able to announce early next year the first services or groups of services that will be prepared for franchising.

Citizens Charter

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the progress made by his Department on setting targets under the citizens charter.

Mr. Norris: The Department has made significant progress in establishing an effective framework of targets across its areas of responsibility. These are detailed in the recently published White Paper "The Citizen's Charter, First Report: 1992" (Cm 2101). Nationalised industries and executive agencies sponsored by the Department have published their targets in individual charters and service guides; further details can be found in the bibliography of the White Paper.

Employee Transport Schemes

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to establish pump priming funds for companies wishing to establish company employee transport schemes.

Mr. Freeman: No. Transport to places of employment is a matter for the individuals and companies concerned.

A5

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action has been taken by his Department in connection with the rate assessment and scheme identification study into the A5 from Old Stratford to the M42 announced in the "Roads for Prosperity" White Paper of May 1989.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The report on the scheme identification study for the length of A5 between Old Stratford in Buckinghamshire and the M42 near Tamworth is under consideration.

Road Humps

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received from *(a)* resident's associations, *(b)* local highways authorities, *(c)* individual members of the public and *(d)* bus operators on the effect of road humps on traffic in (i) the streets where they are sited and (ii) the nearest streets without road humps which provide alternative routes.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: No central record is kept of the number of such representations and it would not be economic to produce such figures. Road humps are installed on local roads, for which local authorities have responsibility. For this reason, the majority of the approaches I received on road humps are from local highway authorities seeking technical advice.

M1

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects contracts to be placed for the widening of the M1 from junction 1 to its junction with the M6.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Apart from the scheme for widening between junctions 9 and 10 (northbound) on which work will start next year, it is too early to predict with any certainty when contracts might be placed for the other four schemes which make up the proposed widening of the M1 between the M25 (junction 6A) and the M6 (junction 19). Preparation work is proceeding satisfactorily. The public were consulted on proposals for widening the length between the M25 and junction 10 in September and on the length between junctions 10 and 15 earlier this month. Consultations on proposals for junction 19 and for the length between junctions 15 and 19 are expected to take place around the middle of next year. We will make every effort to announce our preferred option for each scheme within as short a time as possible.

Emergency Telephones, Motorways

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to eliminate traffic noise from the emergency telephones on motorways.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: It is not possible totally to eliminate the effects on motorway telephones of noise generated by passing traffic. All new telephones are equipped with noise-cancelling microphones to reduce the effects of noise.

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to reduce the distance between emergency telephones on motorways.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I have no plans to reduce the distance between emergency telephones on motorways.

A1

Mr. Hague: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to announce whether the new policy on motorway service areas will apply to the A1 when it has been upgraded to motorway standard.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I hope to make an announcement before Christmas.

Civil Servants

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many civil servants are currently employed by his Department *(a)* in London and *(b)* elsewhere.

Mr. Norris: Sixteen thousand and seventy six civil servants are currently employed by the Department, including its executive agencies; 2,594 are in inner London, 695 in the intermediate and outer London area, and 12,787 elsewhere.

Railway Viaduct, Colne

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the annual cost to British Rail of maintaining the railway viaduct at Colne, Lancashire.

Mr. Freeman: Detailed costs of the maintenance of individual structures on lines are a matter for British Rail.

Foreign Underground Systems

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what studies he has commissioned of foreign underground transport systems as a means of improving *(a)* the operational efficiency *(b)* the number of passengers carried by and *(c)* the financial outturn of London Transport.

Mr. Norris: None. London Underground Ltd. has close links with other metro systems worldwide, and draws on their experience, where appropriate, to improve its own performance.

Highway Authorities (Liaison)

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the level of liaison between highway authorities when one highway authority is proposing a road scheme that has an indirect effect on a neighbouring authority.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The level of liaison is a matter for authorities themselves to determine. In deciding whether to accept a particular scheme for transport supplementary grant support, the Secretary of State considers all aspects including the supporting information provided in the authority's transport policies and programme submission.

London Transport (Passengers Charter)

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the improvements which have been made by London Transport as a result of the passengers charter provisions on *(a)* avoidance of delays and disruption of passengers, *(b)* paying of compensation to passengers whose journeys have been delayed or disrupted and *(c)* providing timely information to passengers about delays and disruption.

Mr. Norris: London Underground's customer charter introduced a refund scheme for customers whose journeys are delayed for 20 minutes or more for reasons within LUL's control. The number of such delays is now lower than it was when the scheme was launched in July. On information, my Department has set London Underground targets to improve by 1 April 1993 the quality of information provided on trains and at stations, so that 78 per cent. and 76 per cent. of customers respectively rate it as acceptable or better. Both these targets are now being met.

M66 (Middleton-Denton)

Mr. Callaghan: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport on what future date it is proposed to start construction on the Middleton-Denton section of the M66 motorway.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I expect work at the northern end of the scheme from the River Irk to the junction of the existing M66 with the M62 motorway to start next March. My right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for the Environment and for Transport are considering the inspector's report of the public inquiry into revised orders and compulsory purchase orders for the central and southern sections of the scheme which ended last February. Subject to that, work could start on the Tameside section south of the River Medlock in 1995 and on the final section between the River Medlock and the River Irk in 1996.

A38 (Departmental Survey)

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he now expects to publish the survey of the A38 undertaken by his Department; when the survey was originally intended to be published; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 1 December 1992]:* The study into the long-term needs of the A38 between Exeter and Plymouth, which was announced in the White Paper "Roads for Prosperity", was always regarded as a longer-term project, and no date for its commencement or completion was set.

I now intend to invite fee competition bids for this study early next year.

Village Bypass Schemes

Mr. Moate: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many village bypass schemes not on primary routes have been accepted for transport supplementary grant during the most recent five years for which information is available.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 1 December 1992]:* Following is the information:

Year	Number of schemes
1988-89	13
1989-90	12
1990-91	10
1991-92	7
1992-93	11

Mr. Moate: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport in what circumstances his Department could be expected favourably to consider for transport supplementary grant a village bypass scheme which is not on a designated primary route; what guidance he has issued to local highways authorities about this matter beyond the published criteria for transport supplementary grant; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 1 December 1992]:* My Department receives annual bids for eligible schemes from the 108 English local highway authorities. They are considered on their overall merits in competition. The number accepted for TSG depends on the level of resources available.

The Department issues an annual circular explaining the operation of the TSG system. The latest edition is local authority circular 3/92. It contains details of the eligibility criteria. All roads which are of more than local importance are eligible for TSG. In addition, guidance notes on the completion of the finance forms used to support bids for TSG are issued to each local highway authority. These notes include particulars of information required to support bids for TSG on individual major schemes.

Q Registration System

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will consider reforms of the Q registration system for motor vehicles to prevent abuses.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Yes. The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency is currently reviewing the system for the allocation of Q registration marks in consultation with the police and other interested parties.

ENVIRONMENT

Local Authorities, Lancashire

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list for each local authority in Lancashire the capital receipts held by them resulting from the sale of land, property and other assets.

Mr. Robin Squire: The total usable receipts held by each local authority in Lancashire as at 31 March 1992 are shown in the table. Information disaggregated into receipts from sale of land, property and other assets is not available.

	£'000s
Blackburn	0
Blackpool	1,797
Burnley	1,103
Chorley	600
Fylde	282
Hyndburn	259
Lancaster	385
Pendle	675
Preston	138
Ribble Valley	1,044
Rossendale	0
South Ribble	178
West Lancashire	1,237
Wyre	840
Lancashire county council	1,961

Source: Latest local authority returns.

Local Government Finance

Ms. Janet Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list, by local authority area in England and Wales, the value of capital receipts held by those authorities, and the annual interest attracted on those capital receipts for revenue spending.

Mr. Robin Squire: No information is held centrally on the interest attracted on usable capital receipts for each local authority. I have arranged for the latest available information on the usable capital receipts held by authorities in England at 31 March 1992 to be placed in the Library of the House. Information for Wales is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Solar Energy

Mr. Dalis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to adopt passive solar designs for all Government buildings.

Mr. Baldry: The Department of the Environment encourages all forms of energy efficiency measures in Government buildings, including that of passive solar design where appropriate. However, the application of such measures is the responsibility of individual Departments.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the settlement figure to local authorities from the financial year 1984-85 to 1991-92; and what was the percentage increase from 1984-85 to 1991-92.

Mr. Robin Squire: The information is as follows:

English local authority settlement figures

Year	Grant related expenditure £ million
1984-85	19,882
1985-86	21,221
1986-87	22,790
1987-88	23,743
1988-89	26,006
1989-90	27,662

Year	Net total standard spending £ million
1990-91	29,805
1991-92	35,587

The increase from 1984-85 to 1991-92 was 84·3 per cent. taking into account changes of responsibilities with the introduction of the community charge system. Net total standard spending is equal to the aggregate of standard spending assessments and is broadly comparable with grant-related expenditure.

Timber

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he has taken following the seizure in Oxfordshire of convention on international trade in endangered species appendix 1 listed timber in May 1992.

Mr. Maclean: This is a matter for Her Majesty's Customs and Excise, who are primarily responsible for the enforcement of CITES controls in the United Kingdom. I understand that an extensive investigation was carried out by their officers, but insufficient evidence was discovered to support a prosecution. Customs action has therefore been confined to the seizure of the timber.

Leaseholds

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what arrangements he proposes to make for the establishment of a new advisory agency to assist leaseholders seeking enfranchisement.

Sir George Young: I announced on 17 November, during a sitting of Standing Committee B on the Housing and Urban Development Bill, that the Government would be prepared to contribute towards the costs of a leasehold enfranchisement advisory agency for an initial period. The Leasehold Reform Co-ordinating Committee is working on a scheme for such an agency and hopes to submit proposals shortly.

Civil Servants

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many civil servants are currently employed by his Department *(a)* in London and *(b)* elsewhere.

Mr. Howard: The Department of the Environment currently employs 4,012 civil servants in London, 686 of them in agencies; 2,722 civil servants are employed elsewhere, 721 of them in agencies.

Elephants

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his policy towards the conservation of elephants.

Mr. Maclean: The Government share the widespread international concern about any threat to the survival of the elephant, and we have given strong support to efforts to conserve the species. For example, we are contributing £600,000 this year to a number of elephant conservation projects in Africa, in addition to our substantial support for general wildlife projects which also benefit elephants. We are committed to maintaining the current ban on the ivory trade for as long as necessary, and at the conference of the parties to the convention on international trade in endangered species in March, we played a leading part in opposing moves to allow a resumption of trade.

We also supported proposals made at the conference for more discussion between elephant range states and non-range states on the complex questions of elephant management and trade. To this end, one of the Department's senior officials is at present leading an EC fact-finding mission to Africa; they will meet policy makers, wildlife managers, conservationists and non-governmental organisations in a number of countries.

Urban Development Corporations

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to announce the budget for urban development corporations for 1993-94.

Mr. Robin Squire: The 1993-94 budget for UDCs will be announced as soon as the figures have been finalised.

City Challenge

Ms. Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the planned expenditure on the urban programme in 1993-94; how much of this is to be diverted to city challenge; what plans there are to make city challenge available to all urban programme authorities; and what assessment he has made of the reduction in the number of jobs to be created resulting from the change in the urban programme funding.

Mr. Robin Squire: The answer is:

(a) A total of £176 million is to be made available to urban programme authorities in 1993-94; *(b)* None. City challenge resources for next year are additional to the £176 million; *(c)* All 57 urban programme authorities were invited to compete in round 2 of city challenge. The future of city challenge will be considered in the light of next year's review of urban needs and progress in the areas successful in the first two competitions; *(d)* Taking city challenge together with the urban programme, resources will rise from £319 million in 1992-93 to £408 million in 1993-94. I would therefore expect to see a corresponding increase in the number of jobs created as a result of this expenditure.

Urban Programme (Rochdale)

Ms. Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much of the funds allocated to the urban programme for 1993-94 Rochdale will receive; and how much of Rochdale's allocation will be financed through *(a)* the sale of council houses and *(b)* the sale of council owned land.

Mr. Robin Squire: Local authorities' provisional urban programme allocations for 1993-94 will be announced next January as usual. Allocations will cover continuing commitments entered into in 1992-93 and prior years.

It is for the local authority to decide how to finance the 25 per cent. contribution it is required to make to urban programme revenue expenditure.

In assessing bids for the urban partnership fund in 1993-94, we will take account of the authority's willingness and ability to provide part of the finance from usable capital receipts.

Ms. Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many jobs have been created in the Rochdale area as a result of urban programmes in the last five years.

Mr. Robin Squire: The estimated number of jobs created/preserved in the Rochdale area as a result of urban programmes (UP) in the last five years is as follows:

	Number
1988-89	215
1989-90	693
1990-91	663
1991-92	4,900
[1]1992-93	150

[1]Interim estimate.

Sources: Annual reports for Rochdale UP 1988-89 to 1991-92 and Rochdale UP submission for 1992-93.

Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has yet considered the response of Sefton metropolitan borough council to the notice served on the authority on 24 August under section 19A of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. and learned Friend has given careful consideration to the response which Sefton metropolitan borough council has made to the notice served on the authority on 24 August, and has today given a direction under section 19B of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980. The effect of the direction is that, after 1 June 1993, the authority will cease to have the power itself to carry out highways maintenance work as described in the authority's document entitled "Annual Service Contract No. 7".

He has also today served a notice on the council under section 19A of the 1980 Act setting out his view that in 1990-91 the authority had failed to achieve the required rate of return in carrying out the work described in section 10(2)(d) of the Act—maintenance work, other than such works of maintenance in connection with highways or the maintenance of a sewer. The authority is required to respond to the notice by 13 January 1993.

Direct Labour Organisations

Mr. David Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he proposes to take against those local authorities whose direct labour organisations made significant financial losses in 1990-91.

Mr. Robin Squire: Statutory notices under the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 and the Local Government Act 1988 were served on 36 local authorities between July and September of this year in respect of financial failure in 1990-91. My right hon. and learned Friend has now considered the responses of the 10 authorities on which notices were served on 16 July. He has today given directions under section 19B of the 1980 Act to Canterbury city council in respect of new construction work and to Halton borough council in respect of highways and sewerage work.

He has decided to take no further action in respect of financial failure in 1990-91 by Aylesbury Vale district council (building maintenance), Blackburn borough council (other cleaning), Gillingham borough council (building maintenance), Hampshire county council (ground maintenance), Kerrier district council (building cleaning), South Bedfordshire district council (building maintenance) and Wear Valley district council (building maintenance). In all these cases, either the relevant work is now being carried out by private contractors or the authority has demonstrated to my right hon. and learned Friend's satisfaction that it has taken the necessary remedial measures to ensure that statutory requirement were met in 1991-92 or are likely to be met in the current financial year.

Similarly, he has decided to take no further action for the present against the London borough of Tower Hamlets (building maintenance) and Halton district council (building maintenance) pending receipt of further quarterly financial returns. He is still considering responses from the remaining 26 authorities on which notices were served during August and September.

Airport Sales

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if a local authority will be entitled to spend all the capital receipts it receives from an airport sale; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire *[holding answer 26 November 1992]:* Under regulations which came into force on 13 November 1992, local authorities may spend in full the capital receipts obtained between that date and 31 December 1993 from sales of most assets, including share or loan capital in airport companies acquired before 15 February 1989.

Correspondence

Mr. Spreat: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the average time taken by the Ministers in his Department, including himself, to answer letters from hon. Members, in each of the first three quarters of 1992, measuring the time from the receipt of the letter to the despatch of the substantive reply.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 1 December 1992]:* It is not possible to identify from my Department's records an arithmetical average length of time taken to reply to an hon. Member's letter. Figures from my Department will be published in the *Official Report*, and made available in the House Libraries, early next year, showing the volume of ministerial correspondence from hon. Members in 1992, the targets set for reply and the percentage of replies within target. My Department's objective is to reply within three weeks of receipt, and this target was achieved for 58 per cent. of letters for hon. Members received in the first nine months of this year.

The table shows information for each of the first three quarters of 1992, and the year to date:

	Within 3 weeks Per cent.	*Within 4 weeks Per cent.*	*Within 5 weeks Per cent.*
1st quarter	65	84	93
2nd quarter	58	75	89
3rd quarter	46	69	83
Overall	58	76	91

Sheltered Housing

Ms. Joan Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received about the retention of sheltered housing incorporating a warden service.

Mr. Baldry: Clauses in the Housing Urban Development Bill will give housing authorities the powers to provide welfare services for the tenants and account for the costs within the housing revenue account. These powers would avoid disruption to these services following a Court of Appeal judgment. However, our policy is that the HRA should be a landlord account, and our intention is that these powers should remain in force only until local authorities have had an opportunity to make new arrangements for these services. Before we take any decisions about changes to the arrangements, there will be full consultation with all interested parties, early in the new year.

The Department has received approximately 130 representations about this subject from local authorities, their organisations and others. The powers in the Bill for housing authorities to provide welfare services and account for their costs in the HRA have been widely welcomed. Many of them suggest that welfare services should continue to be provided by housing authorities as part of the housing service, or at least until local government reorganisation is complete. These representations will be considered along with those received in response to next year's consultation exercise.

Government Car Service

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many organisations submitted tenders for the contract of supplying vehicles under the Government car service; which company won the contract; when the tender for the contract will next be advertised; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I have been asked to reply.

Cars for the Government car service are generally purchased by the Department of the Environment through a number of running contracts placed by the Ministry of Defence with vehicle manufactures. The requirements are advertised at approximately three-yearly intervals. The next advertisement is likely to be placed in 1994-95.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Maastricht Treaty

Mr. Legg: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will set out the differences between the European Economic Community established under the treaty of Rome and the union to be established by the treaty of Maastricht.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The union embraces both intergovernmental co-operation—in the fields of common foreign and security policy and justice/home affairs—and co-operation under the treaty of Rome. The Community institutions will act in the former fields under the provisions of titles V and VI of the Maastricht treaty, which sets out different rules from those applicable under the treaty of Rome.

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the articles in the Maastricht treaty which he expects to give rise to the need for domestic legislation in each year from 1993 to 1999.

Mr. Garel-Jones: It is not possible to predict in which areas co-operation with the other member states in the period 1993-99 will give rise to a need for domestic legislation.

Esperanto

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received regarding the use of Esperanto as a means of resolving linguistic problems within the European Community consequent on accession of Scandinavian and eastern European countries.

Mr. Garel-Jones: None. We would expect the rules governing the languages of the institutions of the Community to be a matter for consideration in the course of accession negotiations.

Languages (Convention)

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the countries which have signed the Council of Europe convention for minority or regional languages, together with those eligible which have not signed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The following countries have signed the Council of Europe convention on regional or minority languages: Austria, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway and Spain.

The following countries are eligible but have not signed: Belgium, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, France, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Poland, Portugal, San Marino, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey and the United Kingdom.

We are still considering whether to sign the European charter on regional or minority languages.

Civil Servants

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many civil servants are currently employed by his Department *(a)* in London and *(b)* elsewhere in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Goodlad: On 31 October 1992, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office employed 3,679·5 staff in London and 3,613·5 staff elsewhere in the United Kingdom.

Foreign and Security Policy

Mr. Jenkin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the application of article J.5 of the provisions on a common foreign and security policy of the proposed treaty on European union in circumstances where United Kingdom policy or interests differ from the policy of the union as represented by the presidency.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Article J.5 of the treaty on European union provides for the presidency to represent the union

on the basis of common positions within the common foreign and security policy. In order for there to be a common position, all member states must agree to it. Where there is no common position, member states speak for themselves. Article J.5(4) specifically safeguards the United Kingdom's ability to fulfil effectively its responsibilities as a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council.

Bosnia

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his policy towards the enforcement by military means of a no-fly zone over Bosnia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Garel-Jones: We fully support United Nations Security Council resolutions 781 and 786, which ban military flights in the airspace above Bosnia-Herzegovina. The ban does not apply to United Nations protection force flights or to other flights in support of United Nations operations, including humanitarian assistance.

There have been no confirmed reports of combat activity involving aircraft over Bosnia-Herzegovina since 13 October. The Security Council resolutions have therefore had an effect. We are, however, concerned about reports from the United Nations Secretary-General of other flights over Bosnia-Herzegovina, apparently violating the ban. The Security Council made clear in SCR 786 its determination to consider urgently further measures to enforce the ban in the case of such violations.

Public Works

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, if he will list the dates on which regulations equivalent to the Public Works Contracts Regulations 1991 were enacted or came into force in each other EC member state.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Council directive 89/440/EEC of 18 July 1989 was implemented in the United Kingdom by the Public Works Contracts Regulations of 21 December 1991. Latest information available from the European Commission on implementation for directive 89/440/EEC in other member states is as follows:

Denmark—8 June 1990 (further measures 14 August 1990 and 25 June 1991)
Germany—19 July 1990
Belgium—1 August 1990
Portugal—11 December 1990
France—3 January 1991 (further measures 31 March 1992)
Spain—18 April 1991
Netherlands—11 September 1991
Italy—27 December 1991
Ireland—1992

As at 28 September 1992, no notification of implementation had been received by the Commission from Greece or Luxembourg.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Third-country Nationals (Visas)

Mr. Jenkin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government in respect of whether the determination of which nationals of third countries will require visas to enter the United Kingdom should be made by the Council of the union acting by a qualified majority after 1 January 1996.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The Government accept article 100c—to be inserted into the treaty of Rome when the treaty on European union enters into force—which provides for member states to agree a common list of countries whose nationals will require a visa when crossing the external borders of member states.

Primates (Allegations)

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the outcome of investigations into allegations by the British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection in respect of the treatment of primates at Shamrock (GB) Ltd. and Hazleton UK.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The Home Office animals (scientific procedures) inspectorate has investigated the allegations contained in written and video material sent to the Home Office by the BUAV, in respect of the treatment of animals at Shamrock Farms and Hazleton UK. The results of that investigation have been reported to the Animal Procedures Committee and to me, and I have had the benefit of the APC's comments on those conclusions.

The investigation found evidence of poor standards of care and handling at Shamrock Farms, and a lack of effective managerial control. Insufficient attention was paid to the maintenance of a regime in which animals are treated at all times with due dignity and respect, and in which the physical and emotional needs of the animals are given proper emphasis. My conclusion is that poor technique and over-forceful handling may have resulted in avoidable stress and possible suffering.

I have concluded that these findings represent a significant failure on the part of the named day-to-day care person at Shamrock, and I have directed that Shamrock's certificate of designation be amended to appoint a new person to that role.

Other measures are being taken in the light of the report:

(i) I have concluded that new and existing staff at Shamrock should be trained in the wider ethical and legal issues associated with animal use; the nature and content of that training will be agreed between the management and the Home Office inspectorate.

(ii) Some aspects of the accommodation at both Shamrock and Hazleton fall short of desirable standards, and programmes of improvement and replacement of facilities have been developed or accelerated.

(iii) Another member of staff at Shamrock will be excluded from duties involving any further animal contact until he has satisfactorily completed the retraining already mentioned.

I am satisfied that other allegations are misconceived, may be based on a misinterpretation of legitimate procedures or are incapable of being proved one way or the other. All staff in the two establishments have been made aware, however, of the importance of the proper treatment of animals in their care, and the seriousness with which alleged breaches will be regarded.

The response which is being made to problems uncovered as a result of these allegations is firm, fair and designed to deal effectively with public concerns. I recognise that the use of primates in research causes particular anxiety, and I am pleased that the APC is considering the general questions raised. I look forward to hearing their conclusions.

Fire Cover, Cumbria

Mr. Jopling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment his advisers on fire services have made of the adequacy of the fire services provided by Cumbria county council; and what advice they have given on maintaining adequate cover within the standard spending assessment.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Fire Services is satisfied that the Cumbria fire service provides effective and efficient fire services. It is for Cumbria county council to decide, in the light of its statutory responsibilities and of its standard spending assessment each year, on the level of provision which is allocated to the Cumbria fire service.

Domestic Violence (Northumbria)

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Northumbria as to the number of officers in his force who have received training in dealing with domestic violence.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Eighteen officers have undergone specialist training. The subject is covered at a more general level in other training within the force.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many wives were *(a)* murdered and *(b)* assaulted by their husbands in the area covered by the Northumbria police force in each of the last five years.

Mr. Jack The number of wives who were the victims of offences currently recorded as homicide committed by their husbands in the Northumbria police force area in each of the last five years is a follows:

Year	Number
1987	1
1988	1
1989	1
1990	1
1991	—

Information on assaults of wives by their husbands is not collected centrally.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will ask the chief constable of Northumbria to list the domestic violence units in the area covered by his force.

Mr. Charles Wardle: There is currently one such unit, situated at South Shields police station.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many husbands were *(a)* killed or *(b)* assaulted by their wives in the area covered by the Northumbria force in each of the last five years.

Mr. Jack: The number of husbands who were the victims of offences currently recorded as homicide committed by their wives in the Northumbria police force area in each of the last five years is as follows:

Year	*Number*
1987	—
1988	—
1989	1
1990	—
1991	—

Information on assaults of husbands by their wives is not collected centrally.

Convicted Teenagers

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many teenagers are in secure accommodation following criminal proceedings.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: According to records held centrally, which are approximate, there were 4,800 prisoners aged 14 to 19 in secure prison service establishments on 30 June 1992.

Information supplied by the Department of Health shows that, on 31 October 1992, there were 119 teenagers serving sentences under section 53 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933 in secure community homes or youth treatment centres. On 31 March 1991, the latest date for which such information is available, there were 12 teenagers subject to criminal care orders and 51 teenagers remanded to the care of a local authority held in secure accommodation.

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many young people in young offenders institutions are *(a)* convicted and *(b)* on remand.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The table shows how many under 21-year-olds were held in prison service establishments in England and Wales on 27 November 1992.

Establishment type	*Sentenced young persons*	*Unsentenced young persons*	*Total*
Local prison	129	128	257
Remand centre	1,224	1,487	2,711
YO institution	4,214	0	4,214
Female establishment	50	48	98
Total	5,617	1,663	7,280

The figures for the unsentenced include remand, trial and convicted but unsentenced young persons.

Marriage Guidance

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement following his review of the funding of marriage guidance.

Mr. Jack: The marriage guidance organisations which receive grants from the Home Office will be notified shortly about their levels of grant for 1993-94.

Dyslexic Offenders

Mr. Heppell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to record the number of young offenders in remand centres or young offenders institutions who suffer from dyslexia.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The prison service has no plans to keep separate records of the number of young offenders who suffer from dyslexia. Particular emphasis is, however, placed upon assisting those young offenders in custody who have a range of learning difficulties. The White Paper "Custody, Care and Justice" (Cm 1647), published in September 1991, states that the first priority for education programmes in prisons must be to identify and provide help for those prisoners who have difficulty reading or writing, and who are unable to do simple arithmetic.

Guildford Four

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what public interest immunity certificates he has signed in respect of documents supplied by his Department to Sir John May's inquiry.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: None.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Metropolitan police as to what documentary evidence they have supplied to Sir John May's inquiry into the Guildford Four convictions; and on what terms.

Mr. Jack: No. Questions about the disclosure of documents held by the Metropolitan police are the responsibility of the Commissioner and not of my right hon. and learned Friend.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to publish all oral evidence taken by Sir John May in his inquiry into the Guildford Four convictions when the inquiry is completed.

Mr. Jack: As was the case in connection with the oral evidence given to his inquiry into the convictions of the Maguire family and those convicted with them, it will be for Sir John May to decide whether to take any oral evidence in connection with his inquiry into the convictions of the Guildford Four, and whether and in what form any such evidence should be included in his report to my right hon. and learned Friends or otherwise made public.

Forensic Science Service

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 3 November, *Official Report*, columns *129-30*, what has been the cost to the Exchequer of the chief executive of the Forensic Science Service's visits to the Netherlands during the last 12 months.

Mr. Charles Wardle: This is a matter for which the Forensic Science Service is responsible and I have asked the chief executive to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Dr. Janet Thompson to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 1 December 1992:

You recently tabled a Parliamentary Question about my visit to the Netherlands. As you know, the arrangement now is that the Chief Executive of an Executive Agency, with the agreement of the Minister, replies to Members of Parliament on operational matters. I am therefore replying on behalf of the Forensic Science Service (FSS).

The one day visit to the Netherlands took place on 24 June. Its main purpose was a meeting of some of the heads of European Forensic Science organisations to discuss the possible establishment of a European Network of Forensic Institutes and the issues that were of common interest. The visit included a tour of the laboratory. The costs amounted to £305.

Asylum Seekers

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many former asylum seekers have been granted work permits in each of the past five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle *[holding answer 1 December 1992]:* Comprehensive information on the number of asylum seekers who have withdrawn their application or have been refused asylum, and have subsequently been granted a work permit by the Department of Employment, is not available and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Asylum seekers in the United Kingdom whose applications have not yet been decided may apply after six months from the date of application for authorisation to seek employment without a work permit. Persons granted asylum or exceptional leave are granted such authorisation at the time of the grant.

Commonwealth Exchange of Prisoners Treaty

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions he has had with the Nigerian Government in respect of ratifying the Commonwealth exchange of prisoners treaty; and what progress has been made in reaching bilateral agreements on sentencing and deportation.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 23 November 1992]:* The United Kingdom and Nigeria are both party to the multilateral scheme for the transfer of convicted offenders within the Commonwealth. There have been no bilateral discussions with the Nigerians about the scheme, or about agreements on sentencing and deportation.

PRIME MINISTER

Iraq

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Prime Minister if he will agree to order that copies of all documents that are made available by Government Department's to Lord Justice Scott's inquiry in the export of arms, components and machine tools to Iraq shall also be made available on request to those committees of the Congress of the United States conducting comparable inquiries or investigations.

The Prime Minister: No, but requests for information will be considered on their merits.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister whether the briefing material relating to United Kingdom exports to Iraq, prepared for the Foreign Secretary's meeting with Tariq Aziz, the Iraqi Foreign Minister in September 1989, still exists; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Yes. The brief referred to British media interest in Iraqi procurement activities in the United Kingdom, naming Learfan and Matrix Churchill as examples. No further details were given and there was no other reference to United Kingdom defence exports to Iraq.

Civil List

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list all the occasions since 1972 on which a reimbursement by Her Majesty the Queen of civil list annuities to the Treasury in relation to other members of the royal family has taken place and what sums were involved in each case.

The Prime Minister: Since 1975 Her Majesty the Queen has fully reimbursed the Consolidated Fund for the annuities paid under section 3 of the Civil List Act 1972. I will arrange for the right hon. Gentleman to have the detail of each refund.

Her Majesty The Queen (Taxation)

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his oral answer to the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) of 26 November, *Official Report*, column *982*, when the discussions with Her Majesty the Queen on taxation of her income began; and what consideration was given to the timing of the announcement.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 1 December 1992]:* Her Majesty indicated to me some months ago before the summer recess that she wished consideration to be given to the basis on which she might voluntarily pay tax. Once discussion had reached a stage where it was clear that arrangements could be put in place for next year, I agreed with Her Majesty that I should notify the House as soon as possible.

Public Interest Immunity Certificates

Mr. Michael: To ask the Prime Minister how many public interest immunity certificates have been signed by Ministers in each of the last six months; and in what circumstances.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 24 November 1992]:* Ministers signed two public interest immunity certificates in June, two in July, six in September, three in October and two in November.

EMPLOYMENT

Training

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proposals she has to improve and extend employment training schemes in areas directly affected by coal mine closures; and what age groups such schemes will cover.

Mr. McLoughlin: The training and enterprise councils in areas affected by potential coal mine closures have

submitted action plans giving their proposals for a range of labour market measures. All unemployed people in areas most affected by pit closures and any redundant miners who live outside them will be eligible for assistance, including training, as appropriate. Local arrangements will depend on final action agreed with TECs.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proposals she has to increase the availability of statistics on the number of young people seeking a youth training place by district.

Mr. McLoughlin: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, to my hon. Friend the Member for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell) on 1 December 1992, *Official Report*, columns 127-28.

Mr. Batcher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what considerations underlie her policy of restricting places on the employment training scheme to unemployed people between the ages of 18 and 49 years; and if she will raise the upper limit.

Mr. McLoughlin: Employment training is open to unemployed people up to the age of 59 who meet the general eligibility conditions. However, those aged 50 and over do not fall within any of the categories of unemployed people who have priority for places. Under training for work, which is to replace employment training from April 1993, age will not be a factor in determining priority.

Accidents

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to her answer of 19 October, *Official Report*, column *114*, what sorts of information relating to accidents at installations covered by the Control of Industrial Major Accident Hazards Regulations 1984 are held by the Health and Safety Executive; what arrangements have been made for the analysis of information relating to accidents at such sites; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: In respect of accidents at an installation subject to the Control of Industrial Major Accident Hazard Regulations 1984—CIMAH—that are defined as major accidents by regulation 2, the Health and Safety Executive—HSE—holds information provided by manufacturers in accordance with regulation 5(1). This requires that where a major accident occurs on a site, the manufacturer should notify the HSE and provide the following information as soon as it becomes available:

The circumstances of the accident;
The dangerous substances involved;
The data available for assessing the effects of the accident on persons and the environment;
The emergency measures taken;
A statement of the steps envisaged to alleviate the medium or long term effects of the major accident, if any and the steps necessary to prevent a recurrence.

In accordance with regulation 5(2) of CIMAH, the HSE is responsible for collecting information about major accidents to enable a full analysis to be made. The HSE complies with this requirement by investigating every major accident that occurs on a site subject to CIMAH, determining the cause, collecting information and sending a report to the European Commission for entering on a database used for accident prevention purposes. An analysis of such reports is sent to the competent authorities annually.

In respect of sites subject to CIMAH, the HSE also holds information on other accidents and dangerous occurrences not reportable under CIMAH, but which may be reportable to the HSE under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1985. These are included in the statistical analysis published by the HSE in its annual reports.

Additionally the HSE uses the major hazard incident data service maintained by the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority's safety and reliability directorate—SRD—funded jointly by the HSE and SRD.

Wages Councils

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to her answer on wages councils on 26 November, *Official Report*, column *830*, when the decision to abolish wages councils was first published.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Government's decision to abolish the wages councils was published on 5 November.

Factory Inspectorate

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the maximum current annual quota of factory inspectorate new recruits; and if he will ensure that the capacity for training recruits is not an artificial barrier to recruitment.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Health and Safety Executive estimates that it is possible at maximum to train 90 newly recruited factory and agricultural inspectors effectively each year.

There have been two competitions per annum in recent years to enable planned targets to be met. The rate at which new inspectors can be absorbed into the system is determined not only by institutional training capacity but also by the time of qualified inspectors taken up in training them on the job.

NORTHERN IRELAND

May Inquiry

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what public interest immunity certificates he has signed in respect of documents supplied by his Department to Sir John May's inquiry.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: None.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will call for a report from the Royal Ulster Constabulary on what documents they have supplied to Sir John May's inquiry and on what terms.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: No. Questions about the disclosure of documents held by the Royal Ulster Constabulary are the responsibility of the Chief Constable and not myself.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Slaughterhouses

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received on behalf of small slaughterhouses since 1 October; and what measures he proposes to enable such businesses to survive in the single European market.

Mr. Gummer: Many right hon. and hon. Members have written to me about small slaughterhouses.

The Government welcomes the EC fresh meat directive 91/497 which will ensure that all meat traded in the single market is produced to common standards of hygiene and inspection—standards which have applied for almost 30 years to meat moving in international trade. It is high time for the same standards to be applied to meat intended for our domestic market.

The single market hygiene legislation is not intended to destroy traditional small businesses, which play an important part in the rural economy. My Department has taken a number of steps to ensure that this directive can be implemented sensibly and without imposing unnecessary burdens. During the EC negotiations, we secured agreement that very small abattoirs did not need to comply with all the detailed structural requirements and that all meat premises would be eligible for temporary derogations of up to three years from 1 January 1993 to enable them to upgrade their premises to meet the new standards.

The Agriculture Departments, as licensing authorities, have made arrangements for all operators to receive advice on what is required, and for ensuring consistent and sensible decisions on licensing. Our veterinary field staff have been instructed to be flexible and realistic in seeking solutions to structural and hygiene problems.

As a further safeguard, I have asked two independent experts in meat hygiene to assess hygiene standards in a small cross-section of plants and to advise whether the improvements being required exceed what is necessary to rectify structure-related hygiene problems.

My Department has this week issued further guidance to local authorities on the provision of veterinary supervision at slaughterhouses. This guidance, which has been placed in the Library, should reduce the estimated cost of the inspection service substantially at some plants. My Department believes that the cost to the industry as a whole should be reduced by some £2 million, compared with estimates made by independent consultants on behalf of MAFF earlier this year.

Local authorities have considerable flexibility to arrange provision of the inspection service in the way which is most appropriate to their local circumstances subject to the overriding need to achieve adequate veterinary supervision. Pending transfer of responsibility for meat inspection to the proposed national meat hygiene service, I shall monitor inspection charges very closely, and will continue to encourage plant operators to discuss with their local authority any possible options for reducing costs. Local authorities have discretion to recover less than the full cost of the inspection service if they so choose, provided the amount recovered complies with the relevant EC legislation. In the longer term, the national meat hygiene service will be required to provide an efficient and cost-effective service to the industry.

Despite all these measures, I am aware that there remains considerable concern about the impact of the new legislation on small slaughterhouses. This concern is not confined to the United Kingdom, and I am therefore arranging for the December Council of Agriculture Ministers to consider whether any further action at Community level is required to safeguard small traditional slaughtering businesses.

Oilseed Products

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food for what reasons the European Economic Community rejected the appeal from the United States of America for a third party to determine by arbitration the level of damage to its interests occasioned by the subsidised production of oilseed products; at what meeting of the Council of Ministers this decision was made; and under what voting requirements.

Mr. Curry: The United States proposal for binding arbitration to settle the oilseeds dispute was rejected by the Commission after consultation with a committee of senior trade officials from member states, meeting under United Kingdom chairmanship during our presidency, because of doubts about its consistency with general agreement on tariffs and trade arbitration rules and because other approaches seemed to offer wider scope for an acceptable settlement. The proposal was not put to the Council of Ministers for a formal decision. A number of further options were put forward by both sides during bilateral negotiations before agreement was reached on a satisfactory compromise.

CAP and GATT

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give an estimate of the effect on job numbers in rural areas of *(a)* the current common agricultural policy reform package and *(b)* further changes arising from the general agreement on tariffs and trade agreement; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: The impact of the common agricultural policy measures agreed in May on employment in rural communities will depend on the response of the farming community over the next few years. The draft general agreement on tariffs and trade settlement is consonant with reforms already agreed and should therefore have no specific impact on employment in rural communities.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Mr. Jopling: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the progress establishing new environmentally sensitive areas; and what management commitments and financial remuneration he is proposing.

Mr. Curry: In January of next year we plan to launch new environmentally sensitive areas in the Avon valley, Exmoor, lake district, north Kent marshes, south Wessex downs and South West Peak. Full details of the management terms and financial remuneration will be published at the time of the launch. We also plan early next year to hold consultations on a further six new English environmentally sensitive areas which we hope to introduce in the following winter.

"A Fair Assessment"

Ms. Walley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received against the National Rivers Authority's discussion document, "A Fair Assessment"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: The Ministry has received a small number of letters about the National Rivers Authority's discussion document. The authority is now considering the comments received in response to the document and, we understand, is looking at more detailed proposals for public consultation.

Intervention Cereal

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has on the level of cereal production held in intervention stocks in the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. Curry: At 22 November 1992, information provided by the EC Commission showed that the level of cereals intervention stocks held in the Republic of Ireland was 81,182 tonnes.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the number of confirmed cases of BSE by county, for November.

Mr. Soames: The information requested from 1 November to 27 November 1992 for Great Britain is as follows. These cases will have a date of report and date of clinical onset of disease before 1 November.

County/Region	Confirmed cases
England	
Avon	89
Bedfordshire	34
Berkshire	14
Buckinghamshire	0
Cambridgeshire	7
Cheshire	120
Cleveland	6
Cornwall	181
Cumbria	105
Derbyshire	86
Devon	247
Dorset	180
Durham	15
Essex	18
Gloucestershire	64
Hampshire	65
Hereford and Worcester	23
Hertfordshire	9
Humberside	11
Isle of Wight	9
Kent	32
Lancashire	125
Leicestershire	38
Lincolnshire	9
London	1
Manchester	10
Merseyside	5
Norfolk	50
Northamptonshire	25
Northumberland	30
Nottinghamshire	28
Oxfordshire	28
Shropshire	64
Somerset	298
Staffordshire	65
Suffolk	25
Surrey	16
Sussex East	27
Sussex West	46
Tyne and Wear	1
Warwickshire	17
West Midlands	2
Wiltshire	66
Yorkshire North	108
Yorkshire South	15
Yorkshire West	16
Wales	
Clwyd	46
Dyfed	120
Glamorgan Mid	3
Glamorgan South	11
Glamorgan West	2
Gwent	27
Gwynedd	17
Powys	45
Scotland	
Borders	9
Central	5
Dumfries	51
Fife	4
Grampian	29
Highland	7
Lothian	6
Orkney	3
Shetland	0
Strathclyde	39
Tayside	13
Western Isles	0

Live Horses for Slaughter

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will use his role as President of the Council of Agriculture Ministers to prevent the introduction of the European Commission's proposal establishing a compulsory EC free trade area for live horses for slaughter after 31 December.

Mr. Soames: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to him on 1 December 1992 at column *159*.

Coastal Wildlife

Mr. Bellingham: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the impact of his coastal defence policies on the loss of coastal wildlife habitats.

Mr. Gummer: The primary aim of both flood and coastal defence is to protect life and to reduce the risk of flooding or erosion causing damage to the natural and built environment. In pursuit of these objectives, MAFF gives financial support to capital schemes for flood and coastal defence which are cost-beneficial, technically sound and environmentally acceptable.

I share the concerns about the loss of coastal habitats and am determined to ensure that our policies for coastal defences help to tackle this problem. It is already well established that all coast and sea defences must take environmental considerations into account. The grant aid arrangements have been extended to facilitate the use of

"soft" defence measures such as beach replenishment. However, in addition, in order to help stop the decline in the area of wildlife habitats around our coasts, I want the potential impact on coastal habitats to be a key consideration in examining proposed schemes; and there will be a clear presumption in considering applications for grant aid that, except where life or important natural or man-made assets are at risk, natural coastal processes should not be disrupted. I also want to see thorough consideration given in all appropriate cases to whether retreat from the existing line of defence could be managed in such a way as to bring environmental and/or engineering benefits.

This new approach will be reflected in the strategy for flood and coast defence which I am developing in consultation with the operating authorities and environmental interests, and I look forward to discussing this with them.

Meat (Inspections)

Mr. Steen: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he has taken to ensure that there is an adequate number of official veterinary surgeons for slaughterhouse inspection; how many additional veterinary surgeons have been recruited by his Department; at what cost; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames *[holding answer 26 November 1992]:* Until the proposed national meat hygiene service is established, local authorities are responsible for employing official veterinary surgeons for the purposes specified in the Fresh Meat (Hygiene and Inspection) Regulations 1992 and the Poultry Meat (Hygiene) Regulations 1976. My Department runs courses for veterinary surgeons seeking designation as official veterinary surgeons. Some 300 veterinary surgeons have completed the red meat course in the last four years, and over 80 more are booked to attend the course in the new year.

The Department is discussing with the local authority associations ways in which MAFF might assist local authorities wishing to explore the possibility of recruiting veterinary surgeons from other member states where there is a surplus.

Mr. Steen: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what estimate he has made of the additional costs to the meat industry of implementing the Fresh Meat (Hygiene and Inspection) Regulations 1992; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames *[holding answer 26 November 1992]:* Work carried out by independent consultants on behalf of the Agriculture Departments in March and April 1992 estimated the cost of implementing the supervision requirements in the Fresh Meat (Hygiene and Inspection) Regulations 1992 as £33 million per annum, compared with £25 million previously—both figures based on 1991 costs and slaughterhouse numbers. The additional cost of veterinary supervision in medium-sized slaughterhouses was estimated to represent £5·4 million of this increase. However, we estimate that the guidance on veterinary supervision levels issued by the Department on 20 November would reduce this to £3·4 million. A copy of this guidance has been placed in the Library of the House.

The total costs to the industry of complying with the structural requirements of the new legislation, many of which were already contained in or implied by previous Great Britain legislation, will depend on the commercial decisions taken by individual slaughterhouse operators.

Mr. Steen: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy to suspend implementation of the Fresh Meat (Hygiene and Inspection) Regulations 1992 until he has received satisfactory assurances from each other EC country that they have implemented similar regulations.

Mr. Soames *[holding answers 26 November 1992]:* No. The Fresh Meat (Hygiene and Inspection) Regulations 1992 are an important part of the Department's programme of improving the safety and hygiene of British meat and enhancing the protection offered to the consumer.

My right hon. Friend the Minister is, however, arranging for the December Council of Agriculture Ministers to discuss progress with implementation of the fresh meat directive 91/497, in particular as it relates to small slaughterhouses.

Cereals

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations she has made to the European Commission to have the cereal support system in Northern Ireland based upon individual cereal farms; which other community countries have indicated that they prefer the cereal support scheme to be based upon individual cereal farms; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: I have been asked to reply.

No representations have been made to the European Commission to have the cereal support system in Northern Ireland based upon individual cereal farms. The EC regulation establishing a support system for cereal producers makes allowance for base areas, but not yields, to be established on either a regional or an individual holding basis. No member states are operating individual base areas this year.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Charterline

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, pursuant to his answer of 13 November, *Official Report*, column *982*, what is the cost of the contract with Price Waterhouse to pilot the charterline service.

Mr. Waldegrave: It is not our practice to reveal the cost of such contracts, as it could prejudice Her Majesty's Government's position when negotiating other contracts.

All payments are, of course, open to scrutiny by the National Audit Office.

Next Steps

Mr. Paice: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the progress of the next steps initiative.

Mr. Waldegrave: Next steps is progressing well. More than half the civil service is now working on next steps lines and next steps is delivering measurable improvements in efficiency, productivity and value for money.

The Government today published the third annual review of next steps agencies (Cm 2111). The annual review brings together information on all 76 established agencies, together with the 30 executive units of Customs and Excise and the 34 executive offices of Inland Revenue. The review shows performance against targets in 1991-92 and lists key targets for 1992-93. It shows that agencies have continued to perform well and have met three out of four of their targets in the last year. It gives many examples of the ways in which agencies are providing the better service to the public which is at the heart of the citizens charter and describes the many improvements which have been brought about for the benefit of taxpayers and staff.

Factory Inspectorate (Recruitment)

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many applications were received in the recent round of recruitment to the factory inspectorate; how many were recruited; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: I have been asked to reply.

The number of factory inspectorate applications received for the autumn 1992 recruitment competition was 1,846. Of these, 360 have been selected for interview during December 1992 and January 1993, and the Health and Safety Executive expects to offer up to 45 factory inspector posts nationally.

Civil Servants

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many retired civil servants from the Health and Safety Executive have been subsequently re-employed; and what is the executive's policy on such re-employments.

Mr. McLoughlin: I have been asked to reply.

There are currently 16 retired civil servants from the Health and Safety Executive who have been re-employed. The HSE re-employs those who have retired, in accordance with civil service rules, where there is a clear need for particular skills or experience that is not otherwise available.

Mr. E. Whybrew

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when the former Director of Personnel and Development in the Department of Employment, Mr. E. Whybrew, was re-employed by the civil service as a part-time officer in the Certification Office of Trade Unions; and whether the post he now occupies was advertised externally.

Mr. McLoughlin: Mr. Whybrew's appointment as certification officer for trade unions and employers' associations took effect from 6 October 1992. The appointment was made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State after consultation with the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service; the post was not advertised externally.

HEALTH

Research Units

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what consideration she has given to the report of the team which reviewed the role and funding of her Department's research units; and whether she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: I have now considered the report of the review team chaired by Dr. Peter Williams, which outlines a strategy for the funding of long-term health services research. A copy of the report is available in the Library.

I accept the review team's view that some larger centres of multidisciplinary excellence could offer an improved career structure and a more secure base for research. We shall set up such a centre as a pilot project. Some smaller units will remain and current units producing excellent high priority research will be granted fixed-term programme contracts in place of their existing rolling contract.

Peer review and site visits to all units will take place over the next eighteen months. This process will be led by Professor Michael Peckham, the director of research and development.

Custody (Alternatives)

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, in respect of each social services department, how many teenagers are on alternative-to-custody programmes, run by social services and/or the voluntary sector, following conviction for a criminal offence, on the last date for which information is available.

Mr. Yeo: Information is not available centrally in the form requested. Some information about young people involved in social service provision is published in "Supervision Orders and Intermediate Treatment; England" and in "Children in Care of Local Authorities; England". The most recent publications, for the year ending 31 March 1991, are in the Library.

Children's Homes (Schools)

Sir John Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps are being taken to amend the Children Act Regulations to provide exemption for small weekly boarding schools from registration as children's homes with the social services department.

Mr. Yeo: We are considering how this might be achieved.

Civil Servants

Mr. Raymond S. Roberts: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many civil servants are employed by her Department (a) in London and (b) elsewhere.

Mr. Dunnville: At 1 November 1992, the latest date for which detailed information is available, the Department of Health employed 1,013 whole-time equivalent civil servants in London and 1,715 whole-time equivalent civil servants elsewhere.

Limited List Prescribing

Sir Michael Grylls: To ask the Secretary of State for Health upon what basis she identified the 10 new categories of product which are now to be included in the limited list prescribing system for pharmaceutical products.

Dr. Mawhinney: The categories were chosen because they covered a range of products of varying price levels and therefore offered scope for savings while enabling all clinical needs to continue to be met.

Wigs

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when a rate was set to cover the cost of NHS wigs; how much it was; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: Charges for national health service wigs were introduced in April 1971. The charge for a bespoke wig was £7·50 and £2·50 for a stock wig.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many children received NHS wigs for medical conditions for each year since 1987; and if she will state for each year the number of wigs costing *(a)* less than £50, *(b)* between £50 and £60, *(c)* between £60 and £70, *(d)* between £70 and £80, *(e)* between £80 and £90, *(f)* between £90 and £100 and *(g)* over £100.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not available centrally.

Mental Health

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what response her Department has made to the fourth biennial report of the Mental Health Act Commission.

Mr. Yeo: I have written to Sir Louis Blom-Cooper, chairman of the Mental Health Act Commission, thanking the commission for the valuable work reflected in its fourth biennial report, which my right hon. Friend laid before the House on 16 December last. I have included with my letter our detailed responses to specific points made in the report, which have been agreed with my right hon. Friends so far as the Home Office and Welsh Office are concerned. I have today placed copies of my letter and the other documents in the Library.

Hearing Aids

Mr. Hague: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research has been commissioned to consider the benefits to be gained from hearing aids.

Mr. Yeo: We have asked the Medical Research Council's Institute of Hearing Research to commence work on a research project: "Multiple outcome measures for evaluating hearing aid fitting". This work will investigate the benefit that people with a hearing impairment derive from an aid and how effective the aid is in alleviating disability. The research will take three years.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Attendance Allowance

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate the number of people *(a)* currently in receipt of the lower rate of attendance allowance whose claims for medium or higher level allowance have been rejected but who are currently appealing against that decision and *(b)* currently assessed as eligible for the medium and higher rates of attendance allowance but not yet in receipt or notified of that award; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: The information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Christmas Bonus

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will increase the Christmas bonus to take account of the rise in prices or in average earnings, in each year since its introduction; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: No. Because the Christmas bonus is paid to all regardless of income, any increase in the amount would be a poorly targeted use of resources.

Cold Weather Payments

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security for what reasons local statistics on cold weather payments prior to 1 November 1991 were destroyed without being recorded on microfiche; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: The administration of the social fund is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 1 December 1992:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about cold weather payment statistics.

As you know, some local statistics had been destroyed in accordance with standing instructions. These instructions have been drawn up over some time (and applied before the Agency was formed). There is clearly a requirement to keep national information about Social Security benefits for a reasonable period of time, but in respect of local information, we need to balance this requirement against their diminishing relevance and the expenditure of public funds in the upkeep of excessive archives. This would include the transfer of records to microfiche.

It is against this background that no local statistics are held prior to the financial year 1991-92. Information covering the former DHSS North Eastern Region (which includes Doncaster local offices) is, however, in the Library.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the Official Report. Copies are also being placed in the Library.

Crisis Payments

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many crisis payments have been made to the victims of the Islington road flood in Islington by the Euston district social security office.

Mr. Scott: The administration of the social fund is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Jeremy Corbyn, dated 1 December 1992:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about Social Fund crisis loan payments in Euston District.

Staff at Euston District acted immediately in response to the flood in Isledon Road that occurred on the evening of 15 October. A team of Social Fund Officers went to a local neighbourhood centre the following day and took applications to the Social Fund. Thirteen Social Fund awards were decided and paid on the same day in response to this crisis.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the Official Report. Copies are also being placed in the Library.

Independent Living Fund

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on future arrangements for independent living for the most severely disabled people.

Mr. Scott *[pursuant to his reply, 24 November 1992, cols. 597-98]:* A total of £4 million—on a United Kingdom basis—will be made available in 1993-94 to enable the new fund to provide cash payments to new applications from the most severely disabled people of working age. In 1994-95 the allocation will be £11 million and in 1995-96 it will be £17 million. It is expected that new awards will be made to around 1,500 severely disabled people each year.

This allocation is in addition to the sums earmarked for the fund to continue cash payments to around 22,000 cases which the ILF is expected to be paying by April 1993. These amounts—again on a United Kingdom basis—are £117 million in 1993-94, £119 million in 1994-95 and £121 million in 1995-96.

The allocation for new cases recognises the primary role of local authorities under the community care arrangements from April 1993. On 26 November the Secretary of State for Health announced increases to the community care special transitional grant—the means by which local authorities will initially be funded for their new community care responsibilities—in England of £26 million in 1993-94, £64 million in 1994-95 and £100 million in 1995-96. These increases reflect the further responsibilities for disabled people resulting from the planned changes to the ILF. Announcements will be made shortly about the specific allocations in the rest of the United Kingdom.

EDUCATION

Civil Servants

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many civil servants from his Department have been relocated from London to other parts of the United Kingdom *(a)* in the last five years and *(b)* in the last 10 years; and to where they were relocated.

Mr. Forsyth: The Department has relocated 101 posts from London in the last five years, and 104 in the last ten. All relocations were to Darlington.

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many civil servants are currently employed by his Department *(a)* in London and *(b)* elsewhere.

Mr. Forsyth: The Department currently employs 1,398 full-time equivalent civil servants in London and 728 in Darlington. The Darlington figure includes 304 staff in the Teachers Pensions Agency.

Relocation to Darlington of some of the Department's work related to grant-maintained schools will result in a reduction by 58 FTE staff in London and an increase by 69 in Darlington by March 1993.

School Playing Fields

Dr. Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) when he expects to complete his consultation on the disposal of school playing fields, arising out of his document issued on 19 December 1991; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what is his policy in regard to the selling off of playing fields for private development and the assessment of the long-term need for school or community use of those playing fields.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend expects shortly to inform local education authorities (LEAs) and others of his conclusions arising from this consultation exercise.

Any decision as to whether or not to dispose of school playing fields is a matter for the LEA concerned. It is the Government's policy to encourage LEAs to dispose of surplus land and buildings in order to avoid unnecessary expenditure and to realise capital receipts for debt redemption and reinvestment in education capital schemes. However, when considering decisions about the disposal of school playing fields we would expect LEAs to balance these considerations against the need to preserve facilities for potential future use.

School Buildings

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many children currently receive their education in buildings that have been assessed as being in need of substantial repair as a result of inspection by Her Majesty's inspector of schools or otherwise.

Mr. Forth: This information is not available centrally. The repair and maintenance of school buildings is a matter for those with direct responsibility for the schools: local education authorities in the case of county and voluntary-controlled schools and governing bodies in the case of voluntary-aided and grant-maintained schools.

Salaries

Ms. Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement on his policy on salary settlements for academic and related staff *(a)* in the past three years and *(b)* in the light of the autumn statement.

Mr. Forsyth: Over the past three years the Government have looked to employers in higher education to settle the pay of academic and related staff. The Government have however influenced pay and conditions of service as necessary in the wider public interest through the level of funding provided for the higher education funding

councils—for example, to support the introduction of performance-related pay. Under the policy of pay restraint in the public sector introduced in the autumn statement, the employers will still be responsible for resolving pay for academic and related staff, but will have to ensure that no more than 1·5 per cent. is added to their pay bill.

Esperanto

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what advice and assistance he gives to the teaching of Esperanto as a contribution to the linguistic problems of the single European market.

Mr. Forth: None. National curriculum requirements for modern foreign language learning give priority to the working languages of the European Community, and the other specified 11 languages of commercial or cultural significance, and any advice or assistance provided nationally is geared to those.

School Meals

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will include in the revised version of the parents charter the right to a nutritious school meal.

Mr. Forth: No.

Education Inspectors

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the total cost of *(a)* salaries and *(b)* office accommodation for Her Majesty's inspectorate of education in 1988-89, 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Mr. Forth: The information requested is as follows:

£ million

	1988-89	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*
(a) Salaries	16·1	17·9	19·8	21·8
(b) Accommodation	1·1	1·2	1·4	1·5

The figures given at *(a)* relate to HMI and its support staff, and include overtime and national insurance. The accommodation costs are those incurred at HMI divisional and local offices only. The accommodation costs of HMI and support staff stationed centrally were included within the Department's total running costs and could not be disaggregated without disproportionate cost.

Office for Standards in Education

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many staff are currently employed by Ofsted; and what is its 1992-93 budget for *(a)* staff and *(b)* office accommodation.

Mr. Forth: When Ofsted was created on 1 September 1992, it had an initial budget for the remainder of the 1992-93 financial year of £11·7 million and staff, including HMI and support staff, of 550. Finance and staffing of Ofsted from 1 September are the responsibility of Her Majesty's chief inspector of schools.

Education Inspectors

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many of Her Majesty's inspectors of education are *(a)* to retire or *(b)* be made redundant on 1 April 1993.

Mr. Forth: The number of Her Majesty's inspectors employed by the Department and planned to be made redundant on 1 April 1993 is 89. There are no retirements on that date.

I understand that no HMI employed by Ofsted will be made redundant or retire on 1 April 1993.

LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Public Record Office

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Lord President of the Council, pursuant to his answer of 12 November, *Official Report*, column 880, how long the Privy Council Office has had on loan from the Public Record Office *(a)* three volumes of Privy Council papers dating from the early 18th century and *(b)* papers relating to chartered corporations founded in the 19th century; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: The material referred to was held for six weeks and three years respectively. All the papers have now been returned to the Public Record Office.

Universities

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Lord President of the Council how many university statutes and charters are currently being considered by the Privy Council.

Mr. Newton: The Privy Council is currently considering seven applications from universities for changes in charters and statutes.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will list the number of changes to university statutes and charters made by the Privy Council in each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Newton: Changes to the charters and statutes of universities and colleges dealt with by the Privy Council Office for the years in question were as follows:

Year	*Cases*
1983	11
1984	15
1985	15
1986	11
1987	14
1988	18
1989	14
1990	18
1991	15
[1]1992	[2]54

[1] To date.
[2] Includes modifications made by the University Commissioners under section 204 of the Education Reform Act 1988.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will make it his policy that the Privy Council should not approve any further university charters and statutes which require each student to belong to a students' union.

Mr. Newton: It has not been the practice for university charters and statutes to require students to belong to a students' union.

SCOTLAND

Dental Caries

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the figures for the incidence of dental caries since 1979 in children *(a)* under primary school age, *(b)* primary school age and *(c)* secondary school age in (i) Dumbarton district, (ii) Inverclyde district, (iii) Argyll and Bute district and (iv) Renfrew district.

Mr. Stewart: The information requested is not available.

Tooth Extractions

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many tooth extractions are carried out each year since 1979 on children *(a)* under primary school age, *(b)* primary school age and *(c)* secondary school age in (i) Dumbarton district, (ii) Inverclyde district, (iii) Argyll and Bute district and (iv) Renfrew district.

Mr. Stewart: The information requested is not available.

NHS Expenditure

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the average national health service expenditure since 1979 per patient using Argyll and Clyde dental services in *(a)* Dumbarton district, *(b)* Inverclyde district, *(c)* Argyll and Bute district and *(d)* Renfrew district.

Mr. Stewart: The information requested is not available.

Council Tax

Mr. Gallie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will announce details of his proposals for providing a council tax transitional relief scheme to accompany introduction of the council tax in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: The change in the system of local taxation in Scotland will result in a redistribution of the burden of local taxation between households. While many households should gain from the change or face only a small increase in the contribution which they have to make, some households will have to bear a significantly larger share of the tax burden than they do under the community charge. We have provided temporary assistance for households required to pay more under the community charge and I believe it is reasonable to provide such assistance in Scotland in the change to the council tax.

I therefore intend introducing a council tax transitional relief scheme in Scotland similar to the scheme already announced for England by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. Under this, households in the lowest council tax band, band A, would be required to pay only the first £1·75 per week of the increase in bills due to the change in tax system, and households in the bands above this would be required to pay an additional 25p per week in each successive band, so that households in the highest band, band H, would be required to pay the first £2·50 per week due to the change in the tax system. The extra amount households would be expected to pay for each band are as follows:

Ranges of property values in band (at 1 April 1991)

		£ per week
Band A	Up to £27,000	1·75
Band B	Over £27,000 and up to £33,000	2·00
Band C	Over £35,000 and up to £45,000	2·25
Band D	Over £45,000 and up to £58,000	2·50
Band E	Over £58,000 and up to £80,000	2·75
Band F	Over £80,000 and up to £106,000	3·00
Band G	Over £106,000 and up to £212,000	3·25
Band H	Over £212,000	3·50

The calculation of reductions will be based on whichever is the lower of an authority's actual council tax for the valuation band concerned and its scheme council tax for that band. The cost of such a scheme next year is estimated to be up to £28 million and this cost will be reimbursed to local authorities under the scheme. I have asked my officials to consult with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities on the details of the scheme. The scheme will then be implemented under regulations which I hope will be laid before the House shortly.

As a consequence of settling on the details of the council tax transitional relief scheme I am able to increase by £15 million the level of aggregate external finance for 1993-94 which I previously announced on 12 November. I can also announce today that I plan to add a further £2·8 million to both the Government-supported expenditure and AEF figures for next year in recognition of the additional responsibilities which local authorities will face from next April as a consequence of changes to the independent living fund which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security announced on 24 November. The result of these changes is that aggregate external finance next year will be £5,165·1 million, an increase of 3·5 per cent. on the equivalent figure for this year.

Environmental Education

Mr. Wm Gilbert: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the provision of training for teachers on cross-curricular themes, with particular reference to the theme of environmental education.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 27 November 1992]:* In his guidelines for the construction of initial teacher training courses, my right hon. Friend requires that courses for primary teachers must include environmental studies as a significant element of the course. In addition, there are in-service training courses on environmental studies for teachers which may lead to the award of the primary environmental studies certificate. In-service training on the five to 14 curriculum development programme and the primary education development project also have significant elements related to environmental matters. Environmental education is included within the specific grant scheme for the in-service training of teachers, which supports education authorities' costs for such training in priority subject areas.

DEFENCE

RAF (Market-testing)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how the higher formation costs of RAF Support Command will be taken into account in respect of in-house bids in the market-testing competition for RAF establishments.

Mr. Aitken: The market-testing procedures provide for in-house costs to be compared with the prices offered by tenderers on a realistic and consistent footing. Only the resource costs that could be expected to change in the event of contractorisation are included in the in-house bid. The higher formation costs of RAF Support Command would be taken into account only to the extent that they would be affected were a given service or facility to be contractorised.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proposals he has to ring-fence the higher costs of service men to ensure that in-house bids have a fair chance in the market-testing competition announced for RAF establishments; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: As part of the market test, the in-house operation is encouraged to offer efficiency improvements, such as replacing more expensive military personnel with civilians, in order to become more competitive. Bids will be assessed on that basis. In-house bidders will also be encouraged to engage outside consultants to help with the preparation of their bids.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proposals he has to ensure that there is a level playing field for in-house bids in the market-testing competition announced for RAF establishments.

Mr. Aitken: I have arranged to place a copy of the procedures for market-testing in the Library of the House. They require the in-house bid to be prepared against the same requirements, time scale and, so far as is practicable, contract conditions as the commercial tenders. The evaluation of tenders is carried out by officials in a neutral and objective position, and we are currently considering the means by which we can introduce independent observers into the process, as guarantees of fairness.

Ozone Depletion

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will introduce a leakage prevention programme for all refrigeration and air conditioning equipment owned and operated by his Department; if he will publish targets for reductions in leakages; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: My Department's policy is to prevent leakage of ozone-depleting refrigerants to the atmosphere wherever possible. Special equipment is used during maintenance and repair to avoid venting to the atmosphere. Also, although no targets are published regular monitoring of refrigerants enables leakages to be detected and action taken.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will implement a refrigerant recycling and reclaim policy covering all departmental equipment currently using chlorofluorocarbons and hydrochlorofluorocarbons; if he will publish targets for departmental reuse and recycling; if he will implement an equipment conversion and replacement programme for all departmental uses of CFCs and HCFCs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: My Department is fully committed to the Government's policy for reducing the use of all substances controlled under the Montreal protocol. We already have a programme for refrigerant recycling and reclaim. We have no plans to publish targets but this will be carried out in accordance with the terms of the protocol. All equipment using CFCs and HCFCs is being identified and will either be replaced or converted to suitable alternatives. As an interim measure some will be supported by a bank of recycled substances.

Defence Research Agency

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 3 November, *Official Report*, columns *105-11*, what has been the cost to the Exchequer of the chief executive of the Defence Research Agency's visits to *(a)* the United States and *(b)* France during the last 12 months.

Mr. Aitken: This is a matter delegated to the Defence Research Agency under its framework document. I have therefore asked the chief executive to reply direct to the hon. Member.

Letter from J. A. R. Chisholm to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 2 December 1992:

In today's written answer the Minister of State for Defence Procurement informed you that I would be replying directly to your question regarding the cost to the exchequer of my visits, as Chief Executive of the Defence Research Agency, to *(a)* the United States and *(b)* France during the last 12 months.

I visited the United States on two occasions and France on one occasion. The total costs for myself and accompanying official were as follows:

		Total cost £
(a) 18-19 March 1992	United States	1,926
10-17 June 1992	United States	6,202
(b) 1-2 April 1992	France	923

I hope you will find this information useful.

Meteorological Office

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 3 November, *Official Report*, columns *105-6*, what has been the cost to the exchequer of the chief executive of the Meteorological Office's visits to *(a)* Geneva, *(b)* China, *(c)* France and *(d)* Norway during the last 12 months.

Mr. Aitken: This is a matter delegated to the Meteorological Office under its framework document. I have therefore asked the chief executive to reply direct to the hon. Member.

Letter from J. C. R. Hunt to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 1 December 1992:

The costs to the exchequer were approximately *(a)* £2,300 (total for 3 visits), *(b)* £2,500, *(c)* £2,100 (total for 4 visits) and *(d)* £900. Reports are available on the visits if required.

You will be aware that international collaboration in meteorology is of crucial importance. As a leading climate and numerical weather prediction centre, with a large supporting research programme, and as one of two World Area Forecast Centres for civil aviation, the Met. Office plays a major role in these international activities which are co-ordinated through the World Meteorological Organisation, an agency of the United Nations. Furthermore, by sharing experience and collaborating with other scientific and commercial organisations and national meteorological services, the Met. Office is able to improve its efficiency and cost effectiveness.

A copy of the Met. Office's 1991-92 Annual Review is enclosed for your interest. Please do not hesitate to ask if you require further information.

Maintenance Group

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 3 November, *Official Report*, columns *105-11*, what has been the cost to the Exchequer of the chief executive of the Maintenance Group Defence Support Agency's visit to Hanover on 12 to 13 March.

Mr. Aitken: This is a matter delegated to the Maintenance Group Defence Support Agency under its framework document. I have therefore asked the chief executive to reply direct to the hon. Member.

Letter from Air Vice-Marshal D. R. French to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 30 November 1992:

In response to your Parliamentary Question of 24 November, the cost of my visit to Hanover on 12-13 March was £111·60.

Guildford and Woolwich Bombings

Mr. Mallin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what public interest immunity certificates he has signed in relation to documents provided by his Department to Sir John May's inquiry.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: None.

Bosnia

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many flights over Bosnia in contravention of the United Nations no-fly zone have been identified by radar surveillance deployed to monitor that zone; how many such flights have been directly involved in offensive missions; and what action has been taken in response to such flights.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Monitoring of compliance with the no-fly zone imposed on the airspace of Bosnia-Herzegovina in Security Council resolution 781 of 9 October is being conducted by aircraft of NATO's airborne early warning force and by ground monitors deployed at airfields in Bosnia, Croatia and Serbia/Montenegro by the United Nations protection force and the EC monitor mission. Immediately following the passage of the resolution there were a number of sorties by fixed-wing aircraft, which included the use of aircraft for ground attack. From 13 October to date, there have been no confirmed reports of any use of aircraft for ground attack or other combat purpose, by either fixed-wing aircraft or helicopters. The ban on flights in SCR 781 applies only to flights with a military purpose. Provision was made for exemptions, subject to prior approval by the United Nations protection force, for flights for humanitarian purposes or in pursuance of the peace process. In his periodic reports to the Security Council, the United Nations Secretary-General has reported that a total of 204 flights, predominantly by helicopters, have been recorded up to 26 November, other than those for which exemptions have been given, but that there has not been evidence on which to judge whether the flights were of a military nature. Action is being taken to remind the parties concerned of the requirement and procedures for the authorisation of flights. SCR 781 provides that, in the event of evident violations of the ban, the Security Council will consider urgently the further measures necessary to enforce it.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what examination his Department has carried out of the feasibility of the enforcement by military means of a no-fly zone over Bosnia.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: United Nations Security Council resolution 781 of 9 October 1992 banned flights with a military purpose by the warring parties in the airspace of Bosnia-Herzegovina. It did not itself contain provision for enforcement, but provided for regular reports by the Secretary-General on compliance with the ban, and for the Security Council to consider urgently the further measures needed to enforce the ban in the event of violations. The Security Council made clear in SCR 786 of 11 November its determination to do so if necessary.

WALES

Capital Receipts

Mr. Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the total of accumulated capital receipts held by Welsh district councils resulting from the sale of council houses.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The latest information relates to 31 March 1992. At that date, local councils held £27·4 million of usable housing capital receipts. At the same date, after allowing for redemption, Welsh local councils had net outstanding loan debt of £984·4 million.

Hospital Construction

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will list the hospital *(a)* building programmes and *(b)* extension and unit programmes currently under way in Wales;

(2) if he will list the hospital extension programmes and new units that are planned for Wales by the year 2000;

(3) if he will list the new hospitals that are planned to be completed in Wales by the year 2000.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The following lists of schemes give the centrally funded capital building programme for 1992-93 and, separately, those new hospital schemes included in the All Wales capital programme for completion by the year 2000. Minor works programmes are for determination by district health authorities from their minor discretionary capital allocations. Proposals for

major hospital extensions and new units are considered annually for inclusion in future years and district health authorities and NHS trusts are invited to submit bids for appropriate schemes. These will still be subject to the usual planning procedures.

Major Hospital Building Programme 1992-93
Deeside Community Hospital
Ysbyty Maelor Wrexham Phase 2A
Ysbyty Glan Clwyd Phase 2
Royal Gwent Scheme VI
Area Laundry
Royal Gwent kitchens/X-ray department
Ebbw Vale Community Hospital
Torfaen Community Hospital
Ysbyty Gwynedd Phase II
West Mon Community Hospital
North Meirionnydd Community Hospital
Ysbyty George Thomas
Prince Charles Phase II
New Hospital for Taff Ely and Rhondda
Brecon War Memorial Hospital Development
UHW replacement energy sources
UHW improvements to fire precautions
Barry Neighbourhood Hospital
Cardiff Neighbourhood Hospital (St. David's)
UHW Cardiac Expansion Programme
Singleton West Ward Block
Singleton Linear Accelerator Suite
Tonna Redevelopment
Morriston Pathology Department
New Hospital for Neath and Port Talbot
Morriston Hospital, Scheme IV

New Hospital Proposals for Completion by the year 2000
Ebbw Vale Community Hospital
Torfaen Community Hospital
West Mon Community Hospital
North Meirionnydd Community Hospital
Taff Ely and Rhondda
Barry Neighbourhood Hospital
St. David's Neighbourhood Hospital
Neath and Port Talbot

Unemployment

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people in each Welsh constituency have been unemployed for *(a)* more than six months and *(b)* more than one year.

Mr. David Hunt: The unemployment data requested are available from the NOMIS database, which can be accessed on-line by House of Commons Library staff.

Cars

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the total number of registered cars in Wales in each of the last five years; and if he will publish figures showing the number of cars owned per adult in Wales in each year.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The numbers of private and light goods vehicles registered in Wales and the numbers owned per adult in Wales are given in the table.

Year	[1] All private and light goods vehicles registered in Wales (thousands)	[2] Private and light goods vehicles owned per adult in Wales (number)
1987	926·2	0·43
1988	979·7	0·45
1989	1,018·1	0·46
1990	1,050·3	0·48
1991[3]	1,052·2	0·47

[1] Source: Department of Transport.
[2] Adults aged 18 years and over.
[3] 1991 population figures are provisional.

Road Safety

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will provide funding to Clwyd county council to enable them to fund road safety personnel on the A55 at Hawarden high school, following diversion of traffic from the A494.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Hawarden high school is on the B5125. The B5125 is not being signed as a diversionary route as part of the A494 Aston hill reconstruction works. The local highway authority for the B5125 is Clwyd county council and it is responsible for all matters relating to road safety, including funding on that road.

Car Owners

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proportion of people in Wales classified within the lowest 25 per cent. income bracket own cars.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Over the two-year period 1990 to 1991, an estimated 14 per cent. of those households in Wales with the lowest 25 per cent. of incomes owned at least one car. (Source: Family Expenditure Surveys).

Health Authority Funding

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 19 November, *Official Report*, columns *317-20*, (1) what monitoring his Department has undertaken of each of the allocations made to Clwyd health authority in respect of the number of extra patients treated; and if he will list the relevant figures;

(2) what monitoring his Department has undertaken of each of the allocations made to East Dyfed health authority in respect of the number of extra patients treated; and if he will list the relevant figures.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Early initiatives were assessed on the basis of reports prepared by the health authorities involved. The 1991-92 and 1992-93 initiatives are being monitored by NHS Wales' value-for-money unit on behalf of the Department. The additional throughput facilitated by the initiatives for Clwyd and East Dyfed is as follows:

Additional throughput contracted for Clywd and East Dyfed health authorities

Clwyd
1989-90 20 hip replacements
1990-91 240 ENT patients
1991-92 300 urology patients

East Dyfed
1989-90 1,150 dermatology patients
1990-91 550 dermatology patients
1991-92 120 ophthalmology patients
40 urology patients

Heavy Goods Vehicles

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to issue guidelines to local authorities in Wales allowing them to confine lorries over 17 tonnes over 12 m long to motorways, most A roads and certain other designated roads.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Guidance on lorry controls has been issued to local authorities in Welsh Office circular 24/82.

Financial Sector Jobs

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many jobs were created in the financial sector in Wales in each year since 1989.

Mr. David Hunt: Between June 1989 and 1992 the number of employees employed in the banking, insurance and finance sector increased by 21,000. While comprehensive information on total jobs created is not available, levels of employment in this sector in Wales each year are given in the following table:

Employees in banking, insurance and finance

Year	Thousands at June
1989	68
1990	74
1991	90
1992	89

Source: Employment Department, Quarterly estimate series.

A487, Gwynedd

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the latest estimate of the commencement date for the Llanllyfwi Penygroes and Groeslow bypass scheme on the A487 trunk road in Gwynedd; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The A487 Penygroes-Llanllyfni bypass scheme is planned to start between April 1995 and March 1998.

Training Schemes

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people in Wales are currently on training schemes sponsored by local government.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The information requested is not available centrally. Local training provision, including any through training schemes sponsored by local government, is negotiated between providers and individual training and enterprise councils.

Travel Statistics

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what figures he has showing the average length of journey in Wales from home to *(a)* hospital, *(b)* leisure facilities, *(c)* shopping facilities and *(d)* the place of work in Wales during each of the last 15 years, nationally and by local authority.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Information on the average length of journeys is available only for Wales as a whole from the national travel survey. Figures from the latest survey for which Welsh results are available are given in the table.

Average length of journey in Wales, by purpose, 1985-86

	Miles All journeys
From home to:	
Leisure facilities	
Social/Entertainment	6·3
Holidays/Day trips	14·7
Shopping facilities	4·9
Place of work	5·8
Carry out personal medical business[1]	6·2
All[2]	6·2

Source: 1985-86 National Travel Survey, Department of Transport.
[1] No data are available for hospital visits specifically.
[2] Includes journeys in the course of work, for education purposes and other personal business.

Cancer Centre

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the siting of the north Wales cancer centre.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The establishment of a dedicated cancer treatment centre in north Wales is dependent upon the outcome of the investment appraisal currently under way.

"This Common Inheritance"

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the likely cost of local authorities in Wales of implementing recycling plans to meet the targets set out in "This Common Inheritance"; and what percentage of those costs will be met by his Department by specific grant.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information will not be available until local authorities have prepared their recycling plans in accordance with section 49 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990. The costs will be funded through the unhypothecated element of the local government revenue settlement.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the number of confirmed cases of BSE by county, in each month since January 1990.

Mr. David Hunt: The number of confirmed cases of BSE by county, in each month since January 1990 is shown in the following table:

Number of confirmed cases of BSE in Wales by month of service of form A at 30 November 1992

	Clwyd	Dyfed	Mid Glamorgan	South Glamorgan	West Glamorgan	Gwent	Gwynedd	Powys	Total
January 1990	7	30	0	0	0	10	4	9	60
February 1990	10	49	4	0	1	9	0	9	82
March 1990	14	75	4	0	1	10	3	15	122
April 1990	11	48	4	2	0	3	3	12	83
May 1990	15	44	4	1	0	4	1	14	83
June 1990	9	38	4	3	1	5	3	4	67

	Clwyd	Dyfed	Mid Glamorgan	South Glamorgan	West Glamorgan	Gwent	Gwynedd	Powys	Total
July 1990	12	36	0	5	0	5	2	5	65
August 1990	9	46	3	3	2	4	2	10	79
September 1990	17	46	6	0	0	12	2	9	92
October 1990	24	58	4	5	2	13	3	12	121
November 1990	30	58	2	2	1	4	5	19	121
December 1990	24	55	2	1	0	11	2	13	108
January 1991	37	99	2	4	0	10	4	18	174
February 1991	21	62	2	2	2	9	4	14	116
March 1991	24	79	8	0	1	14	5	15	146
April 1991	29	102	5	9	1	11	6	14	177
May 1991	20	75	0	5	1	11	2	23	137
June 1991	30	84	3	6	1	10	3	11	148
July 1991	36	92	0	3	0	14	6	10	161
August 1991	30	122	3	3	0	10	5	27	200
September 1991	35	130	2	5	0	14	7	21	214
October 1991	41	135	5	6	2	17	15	28	249
November 1991	42	146	5	6	1	16	17	37	270
December 1991	37	130	6	9	1	18	7	34	242
January 1992	44	197	3	8	1	24	10	33	320
February 1992	52	156	2	16	2	30	15	38	311
March 1992	59	201	3	9	1	24	17	55	369
April 1992	43	190	4	6	7	10	9	42	311
May 1992	31	125	3	4	2	23	5	29	222
June 1992	32	123	1	9	2	9	12	37	225
July 1992	43	155	5	9	1	23	15	34	285
August 1992	31	147	3	14	6	14	11	35	261
September 1992	40	147	5	7	1	21	12	39	272
October 1992	28	83	4	8	1	16	14	36	190

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Exports (Single Market)

13. **Mr. Trimble:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether he will make a statement on progress towards the removal, in the context of the single market, of bureaucratic impediments to exports.

Mr. Needham: Good progress has been made towards completion of the single market, including free movement of goods within the Community. The single market will indeed be open for business by the end of 1992 target date.

Iraq

17. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will place in the Library a copy of the letter dated 20 June 1990 from his predecessor's principal private secretary to the private secretary to the chairman of the Commissioners for Her Majesty's Customs and Excise.

Mr. Hamilton: No. The letter is one of the documents disclosed to the defence for use in connection with the Matrix Churchill trial. Lord Justice Scott will of course have full access to all relevant papers.

24. **Mr. Mike O'Brien:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on his Department's role in the approval of Matrix Churchill exports to Iraq, and his signing of public interest immunity certificates relating to documents relevant to the conduct of the prosecution of Matrix Churchill executives.

Mr. Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the speech I made in the House on 23 November, at columns 640-53. It is now for Lord Justice Scott to consider this issue under the terms of his inquiry.

Trading Standards Officers

17. **Ms. Rachel Squire:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the current shortfall in the number of trading standards officers; and what estimate he has made of its impact on the consumer protection service.

Mr. Leigh: The total number of trading standards officers in post in local authorities at 1 April 1992 was 288 below complement. This is a shortfall of 15 per cent. The size of the shortfall and its impact varies from authority to authority.

Small Firms Merit Award for Research and Technology

19. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many companies in the south of England have won SMART awards.

Mr. Leigh: A total of 241 projects have been supported in the South of England—152 in the south-east—under the small firms merit award for research and technology since 1988.

Small Businesses

20. **Mr. Gunnell:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the level of Government financial assistance to small businesses in each year since 1990-91, expressed in 1990 prices; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hamilton: Government provides assistance for small businesses in many ways. Interest rates are at their lowest level since 1978 and are the lowest in the European Community. Inflation has been below the EC average for over a year. We have one of the most favourable corporation tax structures in the major industrialised countries. We have increased capital allowances to bring forward investment. In addition, specific help provided by the Department of Trade and Industry, the Department of

Employment and the Scottish and Welsh Offices, including assistance provided via training and enterprise councils, local enterprise companies and other agencies, was £302 million in 1990-91, £292 million in 1991-92 and a planned £277 million in 1992-93, expressed in 1990 prices.

Microwave Modules

21. **Mrs. Jane Kennedy:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what meetings took place between his Department and Microwave Modules, or Microwave Modules International, between 1985 and 1990.

Mr. Salisbury: Representatives of my Department have had meetings and other contracts with representatives of these companies covering a variety of subjects for which my Department is responsible.

Newspaper Distribution

22. **Mr. Ernie Ross:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he expects the Director General of Fair Trading to complete his inquiries into newspaper distribution practices.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The Director General of Fair Trading referred the supply of newspapers from publishers to wholesalers, and wholesalers to retailers, in England and Wales to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission on 19 August this year. The commission was asked to report to my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade within 12 months.

Manufacturing

23. **Mr. Soley:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what new proposals he has to assist manufacturing industry.

Mr. Heseltine: The autumn statement contained a wide range of measures to help industry. It increased capital allowances, protected major public sector capital projects, encouraged private sector finance for public sector projects, provided £700 million extra help for exporters and abolished special car tax. In addition, I have restructured my Department so as to provide a more immediate response to the needs of industry. This includes major new initiatives on deregulation and in support of exports.

27. **Mr. Byers:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to assist the manufacturing industries in the northern region.

Mr. Salisbury: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) on 16 November, at columns *71-72*. The importance of manufacturing industry in the north is recognised by the wide range of the Department of Trade and Industry's services available to the region.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will meet representatives from the Confederation of British Industry's manufacturing council to discuss the key findings of its recent report on manufacturing.

Mr. Salisbury: The launch of the CBI manufacturing council report was accompanied by a debate on 10 November at its conference. My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade took part in that debate, replying on behalf of the Government.

Foam-filled Furniture

25. **Mr. McCartney:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what further representations he has made to the European Commission to ensure that United Nations consumers continue to receive protection against dangerous foam-filled furniture.

Mr. Leigh: In May 1991 the Commission announced its decision to suspend further work on the preparation of directive on the fire behaviour of upholstered furniture pending research to establish criteria for test methods. In informal contacts with the Commission, my Department has continued to make it clear that the United Kingdom will retain its furniture regulations until there is agreement on a directive which will afford a level of fire protection commensurate with our prevailing requirements for furniture containing foam and other filling material.

Pit Closures

26. **Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he was made aware of the inclusion of the Point of Ayr colliery in the list of coal mines proposed for closure by British Coal.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. Friend and I were informed by British Coal of the names of the 31 pits which it proposed for closure, which included Point of Ayr, on 12 October.

Clean Coal Technology

28. **Mr. Madel:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has received since 1 October concerning the future development of clean coal technology; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: My Department has received a number of letters supporting the development of clean coal technologies since 1 October. The Government recognise the importance of developing clean coal technologies and my Department is supporting a wide range of clean coal projects in partnership with the British Coal Corporation, UK industry, the European Commission and the International Energy Agency. At present, around 30 projects are under way, with a contract value of over £100 million. A number of further projects are at the planning stage.

The development of clean coal technologies are of worldwide interest and my Department has taken the lead in establishing a number of international agreements covering information exchange and collaborative R and D under the auspicies of the International Energy Agency, European Commission R and D programmes and with the United States Department of Energy.

Single Market

29. **Mr. Luff:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the progress being made with the completion of the single market; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: Progress on completing the Commission's White Paper is good, with over 90 per cent.

of the measures agreed by the member states. Under the United Kingdom presidency we are seeking agreement, where possible, on the remainder, although it is recognised that some have a low priority and that agreement will not be reached on all. There has, in addition, been agreement on a large number of other measures, not included in the White Paper.

These measures should offer major benefits for industry enabling British firms to offer a wide range of goods and services throughout the Community unimpeded by different national rules, standards or testing practices.

However, these benefits will be felt only if there is effective enforcement of these rules in all member states. To this end, the United Kingdom presidency has initiated and obtained agreement on a resolution on making the single market work. This lays down practical steps to ensure the effective appliction, operation and enforcement of EC legislation in all member states.

Balance of Payments

30. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proposals he has to enable the United Kingdom balance of payments to benefit from the depreciation of pound sterling where *(a)* there are no United Kingdom suppliers of manufactured components and *(b)* where the United Kingdom supplies are of low quality.

Mr. Needham: My Department helps United Kingdom manufacturers to identify and take full advantage of market opportunities at home and abroad by stimulating innovation and encouraging best practice in quality, design and management.

Coal Industry

31. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether he will meet NUM representatives to discuss the future plans for the coal industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heseltine: I will meet a delegation from the National Union of Mineworkers on 7 December.

Telephone Sex Line Services

32. **Mr. Lewis:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what further representations have been made by his Department to Oftel about the influence of telephone sex line services.

Mr. Leigh: None. The independent committee for the supervision of standards of telephone information services —ICSTIS—is an effective regulator of the premium rate telephone service industry. The ICSTIS code is kept continuously under review and it was further strengthened this year. Therefore, we believe adult premium rate telephone services are strictly controlled.

Coal Imports

33. **Mr. Barron:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what are the latest available figures for coal imports for 1992.

Mr. Eggar: The amount of coal imported into the United Kingdom in 1992 up to the end of September was 15,972,000 tonnes.

Departmental Subcontractors

34. **Mr. Bill Michie:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many small businesses subcontracted to carry out work for his Department have currently not received payment for work invoiced more than 30 days ago.

Mr. Leigh: This information is not available and could be provided only at disporportionate cost.

However, I can assure the hon. Member that I do recognise the importance of prompt payment of bills, especially to small businesses. The Government should set an example in this.

In accordance with Treasury guidelines, my Department requires its suppliers or contractors to settle all invoices with its subcontractors within the agreed credit terms or, where no credit terms have been agreed, within 30 days of receipt of an approved invoice.

Plant and Equipment

35. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to encourage investment in new manufacturing plant and development by United Kingdom-owned companies.

Mr. Salisbury: Investment will be encouraged by the profitable and competitive manufacturing base which our policies are designed to ensure.

Aerospace Industry

36. **Mr. Purchase:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on his Department's assistance to the British aerospace industry.

Mr. Salisbury: Since 1979 the Department of Trade and Industry has provided over £1·5 billion in support to the United Kingdom aerospace industry.

Laboratory of the Government Chemist

Mr. Redmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) if he will list by *(a)* date, *(b)* destination and *(c)* cost to the Exchequer of the chief executive of the Laboratory of the Government Chemist's visits to Europe since he was appointed in May 1991;

(2) pursuant to his answer of 9 November, *Official Report*, columns *603-5*, what has been the cost to the Exchequer of the chief executive of the Laboratory of the Government Chemist's visits to *(a)* Japan and *(b)* the United States since he was appointed in May 1991.

Mr. Eggar: As this is an operational matter, I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from R. D. Worswick to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 30 November 1992:

As these questions complement one another, it is more constructive for me to cover them in one reply.

The details of my overseas visits are as follows:

Destination and date	*Cost (£K)*
Europe	
Eurolab, Berlin—22-24 May 1991	
Community Bureau of Reference (BCR), Brussels—5-6 June 1991	
BCR, Brussels—15-16 January 1991	
Eurolab, Strasbourg—29-31 January 1992	

Destination and date	Cost (£K)
Central Bureau of Nuclear Measurements, Geel—11-13 November 1992	
TOTAL	2·4
USA	
Association of Analytical Chemists (AOAC), National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) and Analytical Laboratory Managers Association (ALMA)—21-25 October 1991	2·7
Japan	
High Level Mission—29 August/6 September 1991	4·4

The cost comprises travel and subsistence.

Many of the visits to Europe and the USA were made in connection with the Validity of Analytical Measurement initiative. The Laboratory undertakes this work for the Department of Trade and Industry on a customer-contractor basis. I am a UK representative on the BCR Management Committee and the Eurolab General Assembly. The High Level Mission to Japan was funded under the DTI's Overseas Science and Technology Expert Mission Scheme (OSTEMS). A report on this Mission was published in January 1992.

I hope this information is of assistance.

Radiocommunications Agency

Mr. Redmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 9 November, *Official Report*, columns *603-5*, what has been the cost to the exchequer of the chief executive of the Radiocommunications Agency's visits to Australia and New Zealand during the last 12 months.

Mr. Leigh: As this is an operational matter for the agency, I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from M. J. Michell to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 26 November 1992:

The total cost of the visit I made earlier this year to Australia and New Zealand to discuss questions of spectrum management policy, accompanied by a colleague, was £6,550. As a net running costs agency, the Radiocommunications Agency's operating costs are met by its income. This is received from fees charged to users of radio transmission equipment and certain other sources.

Middle East (Exports)

Mr. Hutton: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assistance is provided by his Department for exporters looking to open up markets in the middle east.

Mr. Needham: The Government's overseas trade services are available for most middle east markets and many exporters use them. This year the DTI is supporting 26 trade missions and a United Kingdom presence at 24 trade fairs in the area. It is particularly encouraging that a substantial number of participating companies are new exporters to the region. Export Credits Guarantee Department support is also available for credit-worthy middle east markets. We also see considerable scope in these markets, which last year took United Kingdom exports of £7 billion, for using some of the 100 secondees my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade plans to recruit from industry to assist with the promotion of United Kingdom exports.

Exports

Sir Michael Neubert: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what evidence he has of improved British export performance in the last 10 weeks.

Mr. Needham: United Kingdom figures are not available on a weekly basis. In the three months to October 1992, United Kingdom exports had increased by 2 per cent. by value, and 4 per cent. in volume terms, compared with a year earlier.

Consumers Affairs Council

Mr. Batiste: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the outcome of the Council of Ministers (Consumer Affairs) held in Brussels on 3 November.

Mr. Leigh: My noble Friend the Baroness Denton, the Minister for Consumer Affairs and Small Firms, was in the chair for the meeting of the Council on 3 November.

The Council reached political agreement to a common position on the proposed sixth amendment to the directive on the approximation of the legislation of the member states on cosmetic products. This was made possible by the incorporation of a presidency proposal: a ban of the use of ingredients tested on animals for cosmetics after 1998 but with an obligation on the Commission on scientific advice to make a proposal to the appropriate regulatory committee to postpone this ban if alternative tests have not been developed in time.

The Council held an orientation discussion on the proposed directive on timeshare which revealed strong support for the measure from members of the Council. There was useful clarification of the positions of member states on four key issues—the scope of the directive, the information in the brochure and contract, withdrawal periods and reimbursement upon withdrawal. It is likely that political agreement will be reached during the Danish presidency.

There was a short debate on the proposed directive on distance selling which highlighted the reservations voiced by several member states, particularly as to whether or not services, and most notably financial services, should be included within the scope of the directive. The permanent representatives committee will continue to examine the proposal, with particular reference to the opinion of the European Parliament.

Commissioner Van Miert gave a presentation to the Council on the consumer aspects of the report by the high-level group chaired by Peter Sutherland on the operation of the single market.

In addition, on the basis of a paper from the presidency, the Council explored the question of the need for increased co-operation between enforcement authorities in member states in order to secure the benefit of the single market for consumers. Discussion revealed that delegations were interested in such co-operation, particularly based on existing national structures.

The Commission described progress that had been made on the implementation of the Community scheme for the rapid exchange of information on dangers arising from the use of consumer products and outlined the current state of work on the European home and leisure accident surveillance system.

Renewable Energy

Mr. Colvin: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish details of Government spending on renewables research and development for the current financial year broken down by the energy source.

Mr. Eggar: The estimates provision for the renewable energy research and development programme for 1992-93 is detailed in table 7 of "The Government's Expenditure Plans within the Energy Sector 1992-93 to 1994-95".

Mr. Colvin: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish the names of the members of the Renewable Energy Advisory Group together with their credentials; and if he will make a statement on their agenda for the current financial year.

Mr. Eggar: The Renewable Energy Advisory Group was appointed in 1991 to review the Government's strategy to stimulate the development and application of renewable energy technologies wherever they have prospects of economic viability and environmental acceptability. Its report will contribute to the Government's overall review of renewable energy and will be published shortly.

Membership of the group is as follows:

Dr. Martin Holdgate[1] Chairman
Director General, International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources; formerly Deputy Secretary, Environment Protection and Chief Environment Scientist, Department of the Environment.

Dr. Mary Archer
Chairman, National Energy Foundation.

Mr. John Bellak
Chairman, Severn Trent plc.

Professor Sir Hermann Bondi
Fellow, formerly Master, of Churchill College, Cambridge; formerly Chief Scientific Adviser, Department of Energy and Chairman, Natural Environment Research Council.

Mr. Peter Goldsworthy
Director of Electricity Generation, NORWEB plc.

Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory[2]
Formerly, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Energy.

Mr. Gerald Leach
Senior Research Fellow, Stockholm Environment Institute.

Dr. David Lindley, Managing Director, National Wind Power Ltd.

Mr. Colin Moynihan[3]
Formerly, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Energy.

Mr. Peter Oppenheimer
Student in Economics, Christ Church, Oxford; Chairman Caminus Energy Ltd.

Mr. Jeremy Sainsbury
Sole agent, Fred Olsen Ltd.

Professor Arnold Wolfendale
Astronomer Royal, and Professor of Physics at Durham University.

[1] Chairman from June 1992.
[2] Member until April 1992.
[3] Chairman and Member until April 1992.

Mr. Colvin: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on his policy for market-based support for the renewable energy technology through the non-fossil fuel obligation and the fossil fuel levy, with percentage and cash figures for each.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. Friend's policy is to make renewables orders during the 1990s to support 700 MW of renewable generating capacity; the amount of support required through the levy will depend upon the contribution to generators' costs made by revenue from market sales. My right hon. Friend will review this policy in the light of the report from the Renewable Energy Advisory Group, taking into account the coal review now in progress.

Waste to Energy

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the present level of subsidy for electricity per kilowatt hour through the non-fossil fuel obligation; and how much this represents per tonne of waste incinerated in waste to energy schemes.

Mr. Eggar: The details of the price support arrangements differ from order to order, and from technology to technology. However, for municipal waste incineration projects contracted by the regional electricity companies in fulfilment of the 1991 renewables order, a price of 6·55p/kWh will be paid from the due commissioning date until 1998. Assuming an electricity pool price of 3p/kWh, the premium above the pool price approximates to £17 per tonne of waste incinerated until 1998.

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what price per kWh is currently paid by regional electricity companies for electricity generated from *(a)* coal and *(b)* municipal waste.

Mr. Eggar: The terms of contracts are a commercial matter for the companies concerned.

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what estimate he has made of the quantity of electricity that may be generated from waste to energy incineration projects by the year 2000; and what quantity of coal is needed to generate an equivalent amount.

Mr. Eggar: No firm estimates have been produced of the capacity of electricity generation plant likely to be generated from waste to energy incineration projects by the year 2000. However, if all the domestic waste incineration projects contracted under the first two rounds of the non-fossil fuel obligation came to fruition, the total capacity in place would be over 300 MW. This capacity would generate approximately the same amount of electricity per year as could be generated from 1 million tonnes of coal.

Electricity

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will estimate the cost to the coal industry of the subsidy given through the non-fossil fuel obligation for electricity generated by *(a)* nuclear power, *(b)* waste incineration and *(c)* renewables, including wind, wave, tide and solar power.

Mr. Eggar: The above-market element of the price paid to generators contracted under the non-fossil fuel obligation is financed through a fossil fuel levy paid by electricity consumers.

Car Advertisements

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will introduce new guidelines for the Advertising Standards Agency limiting references to engine performance and speed acceleration in car advertisements.

Mr. Leigh: The Advertising Standards Authority requires that all advertisements should be legal, decent, honest and truthful and should conform to its British code of advertising practice.

The Advertising Standards Authority already monitors car advertisements for claims relating to speed, power, acceleration and performance. Its April 1992 survey confirmed an overall improvement in compliance with British code of advertising practice of car performance advertisements.

The Advertising Standards Authority will investigate any written complaint about advertisements, and if the hon. Gentleman has details of any particular advertisement, I suggest that he contact the Advertising Standards Authority direct.

The British code of advertising practice is due to be substantially reviewed early next year. Although the terms of reference for that revision have yet to be decided, the Advertising Standards Authority says that they are likely to be wide ranging.

Oil and Gas

Mr. Ancram: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what measures he is taking to reduce the burden of regulation on United Kingdom oil and gas field development and production; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: On 22 October I published the report of a recent scrutiny by my Department which recommended a number of measures to reduce the burden of regulation in this area. A copy of the report was placed in the Library of the House. I will be implementing the changed procedures recommended in the report in full. They have been welcomed by the oil and gas industry.

Debt Payments

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 18 November, *Official Report*, column 225, on late payments to small businesses, what is the value of his Department's financial support for the pilot prompt payment initiatives; and if he will list the three trade associations involved in the initiatives.

Mr. Leigh: The three trade associations contracted for the prompt payment initiatives are:

The Mechanical and Metal Trades Confederation
Walsall Chamber of Commerce and Industry
The Federation of Master Builders

Funding will be met as required, subject to a maximum spend by the Department of £90,000.

German Coal Industry

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has made to the EC about subsidies paid by Germany to the German coal industry; and what EC rules and conditions apply to them.

Mr. Eggar: We have made representations to the Commission about contract arrangements in Germany which could have the effect of excluding other Community producers, including British producers. All aids by member states to their coal industries must be approved by the Commission within the terms of decision 2064/86/ECSC.

Nuclear Power Stations

Mr. Hardy: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what separate provision Nuclear Electric has made for decommissioning of nuclear power stations.

Mr. Eggar: Nuclear Electric's 1991-92 report and accounts show that the company's balance sheet at 31 March 1992 contained total nuclear provisions of £9,883 million. Of that total, some £1,699 million represented provisions in respect of the decommissioning of the company's nuclear power stations.

Civil Servants

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many civil servants are currently employed by his Department *(a)* in London, *(b)* in Scotland and *(c)* elsewhere.

Mr. Eggar: The information is as follows. Figures relate to staff in post on 1 October 1992—part-time staff are counted as half.

	Number
London	7,030
Scotland	525
Elsewhere	4,405

Collaborative R&D Projects

Dr. Moonie: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) if he will list the name of each company which received an award from his Department under the LINK scheme, the programme area of each award granted and its value, in each year since 1990-91;

(2) if he will list the name of each company which received an award from his Department under the small firms merit award for research and technology scheme, the project title of each award granted and its value, in each year since 1990-91;

(3) if he will list the title of each advanced technology programme, the value of each programme and the names of each organisation involved in the programmes, in each year since 1990-91;

(4) if he will list the name of each company which received an award from his Department under the EUREKA programme, the project title of each award granted and its value, in each financial year since 1990-91;

(5) if he will list the name of each company which received an award from his Department under the support for products under research scheme, the project title or process name of each award granted and its value, in each year since 1990-91.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 1 December 1992]:* It is not the normal practice of the Department of Trade and Industry to publish names of recipients of grants for collaborative research and development projects. Such information is treated as commercial-in-confidence. However, under the SMART competition and the support for products under research—SPUR—scheme, companies specifically agree to disclosure of their names, and in the case of SPUR they also agree to disclosure of the value of the grants.

Recipients of grant offers under SMART and SPUR are listed, with grant values in the case of SPUR. For LINK and advanced technology programmes the names of programmes are given, together with the value of grant offers made by financial year. For EUREKA, DTI-funded projects are listed—the "EUREKA year" begins in June.

The values of DTI grant offers made for each scheme are as follows:

Value of DTI grant offers made

£ million

	1990-91	*1991-92*	*[1]1992-93*
LINK	20·8	26·2	6·3
EUREKA	22·2	15·1	3·4
Advanced Technology Programmes	20·1	42·3	12·8
SMART	10·6	12·6	[2]7·9
SPUR	—	12·4	7·2

[1] To date.
[2] Estimated.

Value of DTI grant offers made (£)

LINK Programmes

Programme titles	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*1992-93 to date*
Advanced Semiconductor Materials	4,616,076	1,531,499	1,790
Agro-Food Quality	0	1,445,300	61,700
Asymmetric Synthesis	0	353,800	0
Biochemical Engineering	1,012,752	1,065,226	678,261
Biotransformations	715,702	0	254,680
Control of Plant Metabolism	68,890	27,358	0
Crops for Industrial Use	52,990	0	0
Design of High Speed Machinery	326,107	2,102,868	193,078
Enabling Technologies for Advanced Rotorcraft	0	116,000	0
Enhanced Engineering Materials	0	0	14,184
Eukaryotic Genetic Engineering	388,852	169,829	24,130
Food Processing Sciences	1,336,368	1,635,545	100,300
Hydrocarbon Reservoirs	0	511,000	333,000
Industrial Measurement Systems	587,219	1,389,358	118,411
Medical Implants	590,370	205,740	7,200
Molecular Electronics	622,600	0	0
Molecular Sensors	282,702	236,740	0
Nanotechnology	808,120	2,910,000	790,120
New Catalysts and Catalytic Processes	610,653	674,312	0
Optoelectronic Systems	4,795,194	4,055,033	1,909,430
Personal Communications	400,000	1,300,000	250,000
Power Electronic Devices and Derived Systems	376,700	877,300	411,200
Protein Engineering	243,686	1,704,400	312,500
Selective Drug Delivery and Targeting	0	0	0
Structural Composites	628,007	1,693,169	344,074
Technology for Analytical and Physical Measurement	1,414,443	1,218,607	186,737
Technologies for Sustainable Farming Systems	0	0	0·0
Ventilation, Air Conditioning and Refrigeration	425,150	266,009	0·0
Value of Grant Offers made for Projects within Programmes	20,302,581	25,489,093	5,900,795
Consultancy, Awareness and Training	483,027	673,472	265,777
Total value of DTI grant offers made	20,785,608	26,162,565	6,256,572

The names of the businesses, and the project titles, which have received awards under the small firms merit award for research and technology (SMART) scheme in 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93 to date are listed. The value of each award is commercial in confidence.

1990-91—Stage 1

A. K. & E. M. Campbell Trust	Aerating Plant
[1]Abbey Biosystems Limited	Brain Oxygenation Monitor
ABR Partnership	Treatment of Leachates
[1]Abwood Machine Tools Limited	High Performance Grinding Machine
Add Control Limited	Specialised Motor Controllers
[1]Advanced Design and Manufacture Limited	High Temperature Plastic Heat Exchanger
Alfas Industries Limited	Intumescent Sealant Tape
[1]Ampye Limited	Amplitude Limited
[1]Andor Technology Limited	Miniature Spectral Analyser
[1]Animax Limited	Animax Fermentation Project
[1]Applied Sensor Research Limited	Intelligent Vehicle Monitoring
[1]Argon Electronics	Simulation Radiation Dosimeter
[1]Balbox Limited	Injection Mould Tool
Ball Burnishing Machine Tools Limited	Trib-Joints
[1]F. Bamford (Instruments) Limited	High Pressure Transducer

Bank Hoare Pracice and Med Lab Servic	Evaluation of Leucocyte Activity
[1]Beran Instruments Limited	Alternative Data Transmission
[1]Biocyn Limited	Novel Milk Assay System
[1]Botham Engineering Limited	Large Structure Memory Management
R. J. Burston	Fibre Optics
Cambrian Plastics Limited	Camplas "Fiberloc" System
[1]Cambridge Antibody Technology	Small Molecule Detection
[1]Capital HPLC Specialists	Capillary Columns Development
[1]Caraderm Limited	Novel Skin Application
Cell Adhesion Research and Development	Design of Bioreactors
Cell Systems Limited	Freeze Drying Sperm and Blood
CFM Metal-Fax Limited	Liquid Ring Machine
Cheems Technology Limited	Coatings—Pharmaceutical Industry
Chemical Management Services Limited	Synthesis of Hydrofluorocarbons
[1]John Chubb Instrumentation	Test Shielding Capabilities
Clarinet Systems Limited	Handheld Electronic Map on CD
[1]Clinicaid Limited	Novel Range of ECG Electrodes
[1]Clive Durose Woodturners Limited	Woodturning Lathe
Colebrand Limited	Crack-sealing
Columbus Positioning Limited	Vehicular Positioning System
[1]Cryogenic Technology Limited	Intra Organ Cryosurgery
CSE (Nottingham) Limited	Telemetry System
[1]D. B. Electronics Limited	Standard—C. Fax
[1]Danbiosyst UK Limited	Vaginal Hydrogel Polymer System
[1]Dena Techaology Limited	Colloidal Mixing Techniques
[1]Dextra Laboratories Limited	Oligosaccharides
[1]Digital Real Time Systems Limited	Digital Signal Processing
[1]Digitrol Limited	Disk Erase
[1]DSP Consultants Limited	Digital Audio Noise Reduction
E. & L. Instruments Limited	Logic Array Trainer
[1]E. R. & F. Turner Limited	Computerised Flaking Machinery
[1]Edgley Aeronautics Limited	All Composite Wing Spar Lug
[1]Edinburgh Sensors Limited	Carbon Dioxide Detector
Electronic Systems (Notts) Limited	Fluorescent Light Controller
Eng Measurement Analysis and Test	Ship Propulsion by Wind Power
ER Fluid Developments Limited	Variable Displacement Pump
[1]Europa Scientific Limited	Metabolite Detector
[1]Exotherm Products Limited	Polystyrene Waste Densification System
[1]Extek Limited	Extek X1000 Telephone
[1]FFR Ultrasonics	Ultrasonic Plate Fastener
[1]Firmac Limited	Production of Bends in Ducting
Flowercrete Systems Limited	Flowcrete
Formold Limited	Pallet Trays for Glassware
Formtheme Limited	Ambulatory Data Logger
Fosse Limited	The Fosse Filter
Foster Findlay Associates Limited	Image Analysis Software
[1]Fwd Limited	Wind Powered Water Treatment
Fungal Control Systems Limited	AIB Development
Gallet Limited	Fibre Optics for Robotics
[1]Dr. Jason Garford	Novel IUCD
Gibbon Rescarch	Radar Transponder Product Line
Grove Marine Lymington Limited	Pultruded Composite Yacht Spar
[1]Gwent Electronic Materials Limited	Dielectric Materials
[1]Robin Hamilton	ET2 Litter Collecting Vehicle
HE Associates	Dental Bridge
[1]Helix Biotechnology	Products for Gene Technology
[1]High Force Research Limited	Aqueous Phenolic Effluents Treatment
Owen Holland	Neural Network Control System
[1]Holmes Newman Associates	Food Quality Control
[1]Hughes & McLeod Limited	Synthetic Reeds
[1]Hyperotrol Technology Limited	Industrial Microwave Systems
Iden Croft Herbs Limited	Preservation of Edible Flowers
[1]Immune Systems Limited	Cell Culture Priming
[1]Index Data Systems Limited	Mosaic
Industrial Development Bangor (UCNW)	Membrane Instrument
Industrial Health Limited	Multi-sensor Instruments
[1]Ingenion Design Limited	Low-cost Optical Transducer
[1]Instrument Transformers Limited	Optical Techniques
[1]Integral Vision	Beam Straightness Machine
[1]Integrated Display Systems Limited	Clavis Belt Tensioning Equipment
Integrated Silicon Systems Limited	Signal Processing Chip
[1]Intelligent Applications Limited	Electronics Troubleshooting
Interactive Meetings Limited	Tablet
Interdive Limited	Submersible Diving System
[1]Jennings Winch & Foundry Co. Limited	Electro Conductive Resins
[1]Jestar Limited	Inverted Brushless DC Machine
Keepers Developments Limited	H P Biotech Cell Disrupter
[1]Kilim Plastics	Heat Transfer System
Kindbrisk Limited	Atom Probe
[1]Knowledge Based Services Limited	Food (Formal Object Oriented Design)
Koral Scientific Limited	Electron Microscope Module
[1]Laser Hire	Colour Laser Scanning System
[1]Link Technologies Limited	Improved Linker Molecules/ DNA
[1]Linhoff March Limited	Separation Technology
[1]Liquid Levers Innovation Limited	Reflecting Road Stud
[1]Magna Industrials Limited	Magnabond B Alumino Silica
[1]Magstim Co. Limited	Novel Nerve Electromyograph
[1]Mangar Aids Limited	Periscope
[1]Marcher Enterprises Limited	Ophthalmic Camera for Glaucoma
[1]Marine Inertial Systems Limited	Inertial Sensing Unit
[1]Maritime Dynamics Limited	Prototype Container Crane
Marline (General Engineering) Limited	Sports Turf Compaction Relief
[1]Mass Transfer Limited	Biological Effluent Treatment
Matrix Systems	Micro-Plate Incubator
Medcon Consultancies	Ophthalmic Diagnostic Imaging
Medical Laser Technologies Limited	Isotropic Optical Probes
Metal Crystals and Oxides Limited	Crystals for Acousto-optics
Microcomy Limited	Remote Printer Driver
[1]Microplexer Engineering Limited	Non-Contact Bar Code Reader
Microsys Consultants Limited	Icon Based Software System
Microsystem Design Specialists Limited	Gas-Phase Sensor
MIE Medical Research Limited	Clinical Gait Analysis System
Minima Industrial Model Making	Optical Connectors
[1]Mirage Inks Limited	Detoxification of Printing Ink
G. W. Mitchell	Steering System for Trailers
MLC Limited	Colour Dry Silver Imager
Mocrostone Computers Limited	Proximity Sensing Keypad
[1]Motorised Air Products Limited	Fire Safety Damper
[1]Multitech Limited	Silver Photochemical Machining
M4 Data Limited	Optical Recording Filesby
[1]Nawal Systems	Automatic Equipment Monitor

Operating Theatre Systems	Opsheet
[1]Ovetech Marine System Limited	"Rapid"
Dr. R. M. Parkin	High Speed Inspection
[1]Pathology Management Services Limited	Microbiology Control
[1]Photowire Limited	Chronolog/Chronometer
Planar Projects	Planar Research Project
Polymedica Industries UK Limited	Novel Gas
I. T. Power Limited	Hydro-Turbine
[1]Proven Engineering Products Limited	Wind Turbine Blade System
PWM Drives Limited	Fluid Infusion System
PWS Research and Developments Limited	Low Alcohol Drinks
[1]Q-Par Angus Limited	Microwave Components
[1]Quantec Image Processing Limited	Measurement of Components
[1]Radiocode Clocks	Frequency Synchronisation System
[1]Ravensworth Limited	Heat Resistant Polymer
Reel Photographic Limited	Microfiche Duplicator
Reddish Electronics Limited	Mass Analysis Profiler
Ramcosys Limited	Electronic monitoring/fridges
Ravelox Limited	Hi-loch scolling oars
Roston Design Consultants	Tele-nav
Rockwell Hitec Limited	Recycle Photographic Chemicals
Roder Developments	Monitoring of land-fill sites
[1]Safe Training Systems Limited	Radiation Monitor Simulation
[1]Salford Technology PLC	Optical Character Recognition
[1]Julie Schofield Limited	DML—A Presentation Manager
Sense and Vision Electronic Systems Limited	Electronic Fertility Assessment
[1]Sensit Limited	Novel Load Cell
[1]SIS Technology Consultants	Laser Glass
Shorfast Limited	Garment Transport System
Sifrax Structural Glazing Limited	Structural Glazing System PT4
[1]Sirius Analytical Instruments Limited	pKa Analyser
Spray forming Developments Limited	Layered Silicon Steel Strip
[1]St. Andrews Electronics Limited	Data Calculators
Stone Heroes Limited	Marquee Moulded Marble
Structure Testing Services (UK) Limited	Surface Penetrating Radar
Swift 943 Limited	Portable Electronic Notepad
[1]Swiftlogic Limited	Cad Tool for EMI Analysis PCBS
[1]System Silicon PLC	Speech compression
[1]Systems Eng (Lancaster) Limited	Multi-purpose Sonar
[1]Tangent Technology Design Association Limited	Portable IT Device
Thermal Engineering Systems Limited	High Humidity Heat Exchequer
Thermal Measurement Systems	Thermowave
[1]Tec Systems Limited	High Speed Personalised Ticket Dispenser
Tri-Vac Dispense Limited	Beverage Dispensers
[1]Valeport Marine Scientific Limited	Molecular and Optical Sensors
[1]Vigmed Medical Technology Limited	Cadve Detector
[1]VLS Limited	Auto Visual Inspection System
Warwick Design Consultants Limited	Ceramic Swash Plate Motor
[1]Watermatch Limited	Marine Hazard Warning Device
[1]Welbon Microelectronics Limited	Enhanced Analogue Components
[1]E. Wood Limited	Polymer Coatings
Worthington Richardson Design	Colour Change Medical Gloves
[1]M. J. R. Young and R. Bradnock	Removal of Plastic Bone Cement
Zetetic International Limited	Electromagnetic Signature ID System

[1] Received Stage 2 awards in 1991-92.

1990-91 Stage 2

Abbey Biosystems Limited	Blood Glucose Monitor
Abbey Instruments Limited	Bacterial Colony Counter
Advanced Technology Manufacturing Systems Limited	Control and Optimising System
Air Safety Products Limited	Life Support and Location System
Anthony Best Dynamics Limited	Novel Noise Source
Barnard Microsystems Limited	Integrated Microwave Circuit
Biocell Research Limited	Gold Labelled DNA
Biopharm (UK) Limited	Dissolution of Blood Clots
Bionys Limited	Safe Diagnostic Kits
Biotechnology Process Services Limited	Chromatographic Media
Bodymedic Limited	Remote Blood Pressure Monitor
Boverton Electronics Limited	Skin Tissue Condition Monitor
Bradford University Research Limited	NOAA Receiving System
Burkard Manufacturing Co. Limited	Microbiological Air Sampler
M. H. Butterfield	Machine Reading of Handwriting
Camera Alive Limited	Realtime Camera
Cedeta Research Limited	Electronic Pain Relief Device
Cell Adhesion Research and Development	Measurement of Cell Adhesion
Centripetal Technology Limited	Industrial Scale Cole Vacuum
Cirrus Research Limited	Technology Area Noise Monitor
Clyde Product Technology Limited	Protection for Printed Circuit
Crossflow Microfiltration Limited	Treatment of Rural Waters
CSE (Nottingham) Limited	Telemetry Slip Ring
D. C. Clarke	Extensible Pneumatic Cylinders
Danbiosyst UK Limited	Polymeric Peptide Delivery System
Edinburgh Instruments Limited	Microscope Based Spectrometers
Ensigma Limited	A Speaker Verifier
Enzymatix Limited	Therapeutic Phospholipids
EST Research Limited	Power System Development
Exotech Limited	Ultrasonic Stud Monitoring
Farmaresch Medical Limited	Hyaluronic Acid in Joints
Flox Limited	Fibre Optic Image Inverter
Friction Technology Limited	Thin Geometry Tooling
Fyne Designs Limited	Aqua-Nova Bathing Facility
Glitech Limited	Novel Dialysis Fluid
Green Land Systems Limited	Green Land Compost
Heaw Co. Limited	Heaw
Hereford Herbs Limited	Herb and Spice Beads
Hi-Tec Metals R&D Limited	Low Pressure Casting System
Human Machine Interfaces Limited	Electronic Energy Analyser
Hydramotion Limited	Sonic Plane Density Sensor
Insight Logistics Limited	Automatic Interactive Visual Scheduling
Integrated Sensors Limited	Detector of Charged Particles
Intellimetrics Limited	Impact Emission Spectroscopy
Ion Tech Limited	RF Excited Ion Beam Source

Isle Optics	All Solid State Laser
Knight Scientific	Bioluminescent Materials
KX Technology Limited	Low Temp Cooling System
Lancashire Fittings Limited	Lead-free Soft-Solder
Logicflit Limited	Combined Elemental Mass Spec. System
Marshbanks Measurement Systems Limited	Cerebral and Cochlear Fluid Pressure Measurement
Marine Inertial Systems Limited	Heave Independent Motion
MCA Services	Micronised Silver Chloride
McFairmond Advanced Technology Limited	Fast Burn Technology
Medix Limited	Novel Insulin Delivery System
Micrograph Design Limited	Pressure Measuring Instruments
MIA Dynamics Limited	Analysis of Rotating Machinery
Molecular Products Limited	Novel Absorbent
Newcastle Photometric Systems Limited	Multi-point Low Light Detector
Novocastra Laboratories Limited	Monoclonal Antibodies
Optics & Vision Limited	Innovative Binoculars
Oxford Positron Systems Limited	A Low Cost Hidac Camera
Oxford Sensor Technology Limited	Automatic Windscreen Insertion
Paxdata Limited	Data Comms
Prometheus Developments Limited	Polymeric Intumescent Compound
PWM Drives Limited	Microelectronic Controller
Quatro Biosystems Limited	Detection of Drug Abuse
Reeve Analytical Limited	Chromatographic Data Systems
S&C Thermofluids Limited	Exhaust Powered Air Inducers
S. L. Electrotech Limited	Intelligent Fire Sensor System
Salford Ultrafine Chemicals and Research Limited	Preparations of Morphine
Sensor PLC	Exportable Image Analysis System
Sensit Limited	Micro Based Transducer Display
Sherwood Technology Development Limited	New X-Ray Substrate
Skrinemark Limited	Conductive Composite Tubing
Somerset Fruit Machinery Limited	Fruit Collector
Stoneleigh Associates Limited	Precision Imaging
Systems Solutions Limited	Guided Vehicle System
Tetronics Research and Development Co.	Preparation of Ferro Titanium Alloy
Translift Engineering Limited	Space Saving Fork Truck
Tribotics Limited	Research Affecting Chromosome Separation
Ultra Laboratories Limited	Industrial First Aid Dressing
Vetstream (Development) Limited	Info Management System—Vets
Volutch Instruments Limited	Portable Power Analyser
Warwick Design Consultants Limited	Open Water Dive Trainer

1991-92 Stage 1

A. W. Technology	Infra Red Sensing
Abbotsbury Software Limited	Diver Management System
Acorn Chemical Limited	The Biocote Project
Actuated Controls Limited	Ultra Low Pressure Instrument
Advanced Fluid Systems Limited	Electro-Rheological Dashpanners
Advanced Insulation Products Limited	Foam Dispense System
Aerogen Co. Limited	Aerofume
Algotronix Limited	Digital Workbench
Andover Software Ltd.	Speech Processing Transceiver
Antig Engineering	Hypocycloidal Engine
Anton Molecules Limited	Anti-Tumour Agent
Baugh and Weedon Limited	Hand Held Flaw Detector
Bede Scientific Instruments Limited	Miniature X-Ray Detectors
Bendorus Boatyard	Submersible Shellfish Platform
Anthony Best Dynamics Limited	Testing of Vehicle Bodies
Bio-Diagnostics Limited	Assay for Nephrology
Bioprocessing Limited	Affinity System
A. Bissell	Real-time Scan Conversion
Bookham Technology Limited	Silicon Integrated Optics
Z. Brierley Limited	Tool and Cutter Grinder
Cairngorm Climbing Rope Limited	Strain Indicative Climbing Rope
Cambridge Radiation Technology Limited	Horizontal Drilling System
Cardio Carbon Limited	Percutaneous Access Device
Castle Associates Limited	Hand and Arm Risk Measurement
Celect Electronics	Remote Thermal Sensor
Centre for Software Maintenance Limited	Inverse Engineering for Software
Cerutex 3D	Cerutex 3D Transfers
Clinical Product Development Limited	Intra-Operative Suction
Contra Vision	Polyester Processing
Counting Technology	Portable Particle Analyser
Cytocell	DNA Probe for Cystic Fibrosis
Definitive Projects	The Intelligent Claw
Dian Micro Systems Limited	Data Acquisition System
Digital Engineering Limited	ISDN Terminal Adaptor/ Modem
Digital Imaging Systems Limited	Neural Network Image Processor
DLB Systems Limited	Clinical Trial Data Management System
Drew Scientific Limited	Micro Albumen Urea Analyser
Bowesmoss Limited	Disposable Environment Sensors
Elara Associates	Exhaust Gas Monitor
Elimax Limited	Robotics in Protein Crystallisation
Encrypta Electronics Limited	The Re-Usable Security Seal
Energy Technology and Control Limited	Combustion Control Coal Boiler
Envirotech Partnership	Fluid Separator Prototype
Euro Dental	A New Dental Filling Material
Exoptek Limited	Machine Vision Depth Encoding
Fathom	Fathom
Flow Simulation International Limited	4GL Field Modelling Tool
Focuscon Limited	Symbol Agglutination Reader
Formal Systems (Europe) Limited	Task Quantity Modelling System
Gaeltec Limited	Telemetry Transducer Link
Geoquip Limited	Perimeter Security Sensor
Glance Information Systems Limited	Elapsed Event Display
Gratek Manufacturing Limited	Microfilm Imaging Project
Gwilym Jenkins and Partners Limited	Scenario Testing Software
Gyrotech Limited	Rotafen
Gyrus Medical Limited	Acid-Check
Hallmarket Limited	Turf Harvester
Hetrob Limited	High Speed Rivet Collation
Hirst Magnetic Instruments Limited	Permanent Magnet Measurement
Holset Industrial Linings Limited	Fluoroplastic Material
Roger Horsey	Microprocessor Project
Immune Systems Limited	A Monoclonal Antibody

Immunodiagnostic Systems Limited	Diagnostic Technology for Vitamin C
Innovadent Technics Limited	Magnetisable Cap Component
Innovative Technology Limited	Note Acceptor NA-1
Integrated Design Techniques Limited	Non Linear Search Algorithms
Integrated Micro Products Limited	Predictable Open Systems
Intelligent Applications Limited	Expert System Based Energy Auditor
Intelligent Solutions Partnership	Process Optimisation
Inventions Limited	Node Neural Networks
J. P. J. Engineering Services Limited	Ceramic Energy Saving Tuyere
Kayvar Engineering and Automation Limited	Solid State Current Correction System
Kern Electrical Components Limited	EMC Components for new EC Regulations
Knight Scientific	Automated "Abel" Monitoring
Knudsen Computer Products	Portable Reader
Kudos Corporation Limited	Exhaust Conditioning System
KX Technology Limited	Platinum-in-Ore Analyser
Life Support Engineering Limited	Long Duration Breathing Apparatus
Lightwork Design Limited	Computer Graphics Simulator
Liquid Crystal Technology Limited	Low Cost LCD Animation
Liquids Research	High Quality Ferrofluids
W. G. Lucas and Son Limited	Electronic Sewing Machine
Macon Management and Design	High Speed Encoder
Marbco Engineering Limited	Filling for Fire Extinguishers
Marine Data International Limited	Split Ship Sea Going Canal Vessel
Marine Project Development Limited	Detensioner Device
Marshall Biotechnology Limited	Solid State Temperature Control
Maxys Circuit Technology Limited	Neural Accelerator System
Mecon	Math Modellers Work Bench
Medical Advice Service for Travellers Abroad	A new live typhoid vaccine
Medical Document Imaging Systems Limited	Project "VAST"
Medical Express (UK) Limited	Preservatives in Toiletries
Meter Controls International Limited	Domestic Hot Water Controller
Metropolitan Business Services	Heating Device to Strip Paint
Jonathan A. Michaels	Devices for Medical Laser Applications
Microbial Systems Limited	Microbial Colony Discriminator
Miller Dust	Pressure Regulator
Modular Mouldings	Firebird II
D. Moore	Pipemaster
MRP Electronics Limited	Survivor
Multilyte Limited	MultiAnalyte Immunoassay System
Mumed Limited	Pulmonary Function Monitor
Neptune Sonar Limited	Diver Communication System
New Metals and Chemicals Limited	Carbon Fibre Reinforcement
Novocastra Laboratories Limited	Monoclonal Antibodies
R. J. and R. S. Nonny—T/A Sea Sediments	Seabed Stability
Oilfield Chemical Technology	Drilling Fluid Development
Oldham Controls	Yarnspec Equilength
Optical Metrology Limited	Optical Distance Measurement
Orion Gas Seals Limited	Front Deprotion Dry Gas Seal
Oxford Lenses Limited	Variable Focus Lenses and Mirror
Oxford Metrics Limited	Analysis of Human Kinematics
Oxford Sensor Technology Limited	Optical Tracker Robot Welding
Pacer Systems Limited	High speed scalloping of lace
Pennine Automation Limited	New Generation Machine Tool
Pentagram Technical Services Limited	Automated Drive for Microwave
Perifleur Products Limited	Orbital Plant System
Alfred Peters Limited	New Technology Audiometer
Peterson Holographics	Hologram Lighting System
Pharmaceutical Proteins Limited	Trojan Sperm
Pitchline Transmissions Limited	Gear Coupling and Test Rig
Pixel Power Limited	Graphics Supercomputer
Planck Instruments (UK) Limited	Chemical Analysis
Pollution Control and Measurement Limited	Portable Optical Dust Monitor
Power Electronics Controls	Electric Arc Sensing
Precision Drilling Limited	Super Saw Project
Prendergast and Hickey	Voice Driven Machine Interface
Prestek Limited	High Speed Label Printer
Prometheus Developments Limited	Self Reinforcing Plastics
Quality Systems and Technology Limited	Open Net
Quatro Biosystems Limited	Auto Feed Sampler
Quest Refrigeration Manufacturing Limited	Rotational Moulding
RAD Scientific	Photodynamic Cancer Diagnosis
Radiocode Clocks	Precision time and frequency Distributing System
Radicontact Limited	Zonal Intrusion Detection
Rapawny Energy Limited	Energy Reduction for Castings
Research Instruments	Cell Wall Penetration Technique
Rhodes Technology	Refinement of Herbal Therapy
Robotec Limited	Low Level Palletiser
Rockfield Software Limited	Mesh Generating System
Rowan Technologies	Corrosion Monitoring
Russell Paterson	Membrane Characterisation
Sea-Tek Limited	Fish Counting Biomass Measurement
Seatron Limited	Laser Nocturnal Simulator
Selective Antibodies Limited	Monoclonal Selective Antibody
SES Technology Consultants	Fast Radioisotope Imager
Sonic Systems	Electromagnetic Coupling
Specialists Refractory Service	Dental Investment Materials
Spring Research and Manufacturing Association Limited	Auto Spring-End Coning Machine
Springco (NI) Limited	Abrasive Belt Grinding Machine
Stakesolve Limited	Intelligent Bar Code
Sterling Design International	U Tube Control Tool
Sulcated Springs Limited	Sulcated Spring Development
Surface Active Limited	Monoclonal Anti-Body Detection System
System Products Limited	Electronic Tennis Trainer
Systems Solutions Limited	Auto Test Equipment
T-Plan Systems Limited	The M Plan Applicator Generator
Tailor Made Systems Limited	Predictive Lighting Maintenance
Adam Thatcher Limited	Real time monitoring of fall discharge
Tilt Measurement Limited	Roll Free Tilt Sensor
TINT	Ion Mobility Spectrometer
Total Temperature Control Limited	Electronic Control
Track Analysis Systems Limited	Radon and Thoron Dosemeter
Transtec	Seismic Process/Geophysical
Trent Valley Water Systems Limited	Solar Water Sterilisation Unit
Tritec Developments Limited	Fibre Tip Power Meter
UK Plant Services Limited	Low Emission Waste Gas Burner
Viking Designs Limited	Radiotherapy X-Ray Detector
Viridian Bioprocessing Limited	Biotreatment Organic Compounds

Waller Designs	Ultrasonic Power Unit
Warren Logic Limited	Underwater Communication System
Roger West Laboratories Limited	Truck Self Weighing System
Worthington-Richardson Designs	Surgical Laser Structure
X-Tek Systems Limited	Pulsed X-Ray Source
York Equimed Limited	Infra Fred Heart Rate Meter
York Software Engineering Limited	Zeta Feasibility Study
Zeta Controls Limited	Smart Controls
Zytek Systems Limited	Battery Car—Computer Control
2V Microsystems Limited	Wind Generator Kits
3D Scanners Limited	Pantina—the "Colour 3D Scanner"

1992-93 Stage 1

A. Carter & P. Tilsley T/A Computer PK	The Signal Centre
A. G. Designs Limited	Non-Contact Strip Gauge
ABN Engines	Concept Compression Ignition
Acorn Business Company Limited	Solar Heat Engineer (SHE) Pump
Airborne Particle Classification	Airborne Particle Classifier
Airrite Building Services Limited	Variable Area Diffuser
AL-ECO Systems Limited	Modular Hydroponic Product Panel
Alan G. Jones	Chemical Bond Based Microchip
Animax Limited	Materials Technology Project
Apex Developments Limited	Development of Oxygen Sensors
Applied Technology Developments Limited	H/Speed Piezo Electric Valve
April Agri-Biologicals Limited	Centrifugal Fabric Generator
Armstrong Projects Limited	Orthrobot
Arrago Design Engineering Limited	Mini Neutral Buoyant Manipulator
Atlantech Technologies Limited	High Speed Local Loop Modem
Avimar Systems & Components Limited	Advanced Hardware Marine Radar
Bath Analytical	Drug Sensitivity Testing
Beran Instruments Limited	Hardwood Railway Sleepers
Bio Tools	Genome Placement System
Biocell Research Laboratories	Metallic Particle Label, Assay
Biocolor	Glycan Assay Kits
Biopharm (UK) Limited	Leech Salivary Hyaluronase
Blackwater Electronics	Electronic Hydrometer
Bunting Titanium Limited	Titanium Valve
Cabtrac Electronics	A Mains Paging System
Cal Gavin Limited	Enhanced—2 Phase Flow—Tube
Cambridge Antibody Technology	Blood Test for Prenatal Screen
Cambridge Concept Limited	Vehicle Immobiliser System
Cambridge Optical Sciences	Demultiplexer
Ceramic Developments (Midlands) Limited	UV Curing Ceramics/Polymers
Chiprack Electronic Systems Limited	High Density Modular PC
Cirrus Research Limited	A Noise Dose Badge
Cogent Diagnostics Limited	Rheumatoid Dipstick Assay
Computer Industry Research Unit	Multipoint Audio Video
Copeland Fluid Power Limited	Development of Fluidic Motor
Cryogenic Limited	A Low Cost MRI Magnet
Customflex Limited	Spinal Disc Replacement
D. G. Tear Coating Services Limited	Self Lubricating Hard Coating
David James Cundall	Solar Energy Battery
De Montfort Management Limited	"ZERRA" A New Kind of Mirror
Dextra Laboratories Limited	Carbohydrate Antigens
Digital Real Time Systems Limited	Modular Active Control System
Don Whitley Scientific Limited	On-Line Microbial Sensors
Dr. Cross and Dr. Bisnar	Water Potential Meter
Dr. Paul A. Clifton	Manufacture of Metal Alkyls
Dr. R. G. Bardsley	Genetic Profiling Kit
E. M. Electronics Limited	Low Level Isolated Measuring
East Riding Laboratories Limited	Hydrogel Drug Delivery System
Economobile Projects Limited	Variable Geometry Turbocharger
Edgley Aeronautics Limited	Composites in Aircraft
Edinburgh Instruments Limited	Surf Structure Port Analyser
Eident Limited	Laser Based Depilatory System
Eldon Technology Limited	16:9 Display Small Signals SEC
Electron Microscope Services	D.L.C. on Glass Knives
Environics Limited	Mass Emissions Meter
Evans Engineering Limited	High Speed Water Turbine
Everlastings	Preserving Plant Materials
Filtec Limited	Cenospheres Classification
Fred Limited	Pulsed Delivery for AGR Sprays
FSL Electronics Limited	Street Light Fault Monitoring
Fulleon Limited	High Efficiency Sounder Transd
Global Specialities Corporation (UK) Limited	Intelligent Signal Analyser
Goodwin Air Plasma Limited	New Plasma Technology
GPE (Bulk Solids Handling) Limited	Vacuum Aerator Feed Nozzle
Gwent Electronic Materials Limited	A1 Inks for Auto Glass
Gwernafalau Cyfyngedig	Improved Method-Rapid Prototype
H. E. Associates	Unleaded Glass Crystal System
Haematest Limited	Development of Visualiser
Harley Scientific Instruments	Fibrous Aerosol Detector
HDP Consultant Engineers	Sign Capture and Verification
High Force Research Limited	Fluorinated Aids Anticorrosion
Holmes Newman Associates	Automatic Meat Quality Measure
Hughes Whitlock Limited	Detection of Microbial Contaminants
Image Processing & Vision Company Limited	Dental Imaging System
Index Data Systems Limited	Artemis
Inflammatory Bowel Disease Study Group	Treatment of Crohn's Disease
Infra-Therm Limited	Thermal Mannequin
Innervision MRI	Small MRI
Intec Design Limited	Centrifuge with Sealable Rotor
Integral Solutions Limited	Clementine Data Mining System
Integrated Bus Networks Limited	Architecture Data Comm Router
Integrated Display Systems Limited	Moving Belt Tension Measurement
International Telesystems Limited	Voice Recognition Development
Interstellar Systems Limited	Simultaneous Windows
Ionsed	Non Invasive Test
Ion Vac Technology Limited	Pollution Free Vacuum Coating
Isis Optics	Laser Control Devices
Jenner Enterprises Limited	Q Nect Connector
JME Limited	X-ray Stress Analysis
John Ashworth & Partners	Decorative Pyrolytic Coatings
K. & L. Engineering	Tube Filling Machine
L. Jankovic	Self Learning Electronic Chip
Leading Edge Research Limited	Fibre Optic Sensor Bushing
Less Common Metals Limited	High Purity Indium Production
Lesnel Technology	Lithium Sulphur Trioxide Battery
Lightstar Fibre Optic Comms Limited	Peripheral Sharing Using Radio
Lloyd Doyle Limited	High Speed Optical Inspection

Magna Industrials Limited	Isostatic Pressing (Dry Bag)
Marvell Consultants Limited	On-Line Particle Analysis
MCA Services	Novel Biosensor Electrodes
Medicina Limited	Gastric Tonometer
Medimech International Limited	Sharps Protection Feature
Metals Research Semiconductors Limited	Novel Multi-Wafer Movpe System
Michael J. Billingham Limited	Silicone Rubber Patterns
Microbial Developments Limited	Microbial Control
Microlight Systems Limited	Mini Computers
Microsurgical Equipment Limited	Joining Blood Vessels
Midland Valley Exploration	Landslip Prediction Software
Milmega Limited	Solid State Power Amplifiers
Minster Composite Industries Limited	D. S. C. M. Development
Mirage Inks Limited	U. V. Curable Ink Food Packaging
MJA Dynamics Limited	Diagnose Serious Faults
Molecular Light Technology Research	Multiple Virus Screening Tests
Moredun Animal Health	Diagnosis/Animal Disease Kits
Mounture Race Engines	Hydraulic/Electronic Valve Control
Mupor Limited	Surface Morphology Membrane
Natural Technology Limited	Aquatic Weed Harvester
Newtech Limited	Ultra High Speed CNC Machines
Nicholas Electronic Design	Safe Inspection Light
Nima Technology Limited	An Intelligent Gas Sensor
Novocastra Laboratories Limited	Genetic Engineering
Objective Software Technology Limited	Message Base Test
Omicron Development Limited	Flat Loudspeaker
Optoken Instruments Limited	Alumina Size Exclusion Membrane
Optolink	Electronic Health System
Optomech Limited	High Power DPSS Laser
Orwel DNA Service	DNA & RNA Clinical Samples
Oxford Applied Research	Focused Ion Beam Technology
Oxford Asymmetry Limited	Automatic Asymmetric Synthesis
Oxford Optronix	Blood Flow & Oxygenation
P. C. Maritime Limited	Integrated Navigation System
Parallax Solutions Limited	Identify Validation
Permarock Products Limited	Water Based Conductive Coating
Photek Limited	3-5 Hybrid Photomultipliers
Pi Logic Limited	Multiparameter Sensor Mattress
PL Coatings Limited	Refractive Photometric Monitor
Pollution Monitoring Systems	Multi Gas Air Pollution Monitor
Preformed Rib Markings Limited	Road Marking Machine
PRISM	Continuous Reactor Processing
Pyramis Limited	Vital Signs Monitor
Quantum Vision Limited	Bio-Medical Imaging Detector
R. M. Brown T/A Compojet	Miniature Gas Turbine
RDM Consultants Limited	Brain Monitor Development
Richard H. R. Abbott	Hydroponic System
Roger Hurrey	High Speed Microprocessor
Rombo Productions	Multi-Media Development
Roy Venton-Walters	Advanced Light Aircraft
S & C Thermofluids Limited	Floating Booms—Oil Spillage
S. Henderson	The "MAC" Project
Savawatt (UK) Limited	Project Ashpic
Selective Antibodies Limited	Enhanced Specificity Immunoassay
Semimetrics	Materials Quality Testing
Sintex Limited	Sinterforming Waste Polymers
SJB Engineering	Extensiometers: Creep and Fatigue
Spatial Image Systems Limited	New Type of Computer Screen
Specialist Micro Technology	Solid State Disc Drive Design
Spectrum 2000	Advanced Position Sensors
Sterimedix Limited	Small Incision Nucleus Removal
Swift 943 Limited	Divemap
Synpro M. I. Limited	Gearless Print Roller Drive
Systems Eng. (Lancaster) Limited	Hand Held Diver Sonar
Systems Eng. & Assessment Limited	Tissue Characterisation
Team Management Systems Limited	Improvement in Orthodontics
Teledictor Limited	Ultrasonic Thickness Gauge
Thermatec Engineering	Electron Beam Welder
TIC	Interfaces For Specific Needs
TJP Electronics Limited	Automatic Tube Cutting
Tom Wielkopolski	Stepless Gear Drive
Traffic Safety Systems Limited	Traffic Light Video Camera
Transmed Limited	Improved Brain Function Monitor
Trevor Holroyd T/A Sound Advice	Acoustic Testing Machine
Visible Sound	Deaf Vocabulary Training
Vista Optics Limited	Deposit Resistant Material
Vitronix	Glass Ceramic Semiconductors
Vuman Limited	Anaesthesia/Sedation Monitor
Welland Medical Limited	Disposal Stoma Bag
XL Technology Limited	Inflatable Packer
3D Research	3D Digitiser
3A Biotechnology	Phonocardiometer
3D Instruments Limited	Motion Tolerant Compass

Judging of Stage 2 entries has yet to be completed.

Advanced technology programmes
Value of DTI grant offers made (£)

Programme titles	*1990-91* £	*1991-92* £	*1992-93 to date* £
Advanced Robotics	0	2,891,102	394,935
Advanced Silicon Technology	0	0	2,467,973
Compounds Semiconductor Technology	0	684,624	790,708
Competitive Manufacturing: Information Gathering	0	0	9,940
Computer Aided Engineering	1,014,469	1,345,659	629,961
Gallium Arsenide	4,335,800	274,376	0
Information Engineering	9,663,596	7,136,310	0
Manufacturing Organisation, People and Systems	0	506,209	727,155
National Electronics Research Initiative	0	85,000	900,000
Open Distributed Systems Architecture	0	786,700	0
Parallel Applications	0	13,000,000	0
Safety Critical Systems	15,000	7,195,154	102,226
Speech and Language Technology	0	0	3,467
Superconductivity	312,815	772,388	1,326,837
Systems Technology and Integration	282,000	2,119,910	0

Programme titles	1990-91 £	1991-92 £	1992-93 to date £
Wealth From The Oceans	2,093,282	2,272,947	1,284,068
VLSI Design Automation	0	0	2,478,996
Value of grant offers made for projects within programmes	17,716,962	39,070,379	11,116,266
Consultancy, Awareness and Training	2,369,015	3,279,364	1,703,179
Total value of grant offers made	20,085,977	42,349,743	12,819,445

DTI funded EUREKA projects

FY 1990-91:
- EU187 HYPASSE
- EU358 FORECAST
- EU409 EUROMAR SMURV
- EU462 PEPITE
- EU463 PCW
- EU465 ASSYSTO
- EU466 RUBPLAS
- EU468 EUROCOMP
- EU569 PARTIPRO
- EU574 SUMMIT
- EU584 RIVERMAN
- EU597 IPDOCS
- EU605 UNIPOS
- EU613 CUSOFT
- EU616 EURORIM
- EU625 VADIS
- EU630 QMIS
- EU637 PAL-PLUS
- EU645 MEDICINE
- EU661 SELECT

FY 1991-92:
- EU99 HALIOS
- EU411 CERAM 2000
- EU487 ENVINET-INFOSYST
- EU568 MEDISENS
- EU579 JAMIE
- EU606 ACROPOL
- EU610 GRAPHICS
- EU611 NEFO
- EU626 MUSHROOM FACTORY
- EU636 EUROPICON
- EU638 PARSIM
- EU643 SAFETY-INDAL
- EU673 TEPREN
- EU674 MOBILE ANALYSIS LAB
- EU681 HONEYCOMP PANELS
- EU690 ALASCA
- EU692 HADRIAN
- EU699 UBIQUITY
- EU701 MAESTRO
- EU710 ECMA PCTE
- EU716 QUASIAT
- EU721 BIOGENIE
- EU727 FRAIT
- EU742 E-AUTO
- EU745 EUROVOLTAIC
- EU747 ROFOMAG
- EU755 DIATOOLS
- EU775 TV-MIX
- EU291 LAMA
- EU730 PREMEC
- EU750 PORK MIDDLE
- EU776 CARP
- EU829 DECAY CONTROL

The names of the businesses which have received grant offers under the support for products under research (SPUR) scheme are listed as follows with the project title and value in the years 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93 to date.

1990-91

Nil

1991-92

		£ thousands
Advanced Design Systems Ltd.	Auto Robotic Loading System	16·5
Aerospace Systems & Technologies Ltd.	Flash	150·0
AES Engineering Ltd.	Bellows Seals	43·8
Aircraft Maintenance Supply Services	Airconditioning Trolly	106·2
Alval Engineering Co. Ltd.	Pervaporator	39·0
Anson Ltd.	Metlock Union	46·6
Apple Engineering Ltd.	Food Processing	52·5
Applied Vision Ltd.	Ophthalmic Coating	57·1
Avondale Property (Holding) Ltd.	Glass Reinforced Composite	95·0
BD6 Biologicals Ltd.	Coated Particle Immunoassays	41·4
Beta Instrument Co. Ltd.	Integrated Process Control	150·0
BJM Insulation Products Ltd.	CFC-Free Foam Manufacture	38·4
Boiler Management Systems Ltd.	Automatic Boiler System	28·6
Boxford Ltd.	Low Cost Lathe/Milling Machine	70·9
Boxstrong Ltd.	Sheet Prismatic Reflector	22·5
Bracken Enterprises Ltd.	Computer Aided Pattern Technique	69·9
Bradford University Software Services	Computer Soft Graphics	22·5
Bradley Electronics Ltd.	Tacan Ground Beacon	150·0
Carmichael Design & Engineering	Roll Fed Labelling Machine	150·0
Carver & Co. (Eng.) Ltd.	Combination Heater	71·7
Chilworth Technology Ltd.	Calorimeter	87·3
Colourgen Ltd.	Metallic Paint Matching System	30·0
Concorde Packaging Specialists	Multi-Station Spooling Unit	99·0

		£ thousands
Condition Monitoring Ltd.	Machine Condition Software	52·8
Cooperheat (UK) Ltd.	Solid State Power Source	20·4
Creos International Ltd.	HF Generator	128·7
CSA Ltd.	Antennae for PC Networks	150·0
Darron Tool and Engineering Ltd.	Multi-Action Circulation Sub	84·0
Denford Machine Tools Ltd.	CNC Desk Top Tutor	30·0
Depac Glideflare Systems Ltd.	Modified Wood Fibre	119·1
Diomed Ltd.	HP Portable Medical Laser	150·0
Disc Maintenance Services Ltd.	High Speed Disc Drive	121·7
Don Whitley Scientific Ltd.	Microbial Growth Monitoring	62·5
Edgley Aeronautics Ltd.	Glider Fuselage	95.4
Edinburgh Instruments Ltd.	Power Ultimate Reliability	126·9
Elkay Electrical Manufacturing	Cable Glands	64·8
Emerson & Renwick Ltd.	High Speed Cut Off Mechanism	73·4
Epichem Ltd.	Monosilane Production	54·2
European Colour (Pigments) Ltd.	Food Colours Based on NICA	150·0
Fabric Care Research Association	Improved Processes for Laundry Industry	51·7
Fermentech Medical Ltd.	Holoderm	38·7
Fernau Avionics Ltd.	Precision DME Development	147·1
Fibrecast (UK) Ltd.	Injection Moulding Resin	100·3
Film Technology	Water Destructible Film	141·8
First Class Developments Ltd.	Edible Holography	136·5
Forward Group plc	Inspection and Test from Data	150·0
Geotechnical Instruments (UK) Ltd.	Ultrasonic Dipmeter	26·1
GHB (Holding) Ltd.	Rotary Letterpress	27·0
Giltech Ltd.	Antibacterial Agent	150·0
Gledhill (Water Storage) Ltd.	Thermal Storage Package	42·9
Graff Electronic Machines Ltd.	Visual System for Simulation	150·0
GSPK Ltd.	Plugging THP Holes	42·6
Herga Electric Ltd.	Intrinsic Fibre Optic	150·0
Hocking NDT Ltd.	Digital Signal Processing	150·0
HST Developments Ltd.	New Kind of High Speed Tractor	54·2
Hycontrol Ltd.	Ultrasonic Transducer	70,5
Hydraulic Analysis Ltd.	Lead Detection in Pipe Lines	57·3
Imaging Technology Ltd.	Microfilm Scanning Camera	125·1
Industrial Copolymers Ltd.	Synthetic Resins	32·2
Industrial Electronic Automation	Tempcheck	104·3
Informatics (Europe) Ltd.	Patient Data Management	150·0
Integrated Control Technologies Ltd.	Joystick Module Family	18·4
Integrated Optical Components Ltd.	Lithium Niobate Component	126·5
Intercoat Industrial Paints Ltd.	Pigmented Paint Finish	146·3
Interdri Ltd.	Vacuum/Radiant Drying System	105·6
Interprise Ltd.	Growth Promoter Animal Feed	82·0
J. F. Turkington (Eng) Ltd.	Parcel Sorting Device	21·3
J. L. Automation Ltd.	Larvis	57·3
John McGavigan & Co. Ltd.	Membrane Car Horn Switch	48·6
John Woodhead (Dobroyd Mills) Ltd.	Fibre Control System	45·9
Kays Electronics Ltd.	Network 500	44·7
Ken Mills Eng. Co. Ltd.	Fibre Bailing	21·2
KT Industrial Rubber Products	Laminow Development	46·2
Laboratory Impex Ltd.	Bactocyte	150·0
Lamberton & Co. Ltd.	Numerical Controller	117·9
Lancashire Fittings Ltd.	Stainless Steel Pipe Fittings	150·0
Laser Ecosse Ltd.	Carbon Dioxide Laser	135·0
Longdin & Browning (Surveys) Ltd.	Development of Clear Count	44·4
MacFarlane Smith Ltd.	Animal Repellent Products	150·0
Magnex Scientific Ltd.	Mini MRI Magnet System	128·6
Mast Laboratories Ltd.	Infection Assessment Device	52·0
Materials & Corrosion Technology	Monitoring Concrete Structures	36·0
MCC Engines Ltd.	Merritt Engine Hybrid	150·0
Mutual Systems Ltd.	Control & Monitoring S&H Ware	30·0
M4 Data Ltd.	Optical & Magnetic Data	150·0
N. A. Software Ltd.	Parallel Signal Processing Toolset	120·9
Netlon Ltd.	Advanced Georgrids	150·0
New Tech Ltd.	Dacromet Coating	115·0

		£ thousands
Oakdale Batteries Ltd.	Novel Battery	94·5
Oxford Lasers Ltd.	Copper Laser R&D Programme	78·6
Oxley Developments Co. Ltd.	Multiway Filters	52·0
P. G. Technology Ltd.	Non Contact Measuring Module	93·3
Pascall Microwave Ltd.	Advanced Microwave Amplifier	31·7
Pathtrace Engineering Systems Ltd.	Advanced Manufacturing System	150·0
Pegson Ltd.	Cone Crushers	150·0
Penn Pharmaceuticals Ltd.	Lyophilisation Activies	29·2
Pennine Metronics Ltd.	Child Security Tagging System	25·4
Pharmaceutical Proteins Ltd.	Human Milk From Transgenic Cow	150·0
Polymer Laboratories Ltd.	Torsional Rheometer	102·5
R. S. Clare & Co. Ltd.	Aquaflex Road Markings	46·1
RDS Technology Ltd.	Geographical Information Systems	105·6
Recognition Research Ltd.	Novel Neural Network Software	50·9
Reekie Manufacturing Ltd.	Stone and Clod Separator	150·0
Resource Conservation plc	Wind Turbine Control Electrics	64·5
Reynolds Boughton Ltd.	Mounted Container Handling System	112·5
Reynolds Medical Ltd.	ECG Ambulatory Monitoring	150·0
Ridgeway Science Ltd.	On-Farm Heat Detection Kit	28·5
RJG Technology Ltd.	Fluid Quality Control	69·3
Robinson Instruments Ltd.	Stress Control Termination	31·2
Ronag Glass Products Ltd.	Furnace for Film Coating Glass	107·2
S. H. Wire & Tube Products Ltd.	Coathangers	35·9
S. & D. Rivet Ltd.	Portable Applicators	150·0
Sarclad International Ltd.	Condition Monitoring System	134·4
Sauflon Pharmaceuticals Ltd.	Contact Lens Neutralisation	49·5
Servomex (UK) Ltd.	Gas Analysis	133·9
Shering Weighing Ltd.	Digital Loadcell Project	60·1
Sifam Ltd.	Fibre Optics Communications	135·0
Sira Ltd.	Optical Measurement of Products	131·0
Snell & Wilcox Ltd.	UP Converter for HDTV	133·7
Spectra-Tek Holdings Ltd.	Distributed Database Flow	94·3
Steelpress Ltd.	Coating Integrity of Steel	37·0
Sterotech Ltd.	Sterile Solution	30·5
Submetrix Ltd.	Interferometric Seabed Sonar	76·6
Surface Technology Systems Ltd.	Plasma Wafer Processing	58·9
T. A. Savery & Co. Ltd.	Pressure Balanced Pump	43·8
TDS Digitizers Ltd.	Cordless Digitizing Stylus	57·0
Team Precision Engineering Ltd.	DOUBLE	19·5
Tele-Trading International Sales	DASAP 128i	150·0
Test Automation Ltd.	Series 2000 Replacement	37·8
Timberliner Ltd.	Slurry Injection Project	39·0
TQC Ltd.	Process Control Simulation	60·3
TRL Technology Ltd.	INMARSAT-M/B Modem Design	39·8
UCC International Ltd.	On Line Viscosity Fluid	56·4
Usatt International Ltd.	Power Station Simulator	45·6
Valeport Marine Scientific Ltd.	400 Oceanographic Instrument	149·0
Voltech Instruments Ltd.	3-phase Power Analyser	46·2
W. H. Dunn & Sons Ltd.	"Wagtail' High Speed Product	138·2
Western Equipment Development Ltd.	Multi-Cassette Wafer Sorters	144·9
Wicks & Wilson Ltd.	Duplication of Aperture Cards	150·0
Willett Systems Ltd.	Non-Porous Impulse Jet Printer	150·0
Wolfson Microelectronics Ltd.	Mobile Communications	98·3
Zytek Systems Ltd.	Engine Management Systems	72·8
3E Research	XXEN	73·7

1992-93 to date

		£ thousands
A B Automation Limited	Control System and Soft/Hardware	32·6
Acro-Vu Limited	Magazine CNC Bar Feed	94·2
Adams-Hydraulics Limited	Membrane in X-Flow Filtration	105·2
Agropharm Limited	Enrichment of Sesame Seed Oil	58·7
Akebia Limited	High Speed Image Generator	61·1
Ascada Limited	Open Computer System	135·0
Aztec Developments	Soft Drink Mixture Control	81·0
Blow Moulding Controls Limited	Electrical Leak Detection	45·6

		£ thousands
Braid Systems Limited	Image Messaging System	150·0
Branlow Builders Limited	Branlow Probe Development	59·9
British Bio-Technology Products Limited	R&D of 2 Enzymeimmunoassays	140·0
C M Microdat Limited	Automated Cask Beer Racker	30·7
Calder Hydraulic Co. Limited	VDR	16·5
Calluna Technology Limited	High Performance 1·8 Hard Disc	150·0
Castle Care-Tech Limited	Electronic Alarm Control	96·9
Carwell & Co. Limited	Water Based Contact Adhesives	48·7
Chas E Goad Limited	Geographical Information System	87·0
Computionics Limited	Intelligent Call System	104·1
Copystatic Systems Limited	Parts Forecasting Logistics	138·5
Crombie Anderson Associates Limited	Automatic Aircraft Components	128·2
Datel Technology Limited	Patient Management System	106·9
Delta-T Devices Limited	Modular Data-Logger	88·7
Denne Developments Limited	New Actuator System	41·6
Development Plastics Limited	Residential Door System	92·6
Direct Technology Limited	Automator QA For Windows	81·9
Donprint Label Systems Limited	Radiation Curing Surface Coat	49·0
EBAC Limited	Develop A Water Cooler	71·0
Eden Design Group Limited	Advanced Pen Computer	150·0
Electro Automat (UK) Limited	Switch Mode Charger Control	18·0
Equator Wheels & Sections Limited	Dry Rolling of Aluminium	24·0
Europa Crown Limited	Edible Oil Deodoriser Dev	73·9
Everitt Fabrications Limited	Structural Steel Connections	72·2
Ex-Or Limited	Fluorescent Ballast	150·0
First Inertia Switch Limited	Inertia Fuel Pump Controller	150·0
Galatrek International Ltd.	Powermaster	145·2
GBL Ltd.	Polymer Photoreceptor Drums	127·1
GST Holdings Plc	Windfall	150·0
H E Electronics	Eng Control Inst—Gas Turbine	34·1
Hamech Ltd.	E3 Reach Truck	94·2
Highlife Development Co. Ltd.	Energy Housing Modular	82·8
Holroyd Associates Ltd.	Polymer/Carbon Black Aid	119·6
Ilchester Cheese Co. Ltd.	Pilot Plant for Waxed Cheese	33·0
Innovative Technologies Ltd.	Advanced Wound Dressings	84·8
Interconnect Ltd.	G3 Digital Telephone System	150·0
James Proctor Ltd.	Biomass Mechanical Feeder	27·3
Jesse Brough & Co. (Recycling) Limited	100 per cent. Recycling of Dross	49·3
K S Process Eng Ltd.	Anvil Stamping Machine	39·4
Karrimore International Ltd.	Load Carrying System	150·0
Kewill-Xetal Systems Ltd.	EDI Clearing House	88·7
King & Fowler Ltd.	Aluminium Surface Coating	150·0
Lindley Flowtech Ltd.	Fluid Particulate Monitor	43·5
Loctronic International Ltd.	Fresh Potato Selector	60·0
Manufactering Electrical Design Cons	An Ex Loudspeaker	28·5
Mark Tyzack & Sons Ltd.	Autogyro Project	56·7
Marl International Ltd.	Extruded Liquid Optics	117·0
Medicina Ltd.	Gastric Tonometer	43·4
Midland Chromium Plating Co. Ltd.	Durable Electrolytic Finishers	111·6
Moor Instruments Ltd.	Neuropathy Assessment Monitor	58·6
Navico Ltd.	Networked Electronics 4 Boats	150·0
Nordiko Ltd.	Frequency Ion Source	72·7
North West Roller Services Ltd.	Laser Routing System	46·5
Pheonix Scientific Industries	Close Coupled Inert Gas Atomiser	52·8
Planser Products Ltd.	Bio Cryopreservation System	45·9
Polymeters Response International Ltd.	Single Phase Electricity Meter	150·0
Precision Manufacturing Services Ltd.	Saw Blade Grinder	31·5
Pulse Service Centre Ltd.	Mini Servotrack Writers	45·0
Rayleigh Instruments Ltd.	Electromagnetic Communication	28·8
Reddiplex Ltd.	Polypropylene Machinery	97·7
Remote Technology Ltd.	Fatigue Testing Rig	16·2
Storechange Ltd.	Road Cone Sleeves Manufacture	43·5
Techlok Limited	Novel Techring Flange System	114·6

		£ thousands
Technology Systems Limited	Laser Based Dot Matrix Coding	150·0
Textile Computer Systems (TCS) Limited	True Colour/Shademaster	48·0
Transense Technologies Plc	Electric Power Steering System	46·9
Trifid Software Limited	Simultaneous Engineering Control	150·0
TRL Technology Limited	Inmarsat M/B & Mes-B	42·2
Value Added Medical Products Limited	Dev of Integ Med Management System	150·0
Ventron Technology Limited	Synthesise Organotin Compounds	146·7
VLSI Vision Limited	Colour Image Sensing	150·0
Webster Machine Development Limited	The Webster Boom	118·8
Wellman Furnaces Limited	Auto Metal Stacker/Pallet Feed	71·9
Weston Electric Units Limited	High Speed Machining	50·4
Zeal Holdings Limited	Glass Marking Laser/Monomer	37·1

Technology Transfer

Dr. Moonie: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what responsibilities his Department has for the promotion of technology transfer from the public sector research base into industry.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 1 December 1992]:* As part of improving the competitiveness of United Kingdom industry the Department of Trade and Industry seeks to optimise the benefits to industry of work carried out in the science base. Technology transfer is an important aspect of this process.

The Department of Trade and Industry encourages technology transfer by offering direct help through a range of generic technology transfer programmes, for example, in biotechnology and information technology and also by improving education/industry links, for example, the teaching company scheme. Overall, the Department spends some £100 million per year in support of technology transfer.

Parcelforce

Mr. Hain: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will ensure that after the privatisation of Parcelforce a uniform tariff will be maintained.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 1 December 1992]:* In the statement by my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade to the House on 15 July, *Official Report*, column 1137, of his intention to privatise Parcelforce, he stated that an essential requirement for the Government would be a continued universal parcel service at a uniform and affordable tariff. This remains the case.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 3 December 1992

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Guildford and Woolwich Bombings

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Attorney-General what public interest immunity certificates he has signed in relation to documents provided by his Department for Sir John May's inquiry.

The Attorney-General: None.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Attorney-General what documents the Law Officers have supplied to Sir John May's inquiry into the Guildford Four convictions; and on what terms.

The Attorney-General: The Legal Secretariat to the Law Officers provided Sir John May with complete copies of the files relating to the prosecution of the Guildford Four and the Maguires. In addition, his inquiry was provided with a number of files relating to other cases arising at about the same time as the matters under consideration by Sir John May where decisions were taken whether to authorise proceedings under the Explosive Substances Act 1883.

These documents were supplied to Sir John on a confidential basis and with an understanding that he would discuss with us any question of their further use which might arise in the course of his inquiry.

TRANSPORT

West Coast Main Line

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he has for recognising wider social benefits and making provision for through ticketing when financing new rail infrastructure, with particular regard to the west coast main line.

Mr. Freeman: Under our privatisation proposals, ownership of the railway infrastructure will pass to Railtrack, a public sector track authority. Investment in infrastructure will largely be financed from charges to operators but, as stated in the White Paper "New Opportunities for the Railways", the Government may provide direct support for investment schemes not earning an adequate financial return but which have satisfactory cost-benefit returns when wider social and economic benefits are taken into account. No proposals for major investment in the west coast main line have been submitted to the Secretary of State. We have given a clear commitment in the White Paper to preserve through ticketing arrangements across the network.

M25 (Junctions 12 and 15)

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many letters his Department has received commenting on his proposals to enlarge the M25 between junctions 12 and 15; and how many of these supported the proposals.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: In total, 2,691 letters, some copied to other Ministers, and 7,405 pre-printed postcards have been received specifically commenting on the link road proposals between junctions 12 and 15 of the M25. A number of other letters have also been received raising wider M25 issues. Eight letters in support of the link road proposals have been received.

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the alternative routes considered when he was preparing his proposals to enlarge the M25 between junctions 12 and 15.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I am arranging for the list to be placed in the House Libraries.

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish a list of those organisations that have submitted comments on his proposals to enlarge the M25 between junctions 12 and 15.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: A range of possible measures to improve the M25 was outlined in a report by consultants, Rendel, Palmer and Tritton, published in July 1989. This was followed by the M25 action plan published in December 1990 which announced plans to deal with congestion on the M25 and to improve the operation of the motorway. More recently, a review report and a technical appraisal report outlining alternative options for providing additional capacity between junctions 12 and 15 of the M25 were placed in the Library.

Chris Green

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport in what capacity he has invited Chris Green, head of InterCity, to attend the meeting of potential rail operators scheduled for 9 December.

Mr. Freeman: The meeting on 9 December will discuss the procurement of rolling stock following privatisation, particularly through leasing. Those attending are therefore mainly representatives of financial institutions, together with a number of potential franchisees.

British Rail will be represented by the board member for finance, Mr. James Jerram. Mr. Chris Green is not attending.

Rail Freight

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information his Department has about the extent, and the reasons for, the decline in freight on British Rail *(a)* in the two years preceeding 14 July and *(b)* since 14 July.

Mr. Freeman: Total tonnage carried by rail fell from 143·1 million tonnes in 1989-90 to 135·8 million tonnes in 1991-92. Factors affecting changes in rail freight are discussed at pages 18 to 20 of the 1991-92 annual report and accounts of the British Railways Board, which is responsible for rail freight in Great Britain.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met representatives of the rail freight group; and what discussions they had on the switch of freight moved by British Rail to road transport.

Mr. Freeman: I last met the rail users group on 19 May 1992. During the discussion we exchanged views on how rail freight could best compete with other modes.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of state for Transport if it remains his policy to encourage a switch of freight from road to rail; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: It remains Government policy to encourage a switch of freight from road to rail where this makes commercial sense.

InterCity (Franchising Bids)

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will consider the propriety of serving managers of InterCity, and other senior British Rail executives, being allowed to work with, and facilitate prospective franchises in the negotiation and preparation of franchising bids for InterCity which would involve them as shareholders if successful.

Mr. Freeman: We wish to encourage bids for franchises from the management and employees of BR. The BR Board has issued appropriate guidance to its managers so that potential conflicts of interst can be identified. It will be a concern of the franchising authority to ensure equality of information and treatment for all prospective bidders at each stage of the tendering process for each franchise.

British Rail Executives

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether British Rail executives may be considered for the advertised posts of rail regulator and head of franchising; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: We placed no restrictions on the field of application for candidates wishing to be considered for the posts of railway regulator or passenger railway franchising authority. British Rail employees, like any others, were free to apply. The public advertisement for the posts said that railway or public transport experience would be an advantage, though not essential; and it was one of several criteria on which we have been considering candidates.

Advanced Channel Express Ltd.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will set out the operational conditions, in respect of catamarans operated by Advanced Channel Express Ltd, which his surveyor has identified as not currently meeting specified standards; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: The operational conditions for all high-speed craft are set out in a permit to operate, issued in accordance with a safety code developed by the International Maritime Organisation. The owners of the catamaran are aware of this, having been advised that the Department will have to be satisfied that the craft is suitable for the intended service.

Catamaran Safety

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will review all aspects of catamaran safety; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: The United Kingdom has requested a formal review of the International Maritime Organisation safety code for high-speed craft. The United Kingdom is at the forefront of that review which will include all aspects of catamaran safety and is expected to be completed next year.

HGV Operators' Licences

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he has to change the regulations that prevent a regional centre processing applications for heavy goods vehicle operators' licences from accepting objections from neighbouring regions.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: There is nothing to prevent an owner or occupier making representations against the proposed use of a goods vehicle operating centre which is the subject of an application before a licensing authority, in circumstances where the operating centre and the owner or occupier's property are in different traffic areas. The only criteria are that the representor's property must be shown to be adversely affected and that it falls within what the licensing authority determines to be the vicinity of the operating centre in question.

Traffic Congestion

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what estimates he has made of the cost per annum of traffic congestion to *(a)* the Exchequer, *(b)* businesses and *(c)* the average household; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Congestion is costly, but the cost can be measured usefully only against realistic alternatives such as more or less road building or policies for reducing or redirecting traffic. There is therefore no single figure which can be quoted. Much of the Department's roads and traffic expenditure and policies are, however, concerned with reducing congestion and making the best possible use of available road space.

Bus Companies (Future)

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he will be meeting the chairman of the Greater Manchester passenger transport authority to discuss the authority's reaction to his announcement on 23 November about the future of local authority-owned bus companies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: I have written to the chairman of the Greater Manchester passenger transport authority on behalf of my right hon. Friend agreeing to meet him to discuss the division of Greater Manchester Buses.

ENVIRONMENT

Agencies

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library a copy of the health and safety policy of each of the agencies within his Department.

Mr. Howard: The Building Research Establishment, the planning inspectorate and the Queen Elizabeth

conference centre all come under my Department's health and safety policy statement and I have placed a copy of the document in the Library.

I have asked Professor David Rhind to place in the Library a copy of his health and safety policy for the Ordnance Survey, and Mr. Roger Powell for the Buying Agency.

Municipal Waste

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate he will give of the relative average net costs per tonne of disposal of municipal waste based upon projects handling 250,000 tonnes per year comparing landfill via road at a distance of 100 km and waste-to-energy incineration based on a rate of interest of 20 per cent. over 20 years showing the costs per tonne for incineration both with and without non-fossil fuel obligation subsidy.

Mr. Maclean: The wide range of factors involved and the price variations that exist across the country make it very difficult to give general estimates for the cost of waste disposal. Recent work carried out for the Department suggests that the current disposal costs for waste destined for disposal to landfill vary from between £7·50 to £22·50 per tonne. These costs are likely to increase substantially over the next few years as the Government's improved waste management arrangements are brought into effect. Waste to energy incineration costs are thought to be about £20 to £25 per tonne at present. Without the non-fossil fuel obligation, these are thought likely to be nearer £30 to £35 per tonne. These prices are not expected to change significantly over the next few years.

Timber

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether, in meeting the requirements of CITES, he intends to make changes to the system of monitoring timber imported into the United Kingdom.

Mr. Maclean: We have already made the changes necessary to meet the latest CITES requirements.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what labelling of timber species listed in the appendices of CITES is required prior to entry into the United Kingdom.

Mr. Maclean: CITES-listed timber imported into the United Kingdom is not required to be labelled. It must, however, be accompanied by appropriate export and import permits identifying the species in each consignment. The Government are currently supporting schemes to develop effective labelling systems in producer countries.

Water

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he next plans to meet the chairmen of the regional water companies; and what matters will be discussed.

Mr. Maclean: Ministers have had a number of meetings in recent months with the chairman of British Waterways at which, among other things, matters of strategic policy and board appointments have been discussed. But the Secretary of State has at present no plans to meet him.

Research

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much funding was made available by Her Majesty's Government to fund research outside Government Departments on international environmental policy issues in the financial year 1991-92; and what expenditure is proposed for 1992-93.

Mr. Maclean: This information is not readily available in the form requested and could be assembled only at disproportionate cost. However, the Cabinet Office annual review of Government-funded research and development gives a useful overview of the substantial research efforts devoted to diverse and important international policy issues across Government. In addition, considerable proportions of United Kingdom subscriptions to international bodies are devoted to relevant research.

Clean Air Grant

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the clean air grant will continue to be available to local authorities in England and Wales after 1 April 1993; what economic instruments will be made available to local authorities wishing to improve local air quality; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The future of the clean air grant is under review, but the grant will certainly continue to be available to local authorities in 1993-94. Supplementary credit approval will also be available to local authorities in 1993-94 to assist the financing of their capital expenditure on smoke control which is not covered by clean air grant.

Sulphur Dioxide

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment in which month he expects the United Kingdom to meet the large combustion plant directive target of a 20 per cent. reduction in sulphur dioxide emissions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The directive requires the United Kingdom's total emissions of sulphur dioxide from our existing large combustion plants in 1993 to be at least 20 per cent. below those in 1980. Emissions from such plant in 1991, the latest available year, were 71 per cent. of the 1980 figure.

Urban Programme (Rochdale)

Ms. Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many urban programme proposals in the Rochdale metropolitan borough council were funded in 1992-93; and how many are likely to be funded in 1993-94.

Mr. Robin Squire: In 1992-93, 102 proposals received urban programme funding. In 1993-94, it is likely that 34 proposals will receive funding.

Toxic Waste

Mr. Miller: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Evans) of 27 October, *Official Report*, column *549* what steps he intends to take to implement the EC regulations agreed on the supervision and control of shipments of toxic waste; and when he will publish the regulations;

(2) pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Evans) of 27 October, *Official Report*, column *543*, on control of shipments of toxic waste in the European Community, if he will make it his policy in implementing the proposals to ensure that toxic waste is disposed of as close as possible to its source within the United Kingdom and that no waste is imported for commercial gain.

Mr. Maclean: The regulation will be published in the *Official Journal* after adoption by the Council and is likely to apply 15 months after publication. We shall be giving careful consideration to the application of the regulation's provisions in relation to imports for final disposal. We expect no change as result of the regulation to existing practice within the United Kingdom.

Waste Incinerators

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what criteria he will adopt regarding stack emissions for waste incinerators approved by him;

(2) what level of emission of dioxins, furans and polychlorinated biphenyls he regards as *(a)* safe and *(b)* acceptable from waste incinerators;

(3) what criteria he will adopt regarding stack emissions for waste-to-energy incinerators approved by him;

(4) what level of emission of dioxins, furans and polychlorinated biphenyls he regards as *(a)* safe and *(b)* acceptable from waste-to-energy incinerators.

Mr. Maclean: Prime responsibility for the control of stack emissions from incinerators rests with the appropriate enforcing authority under part I of the Environmental Protection Act 1990; either Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution or the relevant district or borough council. Several guidance notes have been published by the Secretary of State and by the chief inspector, Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution concerning emission control standards for incinerators.

In granting authorisations, the regulating body will have regard to the advice contained in the relevant guidance note. These notes provide guidance on the techniques considered to be appropriate to meet the requirement to use the best available techniques not entailing excessive cost to either prevent the release of prescribed substances or, where that is not practicable, to minimise such releases and to render them harmless. They also provide guidance on the levels of releases achievable using these techniques. For dioxins these are set as release limits which accord with the best international safety standards. To facilitate the complete destruction of a wide range of toxic substances, including PCBs, the requirement is to ensure that the gases resulting from the combustion of the waste are raised to a sufficiently high temperature for a minimum time period.

Copies of all guidance notes have been placed in the House Library.

Housing Conditions Survey

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the last survey of housing conditions was made; and if he will publish the result of the survey.

Mr. Baldry: The latest national survey of housing conditions was begun in September 1991 and completed in October this year. Results from the survey will be published next year.

Standard Spending Assessments (London)

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the highest, lowest and next lowest standard spending assessment elements for inner London boroughs for *(a)* other services, *(b)* child social services and *(c)* education expressed for each relevant person.

Mr. Robin Squire: The information requested, in respect of the provisional standard spending assessments, is shown in the table below. The education SSA has been expressed in £s per head since this SSA covers services provided across the full age range.

Table showing provisional 1993-94 SSAs by selected inner London boroughs (excludes the City of London)

Service	Relative Position	Authority	SSA per head or per child
All Other Services	Highest SSA	Westminster	£562 per head
	Lowest SSA	Greenwich	£191 per head
	Next Lowest SSA	Lewisham	£233 per head
Child Social Services	Highest SSA	Lambeth	£880 per child
	Lowest SSA	Greenwich	£311 per child
	Next Lowest SSA	Lewisham	£461 per child
Education Services	Highest SSA	Tower Hamlets	£700 per head
	Lowest SSA	Kensington	£236 per head
	Next Lowest SSA	Westminster	£275 per head

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment in which inner-London boroughs standard spending assessments are below £950 a head; and which are above.

Mr. Robin Squire: Within the provisional standard spending assessments for 1993-94 announced on 26 November, the SSA per head for Greenwich is £929. That for all other inner London boroughs is above £950 per head.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what standard spending assessments would be allocated to Greenwich if it was the same for each person as the assessment for *(a)* Wandsworth and *(b)* Lewisham.

Mr. Robin Squire: Combining the SSA per head for Wandsworth and for Lewisham with the latest resident population figure for Greenwich would produce SSA totals of £300 million and £296 million respectively. SSAs are intended to reflect the social characteristics of the area

concerned. Greenwich's SSA is different from that of Wandsworth and Lewisham because, inter alia, its social characteristics are different.

Mr. Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate he has made of the effects on the standard spending assessments for Greenwich of *(a)* population change and *(b)* the factors II (i) to (vi) in his Department's letter of 26 November to local authorities on local government finance (England).

Mr. Robin Squire: No such estimates have been made.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the significant factors other than population affecting standard spending assessments and what effect each contributed to the difference between the standard spending assessments of Greenwich and Wandsworth.

Mr. Robin Squire: All the factors on which standard spending assessments are based are listed in the draft Local Government Finance Report (England) 1993-94 which is in the Library. These are very similar to those used for 1992-93. The SSA Handbook for 1992-93, which is in the Library, shows the contribution of the main indicators to each authority's SSA in £ per adult. Similar calculations have not been carried out for provisional 1993-94 SSAs.

Air Pollution

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will state for each air pollutant monitored by his Department at what levels the Department classifies the pollution as good, average and below average; if he will list the guidelines or standards advised by the World Health Organisation in each case; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: For the purposes of the air quality bulletins issued by the Department to the media for public consumption, the quality of air, based on measured concentrations of ozone, nitrogen dioxide and sulphur dioxide, is divided into four categories: very good, good, poor and very poor. The bandings are as follows:

Department of Environment guidelines (parts per billion/1 hour)

	Very good	*Good*	*Poor*	*Very poor*
OZONE	< 50	50-89	90-179	> = 180
NO_2	< 50	50-99	100-299	> = 300
SO_2	< 60	60-124	125-399	> = 400

World Health Organisation guidelines (parts per billion)

	1 hour	*8 hour*	*24 hour*
OZONE	76-100	50-60	33
NO_2	210	—	80
SO_2	122	—	35

Environmental Health Regulations

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the environmental health regulations he is considering for modification or abolition; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: My Department is currently reviewing the Environmental Protection (Prescribed Processes and Substances) Regulations 1991, which prescribe the processes to be controlled by local authorities under part I of the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

We have received representations about the enforcement of legislation concerning houses in multiple occupation and common lodging houses and these are being considered.

Following a review of the house renovation grant system for private sector properties a number of changes have been proposed. These include amendments to:—

— the Housing Renovation etc. Grants (Reduction of Grant) Regulations 1990;
— the Housing Renovation etc. Grants (Prescribed Forms and Particulars) Regulations 1990;
— assistance for Minor Works to Dwellings Regulations 1990.

Planning Applications

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of whether local authorities considering planning applications that will have a direct effect on a neighbouring authority pay sufficient care and attention to the needs, costs and infrastructure of that neighbouring authority.

Mr. Baldry: Planning authorities are required to keep under review all matters that are expected to affect the planning of development in their area, and to take account, in consultation with the authorities concerned, of the effects for their areas of similar matters in neighbouring areas. In preparing development plans, all local planning authorities are required to consult the planning authorities for areas adjacent to the area covered by their plan proposals, and to take into account any representations made. We advise them to consult other authorities likely to be affected.

Planning applications must be decided in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. A local planning authority is required by article 18 of the Town and Country Planning General Development Order 1988 to consult the neighbouring planning authority about any application which affects land in its area.

Darwin Initiative

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his oral answer of 11 November, *Official Report*, column 862, if he will make a further statement on the Darwin initiative in the light of the autumn statement.

Mr. Maclean: Subject to parliamentary approval, funding for projects which meet the objectives of the Darwin initiative will be £1 million for 1993-94, £2 million for 1994-95 and £3 million for 1995-96. We will be consulting widely on the priorities and programmes for the initiative. I am establishing a small advisory committee to consider the responses to that consultation. I am pleased to say that Sir Crispin Tickell has agreed to chair it.

Caravan Sites

Mr. Malone: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to publish the responses to the consultation paper on reform of the Caravan Sites Act 1968; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: Copies of the responses to the consultation paper, "Reform of the Caravan Sites Act 1968", will be placed in the Department's library shortly, and a list of the responses will be placed in the House of Commons Library. We are now considering over 1,200 responses we have received so far. We will make an announcement about the way forward in due course.

Industrial Processes (Controls)

Mr. Gawler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the risks to the global environment arising from the transfer of industrial processes from the United Kingdom and other countries with strict environmental legislation to countries with poor or non-existent controls.

Mr. Maclean: The main risks to the global environment from industrial processes are from those which contribute to global warming and through the release of ozone depleting substances. The Government are committed to pursuing multilateral solutions to these problems.

This year over 150 countries including the United Kingdom signed the United Nations framework convention on climate change. All partners will be committed to producing national programmes of measures to limit greenhouse gas emissions.

The Montreal protocol provides controls on the production and consumption of ozone depleting substances and trade in them. At a recent meeting of the parties to the protocol it was agreed that CFC's should be phased out by the end of 1995 and halons by the end of 1993.

EC Environmental Standards

Mr. Gawler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has about the consistency of the application through the Community of EC environmental standards affecting the operations of manufacturing industry.

Mr. Maclean: Ensuring consistent application of legislation throughout the EC is, in the first instance, a matter for the Commission. One of the priorities of our presidency has been to highlight the importance of consistent and effective implementation and enforcement of EC environmental legislation. To this end, Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution has, during our presidency, hosted the first meeting of a network of EC environmental regulatory authorities. Separately we are encouraging the Commission to bring forward proposals for an audit inspectorate to inspect the work of national enforcement agencies.

Environmental Protection

Mr. Gawler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consideration is being given by his Department to the effect on United Kingdom industry's competitiveness of failure of overseas governments to enforce measures to protect the national and global environment; and if he will support the introduction of agreed and enforced environmental standards on an international basis.

Mr. Maclean: The relationship between industrial competitiveness and environmental protection was the subject of a resolution agreed by the EC Council of Industry Ministers on 24 November, and of a communication from the Commission to that Council.

High environmental standards can increase the competitiveness of industry, as well as providing major new market opportunities. However, where necessary to reduce poor standards overseas undermining the competitiveness of certain sectors of United Kingdom industry, we would support action on an international basis.

Empty Council Property

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the number of dwellings which have been empty for more than six months for each London borough and the percentage which empty properties constitute of each council's housing stock; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: The latest information reported by the London boroughs in their annual housing investment programme (HIP1) returns relates to April 1992 and is as follows:—

Borough	London Authority dwellings empty more than six months		All empty London Authority dwellings
	Number	Percentage of stock	Percentage of stock
City of London	6	0·3	1·5
Barking and Dagenham	6	0·0	1·1
Barnet	26	0·2	1·0
Bexley	14	0·2	1·0
Brent	261	1·4	3·4
Bromley	9	0·1	0·9
Camden	135	0·4	1·8
Croydon	19	0·1	2·0
Ealing	90	0·5	2·1
Enfield	18	0·1	1·8
Greenwich	158	0·5	1·7
Hackney	1,776	4·4	6·0
Hammersmith and Fulham	85	0·5	2·3
Haringey	87	0·4	1·7
Harrow	20	0·3	1·4
Havering	14	0·1	1·6
Hillingdon	62	0·4	1·6
Hounslow	24	0·1	1·5
Islington	239	0·7	1·9
Kensington and Chelsea	32	0·4	1·8
Kingston upon Thames	4	0·1	1·9
Lambeth	613	1·4	3·1
Lewisham	301	0·8	2·0
Merton	5	0·1	0·9
Newham	353	2·1	3·4
Redbridge	130	1·5	4·2
Richmond upon Thames	34	0·4	1·4
Southwark	638	1·1	2·9
Sutton	12	0·1	1·0
Tower Hamlets	1,868	2·6	4·2
Waltham Forest	93	0·5	2·0
Wandsworth	67	0·3	1·4
Westminster	159	0·9	1·4

Council Rent Arrears

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the rent arrears for each London borough and indicate the percentage arrears constitute of each council's rent revenue; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave on 2 July 1992 at column *675* to the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson), which included the latest figures, relating to the end of March 1991.

Community Charge Arrears

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the community charge arrears for each London borough and indicate the percentage which arrears constitute of each council's community charge income; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: I refer the hon. Member to my answer given on 5 November at columns *370-71* to the hon. Member for Cheltenham (Mr. Jones).

Councillors (Travel Allowances)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if local authority councillors are permitted to claim travelling allowances in connection with their official duties in respect of travel by bicycle; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: The provisions governing the payment of travelling allowances to councillors do not currently permit the payment of a bicycle allowance.

London Residuary Body

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if any termination payments will be made to members ceasing to be members of the London residuary body in January 1993.

Mr. Robin Squire: No.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make any new appointments or re-appointments to the board of the London residuary body in 1993.

Mr. Robin Squire: It is the intention of my right hon. and learned Friend to reappoint Mr. Wallace Mackenzie, Mr. Michael Roberts and Mr. Jack Wolkind as members of the London residuary body when their present terms expire on 31 March 1993. Sir Godfrey Taylor was reappointed as chairman on 1 December this year.

Battersea Power Station

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 20 November, *Official Report*, column *426*, if he will state the main points made by English Heritage following the inspection of Battersea power station on 7 October.

Mr. Baldry: Following its inspection on 7 October, English Heritage concluded that there had been no significant deterioration of the structure since work stopped. The external brick clad structure is adequately supported where necessary by the temporary steelwork. There has been some ingress of water into the control room due to failure of temporary waterproofing where a small section of the superstructure was removed. A temporary felt roof is to be provided shortly.

Water Quality

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to introduce statutory water quality objectives; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and I have today published a consultation paper on river quality. This sets out the Government's proposals for safeguarding our rivers, including the introduction of statutory water quality objectives (WQOs) gradually from 1993, and initially for a limited number of objectives in order to test the new system. The paper proposes a new classification scheme as the framework within which individual WQOs would be set; and a revised basis for carrying out the regular overall assessments of river quality. The proposals are based on recommendations published by the National Rivers Authority in October, following wide consultation. I am grateful for the authority's work which underpins our proposals.

Our strategy builds on the major programmes of water investment which are already planned or under way and takes account of the implications for consumers. We have set out proposals for maintaining river quality, for reversing recent deteriorations, and for targeting further resources on those improvements which can be achieved most quickly and cost-effectively. This represents a firm foundation for introducing WQOs.

As discussed in "Using Water Wisely" last July and "This Common Inheritance: the Second Year Report" in October, I am developing proposals for water pollution charging which I believe can play a role as an alternative to further regulatory action as a way of achieving WQOs.

I have placed copies of our paper in the Library of the House.

Council House Sales

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the number and value of council house sales by region for each of the last 16 quarters *(a)* at current prices and *(b)* at 1981 prices.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 30 November 1990]:* Information on sales in the period July 1988 to June 1992 is given in the table. The figures exclude dwellings transferred to housing associations and other registered bodies in large scale voluntary transfers. Such transfers accounted for some 94,000 dwellings valued at about £800 million during this period.

Number of council house sales and value by region

£ thousands

DOE region	July to September 1988			October to December 1988		
	Number of sales	Undiscounted value of sales	Value 1981 prices	Number of sales	Undiscounted value of sales	Value 1981 prices
Northern (excluding Cumbria)	1,987	36,709	25,028	2,034	38,297	25,614
Yorkshire and Humberside	2,633	52,054	35,490	3,790	79,233	53,993
East Midlands	3,310	83,791	57,128	3,998	99,758	68,721
Eastern	4,652	207,008	141,150	9,233	230,629	154,252

DOE regions	July to September 1988 Number of sales	Undiscounted value of sales	Value 1981 prices	October to December 1988 Number of sales	Undiscounted value of sales	Value 1981 prices
London Boroughs	6,714	362,265	246,989	6,125	366,884	245,383
South East	3,971	190,650	129,983	5,858	296,916	198,586
South West	4,306	156,295	106,560	3,998	150,392	100,587
West Midlands	3,844	94,945	64,733	5,031	115,756	77,421
North West (including Cumbria)	2,558	48,266	32,907	3,287	69,860	46,724
England	33,975	1,231,983	839,954	43,344	1,447,725	968,282

DOE regions	January to March 1989 Number of sales	Undiscounted value of sales	Value 1981 prices	April to June 1989 Number of sales	Undiscounted value of sales	Value 1981 prices
Northern (excluding Cumbria)	2,870	50,173	32,915	2,814	53,385	34,607
Yorkshire and Humberside	4,418	77,390	50,770	5,038	103,921	67,368
East Midlands	3,947	100,460	65,905	3,441	102,685	66,567
Eastern	4,288	227,040	148,945	3,345	179,422	116,312
London Boroughs	7,997	464,267	304,573	6,960	369,307	239,407
South East	10,823	223,562	146,663	3,617	193,226	125,261
South West	3,684	155,889	102,268	3,279	141,094	91,466
West Midlands	5,165	126,229	82,810	4,870	136,882	88,735
North West (including Cumbria)	3,908	78,040	51,197	4,698	95,387	61,836
England	47,100	1,503,050	986,046	38,062	1,375,309	891,558

DOE Regions	July to September 1989 Number of sales	Undiscounted value of sales	Value 1981 prices	October to December 1989 Number of sales	Undiscounted value of sales	Value 1981 prices
Northern (excluding Cumbria)	2,409	48,029	30,717	3,205	64,908	40,981
Yorkshire and Humberside	4,946	115,025	73,565	4,815	116,218	73,377
East Midlands	2,941	93,824	60,006	2,429	78,891	49,809
Eastern	2,926	160,757	102,814	2,316	133,353	84,195
London Boroughs	6,871	396,835	253,800	7,697	456,854	288,444
South East	3,239	181,639	116,169	3,081	177,520	112,081
South West	2,511	120,463	77,043	2,081	94,343	59,565
West Midlands	4,412	133,129	85,144	4,635	147,126	92,891
North West (including Cumbria)	4,292	99,185	63,435	5,026	118,681	74,932
England	34,547	1,348,886	862,694	35,285	1,387,894	876,275

DOE Regions	January to March 1990 Number of sales	Undiscounted value of sales	Value 1981 prices	April to June 1990 Number of sales	Undiscounted value of sales	Value 1981 prices
Northern (excluding Cumbria)	3,276	67,646	41,819	2,654	60,062	36,315
Yorkshire and Humberside	5,245	151,261	93,510	3,425	90,974	55,005
East Midlands	1,945	68,422	42,298	1,443	50,753	30,686
Eastern	2,317	128,199	79,253	1,867	103,780	62,747
London Boroughs	7,580	460,364	284,597	5,671	361,103	218,330
South East	2,507	134,138	82,924	1,811	103,258	62,432
South West	1,801	80,982	50,063	1,319	57,695	34,884
West Midlands	4,510	149,355	92,331	3,203	110,390	66,744
North West (including Cumbria)	5,364	125,678	77,570	4,347	104,706	63,307
England	34,545	1,365,845	844,365	25,740	1,042,721	630,450

£ thousands

DOE regions	July to September 1990 Number of sales	Undiscounted value of sales	Value 1981 prices	October to December 1990 Number of sales	Undiscounted value of sales	Value 1981 prices
Northern (excluding Cumbria)	2,155	50,270	29,549	1,828	47,086	27,399
Yorkshire and Humberside	2,446	69,326	40,731	2,309	65,553	38,145
East Midlands	1,093	38,966	22,905	984	33,740	19,633

DOE regions	July to September 1990			October to December 1990		
	Number of sales	Undiscounted value of sales	Value 1981 prices	Number of sales	Undiscounted value of sales	Value 1981 prices
Eastern	1,630	86,420	50,799	1,574	83,715	48,713
London Boroughs	4,926	311,363	183,022	4,581	301,318	175,334
South East	1,473	86,096	50,608	1,252	74,669	43,449
South West	1,002	46,590	27,386	904	40,946	23,826
West Midlands	2,564	89,846	52,812	1,951	66,297	38,578
North West (including Cumbria)	3,395	86,399	50,786	3,255	83,722	48,717
England	20,686	865,276	508,618	18,638	797,046	463,793

DOE regions	January to March 1991			April to June 1991 (Provisional)		
	Number of sales	Undiscounted value of sales	Value 1981 prices	Number of sales	Undiscounted value of sales	Value 1981 prices
Northern (excluding Cumbria)	1,553	37,956	21,821	1,315	35,832	20,038
Yorkshire and Humberside	2,080	60,829	34,971	1,299	38,779	21,686
East Midlands	768	28,154	16,186	707	25,529	14,276
Eastern	1,367	69,156	39,759	1,236	64,318	35,967
London Boroughs	4,107	250,770	144,170	3,021	190,697	106,640
South East	1,333	74,395	42,771	1,220	67,599	37,802
South West	797	37,310	21,450	722	32,638	18,251
West Midlands	1,751	63,950	36,765	1,416	48,494	27,118
North West (including Cumbria)	2,593	69,743	40,096	1,832	53,393	29,858
England	16,349	692,263	397,989	12,768	557,279	311,636

DOE regions	July to September 1991 (provisional)			October to December 1991 (provisional)		
	Number of sales	Undiscounted value of sales	Value 1981 prices	Number of sales	Undiscounted value of sales	Value 1981 prices
Northern (excluding Cumbria)	1,407	38,414	21,218	1,306	35,140	19,198
Yorkshire and Humberside	1,338	41,953	23,172	1,162	38,943	21,276
East Midlands	904	32,603	18,008	807	28,800	15,734
Eastern	1,417	73,907	40,822	1,244	66,829	36,511
London Boroughs	2,781	174,979	96,648	2,845	172,056	93,999
South East	1,388	79,219	43,756	1,270	69,120	37,762
South West	853	38,310	21,160	876	37,592	20,538
West Midlands	1,511	54,749	30,240	1,336	52,798	28,845
North West (including Cumbria)	1,759	54,049	29,853	1,848	50,124	27,384
England	13,358	588,183	324,877	12,694	551,402	301,247

DOE regions	January to March 1992 (provisional)			April to June 1992 (provisional)		
	Number of sales	Undiscounted value of sales	Value 1981 prices	Number of sales	Undiscounted value of sales	Value 1981 prices
Northern (excluding Cumbria)	1,510	39,748	21,445	1,067	30,212	16,012
Yorkshire and Humberside	1,289	41,801	22,552	990	32,787	17,376
East Midlands	815	28,390	15,317	697	24,974	13,236
Eastern	1,331	66,021	35,620	1,143	56,156	29,762
London Boroughs	2,651	178,011	96,040	2,310	126,305	66,939
South East	1,192	63,770	34,405	1,055	56,051	29,706
South West	767	35,710	19,266	733	31,365	16,623
West Midlands	1,317	51,366	27,713	1,056	37,963	20,120
North West (including Cumbria)	1,617	50,080	27,019	1,287	40,205	21,308
England	12,489	554,897	299,378	10,338	436,018	231,081

Fire and Civil Defence Authorities

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the standard spending assessment element for fire and civil defence for each county council and metropolitan fire and civil defence authority in England in each year since 1983-84; and what are the figures for 1993-94.

Mr. Robin Squire *[holding answer 1 December 1992]:* Standard spending assessments were first introduced for the settlement year 1990-91 as a replacement for grant related expenditure assessments. The SSA elements for fire and civil defence for each county council and metropolitan fire and civil defence authority in England are shown in table 2 of the SSA handbooks for 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93, all of which are in the Library. The provisional figures for 1993-94 are given in the table.

1993-94 Provisional SSA Elements for Fire and Civil Defence

Authority	*£ million*
Greater Manchester Fire and Civil Defence Authority	70·787
Merseyside Fire and Civil Defence Authority	47·118
South Yorkshire Fire and Civil Defence Authority	28·117
Tyne and Wear Fire and Civil Defence Authority	34·449
West Midlands Fire and Civil Defence Authority	67·514
West Yorkshire Fire and Civil Defence Authority	49·002
London Fire and Civil Defence Authority	242·568
Isles of Scilly	0·053
Avon county council	20·473
Bedfordshire county council	11·073
Berkshire county council	16·601
Buckinghamshire county council	12·360
Cambridgeshire county council	12·039
Cheshire county council	20·103
Cleveland county council	19·464
Cornwall county council	7·181
Cumbria county council	8·753
Derbyshire county council	17·067
Devon county council	19·557
Dorset county council	12·065
Durham county council	12·973
East Sussex county council	14·891
Essex county council	31·445
Gloucestershire county council	9·605
Hampshire county council	31·585
Hereford and Worcester county council	12·116
Hertfordshire county council	20·328
Humberside county council	21·322
Isle of Wight county council	2·229
Kent county council	30·998
Lancashire county council	32,276
Leicestershire county council	16·924
Lincolnshire county council	9·583
Norfolk county council	13·010
Northamptonshire county council	11·260
Northumberland county council	5·823
North Yorkshire county council	12·001
Nottinghamshire county council	21·087
Oxfordshire county council	11·284
Shropshire county council	7·839
Somerset county council	7·693
Staffordshire county council	19·345
Suffolk county council	11·023
Surrey county council	22·133
Warwickshire county council	8·993
West Sussex county council	14·836
Wiltshire county council	10·054
Total England	1,139·000

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give the actual expenditure on fire and civil defence services by each county council and metropolitan fire and civil defence authority in England for each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Robin Squire *[holding answer 1 December 1992]:* I have arranged for the information to be placed in the Library of the House.

Opencast Mining

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many planning appeals for opencast coal sites his office has dealt with in each year since 1983-84 and from 1 April to 30 September 1992; how many were approved and refused each year; what extent of land and volume of coal were approved and disapproved each year; how many appeals are outstanding; and what extent of land and volume of coal these involve.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 1 December 1992]:* Information on planning appeals involving opencast coal extraction between 1983-84 and 1986-87 is not available. The outcome of appeals determined between 1987-88 and 30 September is given in the table.

Planning appeal decisions for opencast coal sites

	Appeals decided	*Appeals allowed*	*Appeals dismissed*
1987-88	15	7	8
1988-89	16	8	8
1989-90	16	8	8
1990-91	18	9	9
1991-92	8	7	1
To 30 September 1992	5	3	2

At 30 November 1992 there are 14 appeals involving opencast coal extraction before the Secretary of State.

Information on the extent of land and the volume of coal approved and disapproved is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

British Waterways

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he next expects to meet the chairman of British Waterways; and what matters will be discussed.

Mr. Maclean: Ministers have had a number of meetings in recent months with the chairman of British Waterways, at which among other things matters of strategic policy and board appointments have been discussed. But the Secretary of State has at present no plans to meet him.

Multilateral Fund

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what contribution Her Majesty's Government has made to the interim multilateral fund to assist the developing nations to phase out CFCs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I have been asked to reply. We have paid the equivalent of US$3·443 million to the interim fund which meets the United Kingdom's full share of approved projects and support costs up to June 1992. We are firmly committed to providing the remainder of our share of the US$240 million fund.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Legal Aid

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what is the current value to the Legal Aid Board, at 1992 prices, of those statutory charges placed on homes as a consequence of civil legal aid proceedings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: As at 31 March 1992—which is the most recent date for which a total figure is available—the value to the Legal Aid Board of charges placed on property as a consequence of civil legal aid proceedings was £86 million.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what assessment he has made of the changes in civil legal aid eligibility on *(a)* the numbers

who will take legal action and *(b)* the access to legal representation and its quality of those client groups no longer financially eligible for legal aid; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: I estimate that the number of civil legal aid bills paid will rise from around 298,000 in 1992-93 to around 327,000 in 1995-96. Legal services for those outside the legal aid scheme will continue to be available from lawyers in private practice and from other sources.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what consultations he has had with *(a)* the Law Society and *(b)* the Law Centres Federation concerning the impact of changes in the legal aid system on the numbers eligible for legal aid.

Mr. John M. Taylor: My Department regularly discusses a range of issues relating to legal aid with both the Law Society and the Law Centres Federation. I am always open to receive representations on any matter.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what assessment he has made of the impact of his amended eligibility criteria for legal aid on applications for legal advice under the green form scheme and private medical examinations for appellants against refusal of invalidity care allowance, attendance allowance, mobility allowance and disability living allowance.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The changes announced on 12 November do not affect the type of work that can be done under the green form scheme. Those people receiving income support or with incomes at income support level will be unaffected by the changes. This will mean that around 21 per cent. of households will be eligible for advice under the green form scheme. People with incomes above income support level will in future be unable to receive help under the green form scheme. However, the average green form bill in the last financial year was £82 and it is not unreasonable to expect them to meet costs of this order.

Guildford Four

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what public interest immunity certificates he has signed in relation to documents provided by his Department to Sir John May's inquiry.

Mr. John M. Taylor: None.

Privity of Contract

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what plans the Government have to reform the law on the privity of contract principle.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor is actively considering the recommendations of the Law Commission on this subject—*"Landlord and Tenant Law: Privity of Contract and Estate"*—Law Com. No. 74—and hopes to be able to make an announcement about it in the near future.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will carry out a survey into how many tenants are estimated to be facing bills for back rent because of default by their successors to whom they had assigned leases.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor has no plans to carry out such a survey, but he takes careful note of the representations he receives from former tenants and from landlords in relation to the operation of the doctrine of privity of contract.

WALES

Sheltered Housing

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the funding of the warden service in sheltered housing after 1994; and what is his estimate of the number of wardens employed by health and social services authorities in sheltered housing.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: A Court of Appeal judgment cast doubt on housing authorities' powers to provide care services and charge their costs to the housing revenue account. To avoid the risk of disruption to these important services, the Government are seeking powers in the Housing and Urban Development Bill to regularise housing authorities' practices in connection with these services.

The Government's policy is that the housing revenue account should be a landlord account. We therefore propose that these new powers would be temporary. However, before any decisions are taken about the timing of any change in the arrangements, about how the services would be provided thereafter, or about how their costs would be accounted for, there will be full consultation with all parties in the new year. When considering how best to implement any new arrangements, we shall consider all the financial and administrative issues to ensure that support continues to be available for those who need it. Information on the number of wardens in local authority sheltered accommodation is not held centrally.

Training Schemes

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many young people in south Glamorgan are currently on waiting lists for youth training schemes.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The information is not available in the form requested.

However, as at 12 November 1992, of the number of young people in south Glamorgan registered for employment or training with the careers service, 228 were reported to be seeking entry or re-entry to youth training. This figure includes young people still receiving guidance as well as those already under submission to training schemes.

St. Mary's Hospital, South Glamorgan

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what requirements he has imposed on South Glamorgan health authority and Llandough hospital unit for public consultation before any plan to close St. Mary's day hospital is implemented.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Welsh Office guidance requires health authorities to discuss service changes with

community health councils, prior to taking a view on whether those changes are substantial and therefore subject to formal consultation procedures.

Pit Closures

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 16 November, *Official Report*, column 91, if the Mid Glamorgan, West Wales and Clwyd training and enterprise councils have completed their action plans for local job creation in the areas affected by the Taff Merthyr, Betws and Point of Ayr collieries; if he has considered their contents; if he will place a copy of each plan and any written response he has made to them in the Library; and if the £4·8 million he has allocated for employment and training in these areas is drawn from the £75 million allocated for this purpose by the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

Mr. David Hunt: The Mid Glamorgan, West Wales and North East Wales TECs have now submitted action plans proposing initiatives which could be taken in their respective areas. These plans are currently being finalised in discussion with my officials and I will announce my proposals as soon as possible.

Of the allocation of £4·8 million which I have already announced, £2·8 million is included in the £75 million announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment.

Cardiff Bay Development Corporation

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 30 November to the hon. Member for Cardiff, West, relating to the auditing arrangements of the Cardiff Bay development corporation, on what date he expects to complete the amendment to the financial memorandum; and if he will place a copy of the amendment in the Library.

Mr. David Hunt: My officials wrote to the corporation yesterday with the amendment to the financial memorandum. I have placed a copy of the letter in the Library of the House.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Performance-related Pay

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many staff in the Treasury at principal grade and above are in receipt of performance-related pay by grade; and what is the total cost of performance-related pay for these grades in the Treasury.

Mr. Nelson: In total some 116 people at grade 7—principal—and above are in receipt of performance-related pay. The total cost of performance-related pay for these grades in 1992-93 is estimated at £270,000. The numbers of staff in each grade are as follows:

	Numbers
Grade 7 (principal)	47
Grade 6	8
Grade 5	30
Grade 4	2
Grade 3	23
Grade 2	6
	116

Chancellor's Tenant

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether the accounting officer appointed under section 22 of the Exchequer and Audit Departments Act 1866 minuted the Comptroller and Auditor General about the expenditure arising in connection with the eviction of a tenant renting property from the Chancellor of the Exchequer; and if he will name the relevant accounting officer.

Mr. Portillo: No minute was sent to the Comptroller and Auditor General. The relevant accounting officers were Sir Peter Middleton and Sir Terence Burns, who succeeded him on 3 May 1991.

Football Grounds

Mr. Ashton: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he expects to confirm his decision to extend the life of the pool betting duty relief announced in the 1990 Budget to provide funds to assist with the implementation of the Taylor report at football grounds.

Sir John Cope: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor will decide whether to extend the reduction in pool betting duty in the light of evidence from the Football League and football clubs that they have moved ahead with planning their own contribution to implementing the Taylor recommendations.

Corporation Tax

Ms. Estelle Morris: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the tax regime applicable to the payment of corporation tax on income accrued as a result of superannuation contribution holidays; and whether any differences exist with respect to the treatment of nationalised industries.

Mr. Dorrell: Companies can obtain a deduction from taxable profits only for superannuation contributions actually paid. This applies equally to nationalised industries as well as the private sector.

Independent Forecasters

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he plans to announce the appointment of a team of independent forecasters to assist the Treasury; and if he will name the individuals he has approached to date.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 1 December 1992]:* It is planned to issue invitations to join the forecasting panel in the next few weeks. An announcement about the panel's membership will follow shortly afterwards.

Empty Properties

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of the £750 million allocated in the autumn statement for buying empty and repossessed properties will be allocated to London local authorities.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 1 December 1992]:* Of the total £750 million allocated to boost the housing market in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, £580 million was allocated to the Housing Corporation to enable housing associations in England to purchase empty properties. Seventy-five per cent. of this £580 million has already been allocated to individual associations. Of this 75 per cent., half—around £220 million—has been allocated to projects in the Housing Corporation's three London and home counties regions.

PRIME MINISTER

Scott Inquiry

Mr. Hain: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement about the affidavit sent to him by Ms. Tess Lawrence on 30 November.

The Prime Minister: The affidavit has been sent by Ms. Lawrence to Lord Justice Scott. It will be for him to consider the information which it contains.

Legal Advice (Ministers)

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Prime Minister on how many occasions since 1979 the Government have funded, wholly or in part, the cost of legal advice of representations for Ministers of the Crown in respect of matters which related in part to personal and private matters; and if he will list the names of the Ministers in respect of whom such payments have been made.

The Prime Minister: There is no central record of such cases. Such advice is normally confidential.

Sprinkler Systems

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make it his policy that sprinkler systems similar to those to be installed at the National Library of Scotland should be installed at the British museum in London.

The Prime Minister: It is for the trustees and directing staff of individual museums and galleries to decide on the most appropriate fire systems for their institutions with regard to the nature of their collections.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Prime Minister on what date the Government received copies of the report prepared by the International Atomic Energy Agency into the attempt by Iraq to build and develop nuclear weapons.

The Prime Minister: So far, the International Atomic Energy Agency has carried out 15 inspections aimed at uncovering Iraqi attempts to build and develop nuclear weapons. As reports of these inspections are published as Security Council documents, they are placed in the House of Commons Library.

Engagements

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 3 December.

Sir Peter Tapsell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 3 December.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Civil Servants

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many civil servants are employed by the Northern Ireland Office in *(a)* London, *(b)* Belfast and *(c)* elsewhere.

Mr. Mates: As at 1 November 1992, the number of people working for the Northern Ireland Office was:

(a) 110 in London
(b) 2,813 in Belfast and
(c) 2,870 elsewhere.

Terrorism

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will place in the Library a comprehensive list of all those who have died as a result of Northerrn Ireland terrorism, including the date and location of their death and of the incident leading to their death and the organisation allegedly responsible for the death since August 1968 in *(a)* Northern Ireland, *(b)* Great Britain, *(c)* the Republic of Ireland and *(d)* other EC countries.

Mr. Mates: I will write to the hon. Gentleman when compilation of the available information is completed and arrange for a copy to be placed in the Library.

Wildlife

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he or his officials last met representatives of the agrochemical industry to discuss the future funding of the wildlife incident investigation schemes.

Mr. Hanley: Wildlife incident investigation schemes operate on a common basis throughout the United Kingdom. The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food takes the lead in negotiations with the agrochemical industry, and I understand that it has recently met with industry representatives to discuss the funding of the scheme.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the future funding of the wildlife incident investigation scheme Northern Ireland.

Mr. Hanley: Wildlife incident investigation schemes operate on a common basis throughout the United Kingdom with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food the lead Department as far as their operation is concerned.

Laganside Corporation

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to his answer of 26 November, *Official Report*, column 789, relating to the auditing arrangements of the Laganside Corporation, on what date he expects to complete the amended financial memorandum; and if he will place a copy in the Library.

Mr. Atkins: Laganside Corporation was advised by letter dated 1 December 1992 of the amendment to the financial memorandum. The amended section now reads:

"The Northern Ireland Audit Office shall have full access on request to the books and records of the Corporation."

I am arranging for a copy of the memorandum to be placed in the Library.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Bangladesh

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about aid to Bangladesh.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Britain provided £56 million in aid to Bangladesh in 1991. Our aid programme supports development of the country's natural resources, its physical infrastructure and its human resources through health and population, education and training. We promote good government through our assistance with economic reform, and improvements to the efficiency and accountability of public services. We have established a new aid management office in Dhaka, staffed by a multi-disciplinary team, which will allow us to focus our aid still more effectively on Bangladesh's development priorities.

Global Environment Facility

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans Her Majesty's Government have to provide additional resources for replenishment of the global environment facility; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Government have agreed to provide new and additional resources for the replenishment of the global environment facility. Provision for this will be made following the outcome of the replenishment negotiations and as soon as the level and the timing of our contribution is known.

Malawi

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on British aid to Malawi.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: At the Consultative Group in May 1992, we and other donors agreed to withhold new balance of payments and restrict other forms of aid, pending improvements in Malawi's human rights record. We welcome the decision to hold a referendum on the one-party system and other indications that the Malawi Government are beginning to address human rights issues. It is essential that the referendum is conducted fairly and those calling for democratic changes are allowed to campaign freely and openly. We continue to urge the Malawi Government to make further improvements in human rights.

We keep our position on aid under regular review, but for the moment we are concentrating new aid on humanitarian relief and projects to help the poorest. So far this year we have allocated £12·3 million of humanitarian relief, including £0·5 million of medical supplies offered during November.

Tropical Forests

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his latest information on the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation's estimates on rates of tropical forest loss.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Preliminary estimates from the current 1990 FAO forest resources assessment indicate a rate of tropical forest loss in excess of 17 million hectares annually.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking to ensure implementation of the forest principles agreed at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We shall publish a national plan on our own implementation of the forest principles, by the end of 1993. We are also using our influence, together with our EC and G7 partners, to seek agreement to an international review process. We believe that this should involve the Sustainable Development Commission which is being established by the United Nations General Assembly.

Grenada

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the environmental impacts of the Commonwealth Development Corporation/Liberty Club Ltd. tourist hotel development in Grenada.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: It is the Government's responsibility under the Commonwealth Development Corporation Act to set the policy framework in which the Commonwealth Development Corporation carries out its activities. Decisions on individual investments are the responsibility of its board. Assessment of the environmental aspects of proposed investments is an integral part of the Commonwealth Development Corporation's project appraisal and approval procedures. In these circumstances, it would not be appropriate for the Overseas Development Administration to undertake separate studies of proposed projects.

Commonwealth Development Corporation

Mr. Jonathan Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proposals he has to authorise the Commonwealth Development Corporation to extend its area of operations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Approval has been given to the Commonwealth Development Corporation undertaking activities in the Dominican Republic. In pursuing investment opportunities the Commonwealth Development Corporation will endeavour to give priority to promoting the private sector.

Human Rights

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether applicants for membership of the Commonwealth have to fulfil any standards with regard to democracy or respect for human rights.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding reply 1 December 1992]:* All countries applying to join the Commonwealth are expected to adhere to the "Declaration of Commonwealth Principles" issued at the 1971 Singapore Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting.

Cameroon

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations his Department has received about the arrest and detention of Dr. Bieleu, president of the Union of Cameroonian Democratic Forces.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 1 December 1992]:* We have received a large number of representations about human rights abuses in Cameroon following the Presidential elections on 11 October. Particular concern has been expressed by human rights groups in both the United Kingdom and Cameroon about the detention of opposition leaders, including Dr. Bieuleu, who is currently detained without charge at the headquarters of the Gendarmerie Nationale in Yaoundé. The authorities have also apparently refused Dr. Bieuleu medication to control his diabetes.

We have made our concerns about human rights abuses plain to the Cameroon Government and have called publicly on President Biya to release those in detention, especially leaders of the opposition parties.

World Bank

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the number of staff available to support the United Kingdom executive director of the World bank in his evaluation of the economic poverty alleviation and environmental impact of proposed World bank projects.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 26 November 1992]:* The United Kingdom executive director has a joint office dealing with World bank and IMF matters. In addition to two alternate directors, there are six assistants, all of whom have responsibilities for reviewing World bank projects and policies. Technical back-up is available as necessary from professional advisers at the ODA's headquarters.

Malaria Conference

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the outcome of the conference in Amsterdam on malaria, at which the Department of Health was represented.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 27 November 1992]:* I have been asked to reply.

Participants from 102 member states of the World Health Organisation unanimously adopted the world declaration on the control of malaria at the ministerial conference in Amsterdam on 26 to 27 October. Acknowledging that malaria constitutes a major threat to health and to economic development, the conference concluded that malaria can and must be controlled with the tools now available; the key to success is applying the right strategy in the right places at the right time; in most endemic countries the goal will be to prevent malaria mortality and to reduce morbidity as well as social and economic losses due to the disease through building local and national capabilities; and aid donors should increase support for malaria control efforts.

The United Kingdom delegation was led by ODA's chief health and population adviser and included representatives from the Department of Health and the Liverpool and London Schools of Tropical Medicine. The United Kingdom delegation stressed the need for cost-effective interventions to tackle malaria. It noted that ODA already provides substantial support to the management of malaria in many developing countries, and announced ODA's intention to establish a United Kigdom malaria consortium to help developing countries acquire skills needed to develop cost-effective malaria strategies and undertake relevant operational research. Developing countries will be able to apply for such assistance under ODA's bilateral country programmes. We hope that other aid agencies, such as WHO and the World bank, will also draw on this United Kingdom expertise.

United Nations Programmes

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much of the United Kingdom contributed financially to *(a)* the United Nations development programme, *(b)* the world food programme, *(c)* the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, *(d)* UNICEF, *(e)* the United Nations fund for population activities, *(f)* the United Nations environment programme and *(g)* the United Nations disaster relief organisation, in cash and at 1991 prices for each year since 1985.

Mr. Lennox Boyd *[holding answer 16 November 1992]:* Contributions in cash terms and in 1991 prices were as follows.

United Kingdom contributions to United Nations organisations in cash terms

£ thousands

	1985	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	[1] *1991*
United Nations Development Programme	21,000	21,000	23,000	24,500	26,001	27,114	28,964
World Food Programme[2]	500	500	10,392	4,542	15,674	4,030	15,190
United Nations High Commission for Refugees	16,860	14,020	14,800	19,470	19,316	19,495	23,475
United Nations Children's Fund	8,400	8,308	12,000	12,223	12,200	9,285	11,232
United Nations Population Fund	4,500	4,500	5,000	5,250	5,500	[3]6,000	[3]7,500
United Nations Environment Programme	750	1,000	1,000	1,250	3,000	3,000	4,000
United Nations Disaster Relief Organisation	n/a	n/a	n/a	2,746	391	719	898

n/a—Not available.

[1] The figures for the United Nations Development Programme, the World Food Programme and the United Nations Children's Fund have been updated since the answer given to the House on 14 July 1992.

[2] Contributions to the World Food Programme include subscription payments, commodity purchase aid, from 1987, food aid. Prior to 1987 the food aid channelled through the World Food Programme could not be distinguished from other food aid, and therefore is not included

in this table.
[3] United Kingdom pledge for 1990, of which £3 million was actually paid in February 1991.
[4] United Kingdom pledge for 1991. Excludes payment of £3 million in February 1991 against 1990 pledge.

United Kingdom contribution to United Nations organisations at 1991 prices

£ thousands

	1985	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*[1]1991*
United Nations Development Programme	30,047	29,044	30,301	30,279	29,990	29,052	28,964
World Food Programme[2]	715	692	13,691	5,613	18,079	4,318	15,190
United Nations High Commission for Refugees	24,124	19,391	19,498	24,063	22,279	20,888	23,475
United Nations Children's Fund	12,019	11,490	15,809	15,106	14,072	9,949	11,232
United Nations Population Fund	6,439	6,224	6,587	6,488	6,344	[3]6,429	[4]7,500
United Nations Environment Programme	1,073	1,383	1,317	1,545	3,460	3,214	4,000
United Nations Disaster Relief Organisation	N/a	N/a	N/a	3,394	451	770	898

Note: Latest available Her Majesty's Treasury deflators (consistent with the Autumn Statement) were used. These figures therefore differ from those given in the answer to the House on 14 July 1992.

N/a—Not available.
[1] The figures for the United Nations Development Programme, the World Food Programme and the United Nations Children's Fund have been updated since the answer given to the House on 14 July 1992.
[2] Contributions to the World Food Programme include subscription payments, commodity purchase and, from 1987, food aid. Prior to 1987 the food aid channelled through the World Food Programme could not be distinguished from other food aid, and therefore is not included in this table.
[3] United Kingdom pledge for 1990, of which £3 million (in cash terms) was actually paid in February 1991.
[4] United Kingdom pledge for 1991. Excludes payment of £3 million (in cash terms) in February 1991 against 1990 pledge.

EDUCATION

Open University

Mr. Mans: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if the Open university will be given the extra funds previously indicated for 1993 to enable it to continue to increase its undergraduate student numbers.

Mr. Forman: The baseline funding for the Open university, which is being transferred to the Higher Education Funding Council for England in 1993-94, includes provision for the university to recruit an additional 2,000 undergraduate students in 1993. I understand that the funding council's decision on the university's funding for the period up to 31 July 1993 takes account of these additional students.

Adult Illiteracy

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what measures are being taken to tackle adult illiteracy in England.

Mr. Forman: The Further and Higher Education Act 1992 places the Further Education Funding Council under a duty to secure adequate provision of basic literacy teaching for adults. The Government also support the adult literacy and basic skills unit which provides advice and undertakes development work in basic skills.

Birmingham City Council

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment he has made of the effect of penalties imposed on council spending which exceeds standard spending assessment on the ability of Birmingham city council to reach its standard spending assessment for education; and what action he proposes to take.

Mr. Forth: Birmingham city council is responsible for deciding its overall budget and spending priorities and is accountable locally for the decisions it takes.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Maastricht Treaty

Mr. Legg: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the provisions of the treaty of Maastricht which *(a)* alter the status of the council as an institution of the European Community, *(b)* increase the scope of majority voting or *(c)* reduce the right of unilateral action by the United Kingdom.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) on 20 May at column 169 detailing extensions of majority voting under the Maastricht treaty. The status of the Council is not altered by the treaty on European union. The United Kingdom would forgo the right to act unilaterally in monetary mattes if it chose to join the move to a single currency, but the treaty does not oblige it to do so. The treaty includes new articles on education, training, culture, health, consumer protection, industry and development which include powers for the Community to act. But measures in all these areas had already been adopted under the existing treaty, so the articles concerned largely make explicit what is already possible under existing provisions. In addition, article 3b of the treaty sets new criteria for Community action across the board, which will limit its right to constrain member states' activities. On balance, therefore, we are confident that member states' freedom of action will be increased.

South-West Atlantic (Fish Stocks)

Mr. Sherwby: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions have taken place with the Argentine Government concerning the conservation of fish stocks in the south-west Atlantic; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Discussions were held with the Argentine Government at the fourth meeting of the South Atlantic Fisheries Commission on 23 and 24 November 1992. The delegations exchanged views on conservation and related matters. We shall continue the dialogue with the Argentine Government.

Mr. Sherwby: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the value of licences to fish for illex squid in Falkland Islands waters in 1992, if he will make an estimate of the projected income for 1993; what information he has concerning investment in fisheries in the Falkland Islands; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The income from illex squid licences to fish in Falkland Islands waters in 1992 amounted to £20·768 million. The current licensing round is not yet complete and prospective income is uncertain. It could be significantly lower. The market for squid is weak. There may be fewer applications for licences.

Mr. Sherwby: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent information he has concerning the depletion of stocks of the illex squid in the waters of the south-west Atlantic; and what is his policy for ensuring that immature squid is protected from overfishing in these waters.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The proportion of the annual illex squid brood which is not caught each season and is thus able to breed has been sufficient to maintain an adequate stock in Falkland Islands waters.

We support the measures taken by the Falkland Islands Government to prevent overfishing by limiting the number of licences for fishing in the Falkland Islands conservation zone (FICZ), closing the fishery early if necessary and negotiating voluntary restraint agreements to prevent overfishing in the adjacent high seas. We discuss with Argentina measures for fisheries conservation in the South Atlantic Fisheries Commission.

Malta

Sir Russell Johnston: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made with Malta's application for membership of the European Community.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The Maltese application has been referred to the European Commission for its Opinion. We look forward to an early discussion by the Council of Ministers when the Opinion is available.

Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty

Mr. Jacques Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the current status and recent implementation of the CFE treaty.

Mr. Garel-Jones: An agreement to apply the CFE treaty provisionally from 17 July 1992 was signed by all 29 CFE states parties at the Helsinki summit on 10 July. This was in response to the view of many states parties that implementation of the treaty, which was signed on 19 November 1990, should not be delayed any further by the failure of some states parties to ratify quickly. The treaty entered into force definitively on 9 November, following ratification by the last two states parties, Belarus and Kazakhstan, on 30 October.

In the 120-day period of intensive inspection since 17 July, the United Kingdom has conducted 21 inspections in the countries of the former Warsaw pact, and has received seven inspections from them. On 14 November the treaty moved into its three-year reduction phase, in the course of which states parties will reduce their equipment holdings to the limits specified by the treaty. We are satisfied that the CFE treaty, which we regard as a cornerstone for co-operative security in Europe, has been properly implemented so far.

EC Officials

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 13 November, *Official Report*, column *1012*, how many of the British employees at the European Commission are translators or interpreters; and if he will break down the figure for those in the administrative grade by directorate general.

Mr. Jackson: I have been asked to reply.

There are currently 185 full-time British translators and interpreters working for the European Community institutions. These are additional to the figures for British officials employed in the European Commission in my answer of 13 November, at column 1012. The provision of detailed breakdowns of staffing figures is a matter for the European Community institutions.

Cameroon

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations his Government have taken at the United Nations or elsewhere about the current political and constitutional position in Cameroon.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: A Cameroonian mission, led by Deputy Foreign Minister Mr. Francis Nkwain, visited the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on 18 November. We called on the Cameroon Government on this occasion to take all possible measures to end human rights abuses and to take active measures to demonstrate their commitment to democracy. We have subsequently drawn to the attention of the Cameroon Government a British statement issued on 19 November which urged President Biya to end the state of emergency and to release those in detention or under house arrest, especially leaders of the opposition parties.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what investigations he has made into the civil rights position of the SDF candidate for the presidency in Cameroon in respect of human rights; and whether his Department has sought to meet Mr. John Fru Ndi recently.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The continued restriction on Mr. Fru Ndi appear to run counter to Cameroon's obligations under the international convention on civil and political rights. The British ambassador to Cameroon has spoken to Mr. Fru Ndi several times by telephone and a member of the embassy visited the North-West Province on 23-24 November, when he was able to meet him in person.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations his Government have made about the treatment of the English-speaking Cameroons in recent years.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have been given no grounds to make such representations in recent years. The current problems in Cameroon are not solely related to problems

between the anglophone and francophone communities in Cameroon, but rather stem from the conduct of the presidential election on 11 October and the increase in human rights abuses in the aftermath of that election.

Tropical Forests

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many species of tropical rain forest timber he considers to be in danger of global extinction as a result of over-harvesting.

Mr. Maclean: I have been asked to reply.

Species threatened with extinction which are, or may be, affected by trade are listed in appendix I of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). The appendix currently includes two tropical timber species: the Guatemalan Fir, Abies guatemalensis, and Brazilian Rosewood, Dalbergia nigra.

HEALTH

Health Practices

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what measures are being taken to promote better health practices in England.

Dr. Mawhinney: Over £150 million has been invested since 1989 to support medical and clinical audit. The philosophy of audit is now generally accepted by the medical and other health care professions.

The clinical outcomes group, jointly chaired by the chief medical officer and chief nursing officer and representing all the major professional groups in the national health service, has been set up to drive forward the concept of clinical audit and focus on establishing outcomes.

Other initiatives include:

the "Health of the Nation" which has set targets in the area of awareness and prevention of illness; and

a series of bulletins entitled "Effective Health Care", bringing together evidence of the effectiveness of specific health care interventions. Four bulletins have been issued to date:

Population Screening for Osteoporosis
Rehabilitation after Stroke
The Management of Subfertility
Treatment of Persistent Glue Ear in Children

Department of Health funded research programmes which will form the basis of standards for audit in future;

encouraging the medical royal colleges to set best practice standards for their specialties.

Vaccines

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action she is taking to speed up the supply of children's HIB vaccines to district health authorities; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: More than 2 million doses of HIB vaccine have been issued to health authorities since the vaccine was introduced on 1 October. The recommended programme for immunisation, which gives priority to the youngest children because they are at most risk from invasive haemophilus disease, required some 650,000 doses in October and November. This has left a substantial balance to allow for the immunisation of older children who would otherwise be called in at a later stage in the programme. The objective is to immunise all children under four years of age by September 1993.

It is the responsibility of health authorities to arrange equitable distribution of the vaccine they receive, according to requirements, and to make any adjustments to the supply arrangements considered necessary. Continuing supplies of HIB vaccine should ensure that a total of 5 million doses will be distributed in the first six months of the programme.

Family Planning

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list for every district health authority in England and number of family planning clinics in 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not collected centrally.

Drugs (Labelling)

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to require drug companies to label drugs with Braille symbols.

Dr. Mawhinney: There are no such plans. I understand that the Royal Pharmaceutical Society has had discussions with the industry which is looking at ways of introducing some degree of Braille labelling.

Secure Units (Juveniles)

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many places in secure units for juveniles there are in England and Wales; and how many places the Government are intending to provide by 1995.

Mr. Yeo: On 30 November 1992 there were 292 places in local authority secure units in England.

Plans are being prepared to provide an additional 60 to 65 secure places in order to implement the new juvenile remand provisions in the Criminal Justice Act 1991 by the mid 1990s.

The information relating to Wales is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the current average cost of keeping a juvenile in a local authority secure unit.

Mr. Yeo: Information in the form requested is not collected centrally.

Eyesight and Dental Checks

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make regulations to restore the right to a free eye test and the right to a free dental check-up.

Dr. Mawhinney: No.

Social Security Budget

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the adjustment in the amount to be transferred from the social security budget to local authorities from 1 April 1993 in the light of the uprating of benefits announced by the Secretary of State for Social Security on 12 November; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: The amounts of the transfer which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced on 2 October were based on a calculation made at that time of the resources which the Government would otherwise have provided to finance care through social security payments to people in residential and nursing homes. The transfer was calculated on the assumption of an increase in social security benefit levels of 4·25 per cent. In the event the uprating of social security benefits announced on 12 November amounted to 3·6 per cent., but I do not envisage any adjustment being made to the transfer amounts.

Chemical Entity Medicines

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 26 November, *Official Report*, columns *810-11*, if she will name the indigestion remedy, the laxative and the vitamin product that have been granted product licences by the United Kingdom licensing authority since 1985; and what was the recommendation of the NHS Advisory Committee on Drugs in each case.

Dr. Mawhinney: The indigestion remedy is Pepulsid which the Advisory Committee on National Health Service Drugs accepted was appropriate for supply on NHS prescription. The laxative is Importal which the committee decided should not be prescribable under the NHS by its proprietary name, although it can be supplied under the generic name Lactitol. The vitamin is Elcarn which has not been considered by the committee; I understand it may never have been marketed in the United Kingdom.

GPs Fee Scale

Mr. Dicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what recommendations the Doctors' and Dentists' Review Body is planning to make on the fee scale for general medical practitioners in 1993-94; and if she will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: When my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister informed the chairman of the Doctors' and Dentists' Review Body of its amended remit for the coming year, he invited the review body to make recommendations as normal on a fee scale for general medical practitioners that would make provision for their practice expenses and deliver the new intended average net income set by the Government's policy for public sector pay settlements for the coming year.

The review body expressed some reservations about what this might entail. There have been discussions between my officials, the profession, and the DDRB secretariat, to explore the review body's concerns and to see how far the two sides could offer evidence which might help. A good deal of common ground has emerged, but it is now clear that there remain some issues which it would be difficult for the review body to handle in current circumstances.

The Government have therefore concluded that the best course is not to refer these questions to the review body for the 1993-94 pay round. Instead, the Health Departments will pursue them directly with the profession, to a time scale which should allow further progress on the unresolved technical matters. My officials are in touch with the British Medical Association about the arrangements for these discussions.

Osteopaths

Mr. Welfen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proposals she has to introduce provisions that osteopaths should be trained to minimum standards of competence and be regulated by a governing body capable of enforcing an appropriate code of practice.

Mr. Sackville: The Government are supporting the private Member's Bill by my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Moss) to establish a single statutory governing body for osteopaths responsible for developing, promoting and regulating the profession of osteopathy and for setting educational standards and standards of professional conduct.

Limited List Prescribing

Sir Michael Grylls: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information she has concerning the effectiveness of the limited list prescribing system which is used in each other member country of the European Community which has adopted such a system.

Dr. Mawhinney: I understand that steps have been or are being taken to ensure that the best use is made of resources available for the provision of drugs in a number of member states in the European Community including Germany, France, Italy, Spain and Belgium. We have no information about the extent to which the effectiveness of such schemes has been formally evaluated.

Health-related Projects

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the health-related projects currently funded by *(a)* city challenge and *(b)* the urban programme.

Mr. Sackville: City challenge funding commenced in April this year and health-related projects are reflected in the action plans of Manchester, Wolverhampton, Nottingham, Newcastle, Wirral, Lewisham, Middlesbrough and Bradford. Plans include a wide range of health promotion projects and others related to primary care, maternity services, drugs prevention, a well woman clinic, health services for ethnic minorities and for elderly people, and family and community health.

The latest information available centrally under the urban programme is for 1991-92. A list of health-related projects for which details are held centrally has been placed in the Library.

Private Ambulance Services

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what steps she has taken in the last 12 months to monitor the activities of companies providing private ambulance services; and if she will make a statement;

(2) what measures she has undertaken to monitor the suitability and qualifications of staff working for private ambulance companies; and if she will make a statement;

(3) what guidelines exist governing the operation of private medical services which offer an emergency response service; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Private ambulance services and their staff are not subject to any specific statute or regulation. It is for the prospective purchasers of private ambulance

services to satisfy themselves that operators are competent to provide the required service. Private ambulance services do not respond to emergency 999 calls.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions she or her officials have had with Belmont International Air and Road Ambulance in the last 12 months; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: None.

Research Units

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list *(a)* the research units within the NHS funded by her Department, *(b)* their principal publications in the last four years and *(c)* any plans for their reorganisation.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Department currently supports 13 research units on rolling contracts. In addition, there are 15 research programmes on fixed-term contracts. None of these contracts is currently held with national health service authorities. The units and programmes are largely based in university departments.

Details of research contracts supported over the past four years are contained in the Department of Health "Handbook of Research and Development", an annual publication, which is available in the Library. A list of units' principal publications is not held centrally. The majority of research units on rolling contracts receive funds from a variety of sources, of which the Department is one.

In respect of plans for reorganisation, I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Waveney (Mr. Porter) on 2 December.

Mentally Disordered Offenders

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on her response to the Reed report on mentally disordered offenders.

Mr. Yeo: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) on 27 November, at columns *873-74*.

Ativan

Mr. Macklalay: To ask the Secretary of State for Health on what criteria the drug Ativan was originally made available; and what drugs its availability was intended to supersede.

Dr. Mawhinney: Ativan is a proprietary brand of lorazepam, one of the benzodiazepine group of drugs. It was licensed by the licensing authority on the basis of the normal criteria of quality, efficacy and safety. Whether or not a particular drug is intended to supersede another one is not relevant to the licensing procedure.

Under the selected list arrangements, general practitioners are not permitted to prescribe Ativan tablets under the National Health Service, although lorazepam tablets can be prescribed generically.

Extra-contractual Referrals

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to monitor the system of extra-contractual referrals in the NHS; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The level of expenditure on extra-contractual referrals is monitored during the year. There are no plans for additional monitoring.

NHS (Private Investment)

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on her plans to attract private investment into the NHS.

Mr. Sackville: Measures already announced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer will increase the scope for using private finance in joint ventures with the national health service to improve and extend services. We aim to ensure that NHS patients will benefit from these new freedoms to the greatest possible extent.

Pay Beds

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish a table showing for each regional health authority and for England as a whole *(a)* the number of NHS pay beds and *(b)* the total revenue generated from those beds for 1989-90, 1990-91, 1991-92 and the projected figures for 1992-93 and 1993-94.

Mr. Sackville: The information available centrally is given in the table.

Number of authorised pay beds in NHS hospitals

Region	*1989-90*	*1990-91*
Northern	97	97
Yorkshire	188	188
Trent	136	136
East Anglian	108	108
North West Thames	283	283
North East Thames	411	411
South East Thames	333	333
South West Thames	180	180
Wessex	116	116
Oxford	194	194
South Western	100	100
West Midlands	276	276
Mersey	129	129
North Western	233	227
Special Health Authorities	178	178
England	2,962	2,956

Data for 1991-92 are not yet available. Nor do we project this data for future years.

Income from private in-patients

Region	*1989-90 £000 (cash)*	*1990-91 £000 (cash)*
Northern	1,275	1,408
Yorkshire	3,020	3,642
Trent	2,064	1,755
East Anglian	3,953	4,153
North West Thames	9,936	11,013
North East Thames	11,598	13,291
South East Thames	7,007	8,979
South West Thames	2,449	2,874
Wessex	1,817	2,246
Oxford	6,315	7,421
South Western	2,768	3,836
West Midlands	3,080	3,968
Mersey	1,206	1,499
North Western	3,928	4,933
Special Health Authorities	12,861	14,535
England	73,277	85,653

Source:
Annual accounts of regional and district health authorities in England and those of the special health authorities for the London postgraduate teaching hospitals.
Note:
Information derivable from 1991-92 annual accounts will be available shortly. Relevant figures are not collected in-year and any estimates for 1992-93 or 1993-94 would consequently be speculative.

Ambulance Service

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to improve the operation of the ambulance service; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The Government remain committed to the maintenance of high standards by NHS ambulance services.

The patients charter sets performance standards for ambulance emergency response times. Progress towards the achievement of the Government's target of one paramedic per front-line ambulance by 1996 continues and is generally ahead of schedule.

In London the inquiry established by the South West Thames regional health authority has been asked to identify the lessons to be learned for the operation and management of the London ambulance service against the imperative of delivering service of the required standard.

NHS Services (Contracting-out)

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the future of the contracting out of NHS services, in connection with recent European rulings on the transfer of undertakings.

Mr. Sackville: In the national health service market testing has been mandatory for catering, laundry and linen and domestic services since 1983 and a significant amount of work has been put out to commercial contractors. NHS managers have undertaken market testing in some 20 other support services and the NHS is preparing for an enhanced programme of testing as set out in the "Competing for Quality" White Paper.

Contractors and would-be tenderers may have seen confusing reports concerning an amendment to the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations (1981) proposed in the employment legislation now before Parliament.

These regulations provide for the transfer of employees' contracts where an undertaking has transferred to a new employer. It is not true, as reports have suggested, that the amendment which is being made applies the regulations to the public sector for the first time. Nor is it correct to suggest this cuts across the Government's policy to open central and local government services to competition. The Government have always accepted that the regulations cover both the public and private sectors.

However, in every case the crucial consideration in deciding whether the regulations require that existing terms and conditions of employment should be preserved, is whether or not an undertaking is actually being transferred. This test has always applied and will continue to apply.

In the NHS there is a wide spectrum of work and contracting scenarios. Health authorities, trusts and would-be contractors need to consider in each case, whether there is likely to be a transfer of undertaking involved and if in any doubt to take legal advice.

The Bill makes no difference to the likely outcome of such consideration. The only relevant changes that are being made in the Bill are that it will no longer be necessary to show that the undertaking is in the nature of a commercial venture and that it is made clear that property does not have to be transferred for there to be a transfer of an undertaking.

These changes are required to bring the wording into line with the EC acquired rights directive and to clarify its interpretation.

The changes in the Bill do not imply that past cases should have been decided differently because other criteria may have been relevant to those decisions, nor can it be assumed that future cases will be decided differently.

Market testing in the NHS has led to both improvements in quality of service and financial savings thus releasing resources for direct patient care. The NHS is committed to pressing ahead with the challenging programme of market testing for the future.

Hospital Waiting Times

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish a table showing for each regional health authority the latest figures on *(a)* the percentage of patients receiving an immediate assessment in casualty, *(b)* the percentage of patients whose waiting time has been limited to 30 minutes and *(c)* the percentage of patients who have experienced the cancellation of a booked operation.

Mr. Sackville: Health authorities, as purchasers of services, are required to publish annual reports giving details of the performance against all relevant patients charter rights and standards achieved by their providers. A commentary on overall performance will be included in the chief executive's annual report for 1992-93.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Loan Objects

Mr. Wolfson: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what was the number of indemnity undertakings given by Departments under section 16 of the National Heritage Act 1980 for the six-month period ended 30 September; and what was the value of contingent liabilities in respect of such undertakings given at any time and which remain outstanding as at 30 September.

Mr. Brooke: The information my hon. Friend requests is as follows:

In the six-month period ended 30 September 1992 the following undertakings to indemnify were given by the relevant Departments for items on loan to national and non-national institutions.

	Number
Department of National Heritage	535
Scottish Office Education Department	93
Welsh Office Education Department	38
Department of Education for Northern Ireland	8

The value of contingent liabilities in respect of such undertakings given at any time and outstanding at 30 September 1992 are:

	£
Department of National Heritage	1,303,095,363
Scottish Office Education Department	284,743,138
Welsh Office Education Department	56,733,397
Department of Education for Northern Ireland	2,899,587

Items in Lieu of Tax

Mr. Wolfson: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what allocations of items accepted in lieu of tax there have been since his last announcement on 6 November.

Mr. Brooke: Since my last announcement, on 6 November at column *429*, I am pleased to inform the House of an allocation of an offer in lieu of tax. The offer is of minutes and accounts relating to the Hambledon cricket club. These documents will be allocated to the Hampshire record office.

Children's Play

Mr. Wolfson: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what support he intends to give to children's play after 31 March 1993.

Mr. Brooke: My Department's current funding of the national children's play and recreation unit, through the Sports Council, comes to an end on 31 March 1993. Discussions have now been opened with the Sports Council with a view to its taking over direct responsibility for a number of the play unit's functions.

National Lottery

Mr. Ashton: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage (1) what advice he has received on the impact of the proposed national lottery on the football pools if the total percentage taken out in tax and in payments to good causes were identical for pools and national lottery;

(2) what advice he has received on the impact of the proposed national lottery on football pools assuming no changes are made in the current rules governing the pools operation and promotion;

(3) what advice he has received on the impact of the proposed national lottery on football pools if pools were permitted *(a)* to be promoted to potential clients who want to use lucky numbers rather than skill and judgment in placing their bets, *(b)* to run roll-over jackpots, *(c)* to be advertised on television or *(d)* to have pools coupons collected from shops;

(4) what advice he has received on the consequences for the proposed national lottery's turnover if the lottery were not to offer instant games;

(5) what advice he has received on the number of jobs lost in the football pools industry if the national lottery is introduced and no changes are permitted in the regime governing footbal pools operation and promotion;

(6) what advice he has received on the consequence for the proposed national lottery's turnover if *(a)* the number of types of retailer handling lottery tickets were restricted to one, *(b)* if it were not advertised on television or *(c)* limits were imposed on prizes and jackpots;

(7) what advice he has received on the impact of the proposed national lottery on retail sales of newspapers and sweets.

Mr. Brooke: The Department commissioned a firm of consultants to advise on a number of aspects of the national lottery. This advice was intended to identify the key determinants for a successful lottery. Among the matters covered was advice on the issues the hon. Member raises in his questions. This advice contained a number of illustrative scenarios based on ranges of assumptions. Much of the information in the report is commercially sensitive to those who provided it, and I do not intend to publish the report.

Mr. Ashton: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what advice he has received on the impact of the proposed national lottery on funding for football, assuming no changes in the rules governing pools operation and promotion.

Mr. Brooke: I have received a number of letters from chairmen of football clubs and the Football Trust, which refer to the concerns expressed by the pools companies.

Mr. Ashton: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will allow representatives of the GAH consulting group to meet representatives of the pools promoters to discuss its report on the impact of the proposed national lottery on football pools.

Mr. Brooke: GAH is bound by normal Government contract conditions not to disclose details of its report.

Mr. Ashton: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what advice he has received on the impact of the proposed national lottery on the sale of premium bonds.

Mr. Brooke: Internal advice suggests that the products offered by these two schemes are very different. Premium bonds are a savings instrument. We expect both schemes to be viable.

Mr. Ashton: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when he last met the Pools Promoters Association members to discuss the proposed national lottery.

Mr. Brooke: My officials have met the Pools Promoters Association to discuss the national lottery on a number of occasions, most recently on 4 November. I am due to meet the chairman and representatives of the pools companies on 9 December.

Mr. Ashton: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what is his latest forecast of the projected annual income of the national lottery.

Mr. Brooke: All forecasts at this stage must be speculative. I hope that the national lottery will generate substantial sums for good causes.

Mr. Ashton: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many reports have been commissioned on the impact of the national lottery on football pools.

Mr. Brooke: The GAH group was commissioned to undertake a report to help the Department shape its legislation on the national lottery. Part of this report looked at the possible effects of the national lottery on the pools industry.

Mr. Ashton: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what has been the cost to public funds of the research he has commissioned on the impact of the national lottery on football pools.

Mr. Brooke: The GAH report, commissioned to cover a wide range of issues, cost £44,985.

Mr. Ashton: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what steps he is taking to ensure that football pools are not damaged by the introduction of the national lottery.

Mr. Brooke: The football pools companies have compiled a list of the relaxations they would like to see to the regime which regulates their operations. The Government are considering whether any changes are appropriate.

Mr. Ashton: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what advice he has received on the impact of the proposed national lottery on lotteries run by sports clubs.

Mr. Brooke: A number of organisations which run small lotteries, including sports clubs, have submitted information in response to the White Paper "A National Lottery Raising Money for Good Causes".

Historic Homes

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many grade I historic homes have sprinkler systems installed as a fire precaution.

Mr. Brooke: This information is not held centrally and is not readily available.

EMPLOYMENT

Disability Quota

Mr. Illsley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list the percentage quota for disabled people employed by each local authority in England and Wales.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Tables of figures showing the number and percentage of registered disabled people employed by a wide range of public sector employers, including local authorities, are published annually in the *Employment Gazette*. This information is published with the agreement of the individual employers. The latest figures for local authorities in England and Wales were published in the February edition of the *Employment Gazette*, a copy of which is in the Library.

Youth Training Scheme

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many young people are currently waiting to get on to places on the YTS; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: I refer the hon. Member to the oral reply given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to the hon. Member for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell) on 1 December, at columns *127-28*.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Crime Statistics

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish a table showing the percentage increase in each category of recorded crime during the 12 months ended June over the 12 months ended June 1989 *(a)* in England and Wales and *(b)* in each police force area.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 24 November 1992]:* The information requested is contained in the tables.

Notifiable offences recorded by the police by police force area
Percentage change for 12 months ended June 1992 compared with 12 months ended June 1989
Violence against the person

Police force area	*Percentage change*
Avon and Somerset	23
Bedfordshire	−10
Cambridgeshire	48
Cheshire	4
Cleveland	7
Cumbria	16
Derbyshire	26
Devon and Cornwall	2
Dorset	14
Durham	1
Essex	5
Gloucestershire	28
Greater Manchester	4
Hampshire	34
Hertfordshire	2
Humberside	−8
Kent	45
Lancashire	5
Leicestershire	34
Lincolnshire	28
City of London	7
Merseyside	31
Metropolitan Police District	33
Norfolk	3
Northamptonshire	1
Northumbria	15
North Yorkshire	24
Nottinghamshire	21
South Yorkshire	2
Staffordshire	14
Suffolk	19
Surrey	7
Sussex	9
Thames Valley	7
Warwickshire	12
West Mercia	12
West Midlands	26
West Yorkshire	15
Wiltshire	39
Dyfed-Powys	53
Gwent	18
North Wales	15
South Wales	31
England and Wales	19

Sexual offences

Police force area	*Percentage change*
Avon and Somerset	−3
Bedfordshire	−16
Cambridgeshire	12
Cheshire	30
Cleveland	−2
Cumbria	4
Derbyshire	−17
Devon and Cornwall	12
Dorset	38
Durham	16
Essex	−4
Gloucestershire	36
Greater Manchester	−1
Hampshire	15

Police force area	Percentage change
Hertfordshire	−19
Humberside	−6
Kent	33
Lancashire	−20
Leicestershire	8
Lincolnshire	−12
City of London	41
Merseyside	26
Metropolitan Police District	29
Norfolk	12
Northamptonshire	−16
Northumbria	3
North Yorkshire	−13
Nottinghamshire	−9
South Yorkshire	−4
Staffordshire	−6
Suffolk	34
Surrey	30
Sussex	4
Thames Valley	−19
Warwickshire	−11
West Mercia	7
West Midlands	6
West Yorkshire	7
Wiltshire	6
Dyfed-Powys	29
Gwent	−20
North Wales	−33
South Wales	−3
England and Wales	6

Robbery

Police force area	Percentage change
Avon and Somerset	85
Bedfordshire	113
Cambridgeshire	171
Cheshire	160
Cleveland	71
Cumbria	92
Derbyshire	148
Devon and Cornwall	54
Dorset	126
Durham	100
Essex	36
Gloucestershire	190
Greater Manchester	90
Hampshire	104
Hertfordshire	75
Humberside	31
Kent	138
Lancashire	89
Leicestershire	45
Lincolnshire	78
City of London	8
Merseyside	25
Metropolitan Police District	32
Norfolk	55
Northamptonshire	94
Northumbria	87
North Yorkshire	78
Nottinghamshire	86
South Yorkshire	48
Staffordshire	87
Suffolk	75
Surrey	93
Sussex	55
Thames Valley	100
Warwickshire	118
West Mercia	85
West Midlands	69
West Yorkshire	174
Wiltshire	63
Dyfed-Powys	182
Gwent	102
North Wales	44
South Wales	62
England and Wales	54

Burglary

Police force area	Percentage change
Avon and Somerset	97
Bedfordshire	92
Cambridgeshire	113
Cheshire	82
Cleveland	35
Cumbria	82
Derbyshire	132
Devon and Cornwall	80
Dorset	81
Durham	45
Essex	89
Gloucestershire	88
Greater Manchester	37
Hampshire	83
Hertfordshire	90
Humberside	70
Kent	117
Lancashire	57
Leicestershire	117
Lincolnshire	67
City of London	32
Merseyside	−13
Metropolitan Police District	37
Norfolk	65
Northamptonshire	100
Northumbria	45
North Yorkshire	70
Nottinghamshire	98
South Yorkshire	81
Staffordshire	87
Suffolk	43
Surrey	66
Sussex	83
Thames Valley	96
Warwickshire	123
West Mercia	86
West Midlands	59
West Yorkshire	99
Wiltshire	70
Dyfed-Powys	80
Gwent	104
North Wales	51
South Wales	53
England and Wales	62

Theft and handling stolen goods

Police force area	Percentage change
Avon and Somerset	59
Bedfordshire	49
Cambridgeshire	83
Cheshire	56
Cleveland	49
Cumbria	66
Derbyshire	88
Devon and Cornwall	46
Dorset	38
Durham	61
Essex	57
Gloucestershire	102
Greater Manchester	33

Police force area	Percentage change
Hampshire	67
Hertfordshire	52
Humberside	45
Kent	97
Lancashire	56
Leicestershire	82
Lincolnshire	37
City of London	14
Merseyside	17
Metropolitan Police District	25
Norfolk	62
Northamptonshire	46
Northumbria	13
North Yorkshire	69
Nottinghamshire	62
South Yorkshire	39
Staffordshire	59
Suffolk	54
Surrey	83
Sussex	70
Thames Valley	79
Warwickshire	80
West Mercia	74
West Midlands	30
West Yorkshire	70
Wiltshire	56
Dyfed-Powys	75
Gwent	66
North Wales	48
South Wales	31
England and Wales	47

Fraud and forgery

Police force area	Percentage change
Avon and Somerset	6
Bedfordshire	2
Cambridgeshire	58
Cheshire	29
Cleveland	−22
Cumbria	2
Derbyshire	32
Devon and Cornwall	3
Dorset	24
Durham	49
Essex	88
Gloucestershire	66
Greater Manchester	23
Hampshire	43
Hertfordshire	−39
Humberside	22
Kent	113
Lancashire	−30
Leicestershire	58
Lincolnshire	42
City of London	25
Merseyside	45
Metropolitan Police District	42
Norfolk	48
Northamptonshire	44
Northumbria	55
North Yorkshire	26
Nottinghamshire	60
South Yorkshire	30
Staffordshire	49
Suffolk	57
Surrey	66
Sussex	801
Thames Valley	97
Warwickshire	88
West Mercia	38
West Midlands	49
West Yorkshire	42
Wiltshire	101
Dyfed-Powys	−2
Gwent	5
North Wales	−25
South Wales	43
England and Wales	35

Criminal damage

Police force area	Percentage change
Avon and Somerset	36
Bedfordshire	28
Cambridgeshire	55
Cheshire	32
Cleveland	38
Cumbria	79
Derbyshire	65
Devon and Cornwall	43
Dorset	27
Durham	40
Essex	34
Gloucestershire	27
Greater Manchester	29
Hampshire	34
Hertfordshire	23
Humberside	30
Kent	75
Lancashire	18
Leicestershire	70
Lincolnshire	39
City of London	4
Merseyside	20
Metropolitan Police District	36
Norfolk	51
Northamptonshire	72
Northumbria	78
North Yorkshire	20
Nottinghamshire	35
South Yorkshire	41
Staffordshire	41
Suffolk	18
Surrey	45
Sussex	47
Thames Valley	68
Warwickshire	55
West Mercia	23
West Midlands	43
West Yorkshire	49
Wiltshire	30
Dyfed-Powys	49
Gwent	47
North Wales	35
South Wales	63
England and Wales	41

Other offences

Police force area	Percentage change
Avon and Somerset	15
Bedfordshire	−5
Cambridgeshire	94
Cheshire	123
Cleveland	68
Cumbria	113
Derbyshire	35
Devon and Cornwall	46
Dorset	54
Durham	104
Essex	36
Gloucestershire	132

Police force area	Percentage change
Greater Manchester	67
Hampshire	98
Hertfordshire	26
Humberside	101
Kent	64
Lancashire	55
Leicestershire	64
Lincolnshire	132
City of London	21
Merseyside	70
Metropolitan Police District	17
Norfolk	105
Northamptonshire	91
Northumbria	41
North Yorkshire	92
Nottinghamshire	20
South Yorkshire	128
Staffordshire	29
Suffolk	58
Surrey	36
Sussex	44
Thames Valley	49
Warwickshire	111
West Mercia	44
West Midlands	62
West Yorkshire	148
Wiltshire	167
Dyfed-Powys	19
Gwent	99
North Wales	64
South Wales	47
England and Wales	55

All offences

Police force area	Percentage change
Avon and Somerset	57
Bedfordshire	47
Cambridgeshire	82
Cheshire	55
Cleveland	39
Cumbria	66
Derbyshire	85
Devon and Cornwall	48
Dorset	14
Durham	49
Essex	56
Gloucestershire	85
Greater Manchester	32
Hampshire	62
Hertfordshire	44
Humberside	44
Kent	94
Lancashire	41
Leicestershire	83
Lincolnshire	43
City of London	16
Merseyside	11
Metropolitan Police District	31
Norfolk	58
Northamptonshire	57
Northumbria	33
North Yorkshire	58
Nottinghamshire	59
South Yorkshire	47
Staffordshire	58
Suffolk	44
Surrey	68
Sussex	66
Thames Valley	77
Warwickshire	83
West Mercia	61
West Midlands	40
West Yorkshire	70
Wiltshire	55
Dyfed-Powys	62
Gwent	62
North Wales	39
South Wales	41
England and Wales	47

Domestic Supervision Cases

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will provide funding for Relate to assist the probation service with domestic supervision cases.

Mr. Jack: I have no plans to give Relate direct funding in relation to supervision orders.

Derek Bentley

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what opportunity he gave to the individuals mentioned in paragraph 7 of his press statement of 1 October, on the case of the late Derek Bentley, to be interviewed or to provide any information supplementary to the material referred to.

Mr. Jack: All the people mentioned in paragraph 7 of the memorandum issued by my right hon. and learned Friend to accompany his statement on 1 October about his review of the case of the late Derek Bentley had the opportunity to submit further material about the case at any time; two persons involved in the preparation of the Thames TV programmes were interviewed by a senior officer in the Metropolitan police in the course of inquiries carried out at the request of my Department.

Burglary

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis on the burglary at the office of Ms. Tess Lawrence at 109 New Bond street, London W1, on 26 November; what documents were taken; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: On the evening of 26 November officers from West End Central CID were called to investigate a burglary at 109 New Bond street, the office of Ms. Tess Lawrence.

I understand from the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police that, among the items which were alleged to have been stolen was a copy of a sworn affidavit, draft letter, and various other papers.

Police at West End Central are continuing with their investigations into this incident.

Immigration

Mr. Gerrard: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will *(a)* make available to the members of Standing Committee A on the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Bill and *(b)* deposit in the Library the draft immigration rules discussed by the meeting of EC Ministers with responsibility for immigration held in London on 30 November;

(2) if he will *(a)* make available to the members of Standing Committee A on the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Bill and *(b)* deposit in the Library the agenda for the meeting of EC Ministers with responsibility for immigration held in London on 30 November.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Details of the conclusions of the EC Ministers' meeting were placed before the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Bill Committee and in the Library on 1 December. Details of the agenda for the meeting were placed in the Library on 30 November.

In addition, my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary will shortly be reporting to the House on the discussions and conclusions of EC Ministers responsible for immigration at their meeting on 30 November, and we will be making available those resolutions and recommendations which Ministers adopted.

May Inquiry

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the final report by Sir John May of his inquiry into the convictions of the Maguire family will be published; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: My right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General and I have received the final report by Sir John May of his inquiry into the case of the Maguire family and their co-defendants, who were convicted in 1976 of the unlawful possession of explosives. Those convictions were quashed by the Court of Appeal on 26 June 1991 following Sir John's interim report on the case and the decision of the then Home Secretary now Lord Waddington, to refer the whole case to the court under the provisions of section 17(1)(a) of the Criminal Appeal Act 1968.

This report is being published today in response to an order of the House for a return. We wish to thank Sir John and all those who assisted him for the care and thoroughness with which his inquiry has examined the circumstances of the convictions of the Maguires and their co-defendants and issues arising therefrom.

In his report Sir John reviews the basis of the decision to prosecute the Maguire family and their co-defendants. He then examines the role of Home Office Ministers and officials in the consideration of representations received over a number of years alleging that there had been a miscarriage of justice. Sir John has also re-examined some of the scientific issues which were dealt with in his interim report, although that re-examination has not caused him to amend his conclusions on the scientific aspects of the case.

It is a very serious matter whenever there is a miscarriage of justice and my right hon. and learned Friend and I are determined that the lessons from such cases should be learned and applied effectively.

Sir John concluded that the criteria which successive Home Secretaries have used to determine whether intervention in a conviction can be justified are sound in law and logic and provides no grounds for criticism. I welcome his further conclusion that, within the limits imposed by those criteria, the Home Office investigated the representations it received with care and thoroughness.

Since the time when those representations were considered, the Home Office has developed its approach to the consideration of alleged miscarriage of justice—in particular, by being ready to investigate the circumstances of a case more widely than the scope of representations made to it and, where there appear to be grounds for doing so, by being ready to initiate inquiries without having first received any representations. We are constantly seeking to apply the lessons to be learned from cases and we will continue to do so, taking account now of what Sir John has said in this report. It will continue to be our aim to give prompt, diligent and impartial consideration to all representations taking whatever action may be necessary including, where appropriate, the referral of a conviction to the Court of Appeal.

Sir John's report raises important questions about the part played by scientific evidence and by expert witnesses in the prosecution of offenders. Since the time when the Maguires and their co-defendants were prosecuted, there have been significant advances in procedures and quality control in the field of forensic science. Questions about the role of experts in criminal proceedings, their responsibilities to the court, prosecution, and defence, the relationship between the forensic science service and the police and access by accused persons to court evidence are being examined by the royal commission on criminal justice.

In his report Sir John May concludes that there should be some new machinery indpendent of the Home Office to consider whether alleged wrongful convictions should be referred to the Court of Appeal. In the oral evidence which I gave recently to the royal commission, I put forward the same proposal.

The commission, of which Sir John May is a member and to whose deliberations he is ideally placed to contribute the wider lessons of his inquiry, is expected to make its own report in June 1993.

Cephalopods

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he received the advice of the Animal Procedures Committee on whether cephalopods used in research should be protected by the controls of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The Government recently received the views of the Animal Procedures Committee. The committee has concluded that there is not yet definite scientific evidence to suggest that cephalopods can experience pain or suffering. However, a majority of the committee believes that there is sufficient doubt about one species of cephalopod, the common octopus or Octopus vulgaris, that the benefit of the doubt should be given to that species and that it should be protected by the 1986 Act.

The Government accept the majority view of the committee and agrees in principle that Octopus vulgaris should be included within the definition of protected animal for the purposes of the 1986 Act. Work is in hand to give effect to this change.

I have placed in the Library of the House a copy of the letter from Lord Nathan, chairman of the APC, to my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary giving details of the committee's considerations.

Blakenhurst Prison

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what contract has been let for the management of Blakenhurst prison; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: On 5 December 1991 my right hon. Friend the then Home Secretary announced that tenders would be sought for the management of a new 649 place prison at Blakenhurst then under construction near Redditch in Hereford and Worcester.

On 15 June 1992, invitations to tender for the management of Blakenhurst were issued to nine contractors.

Today I am pleased to announce that the contract has been awarded to UK Detention Services Limited. UKDS is a consortium comprising Corrections Corporation of America, John Mowlem & Company and Sir Robert McAlpine & Sons (Trade Investments) Ltd.

The success of UKDS follows detailed consideration of proposals submitted by seven potential contractors in response to the Home Office invitation to tender. There was keen competition to secure the contract and several excellent proposals were received. It was considered that UKDS had submitted well researched proposals underpinned by CCA's experience of running penal establishments in Australia and the USA, which offered value for money, and a high quality regime for prisoners. The quality of all proposals submitted has confirmed our view that the private sector has much to offer.

Blakenhurst is the first private sector local prison and is due to take its first prisoners in April 1993.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Travel Allowances

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Lord President of the Council if hon. Members are allowed to claim travelling allowances in respect of travel by bicycle.

Mr. Newton: No.

Members' Funds

Mr. Ray Powell: To ask the Lord President of the Council what consultations he had before 25 November with the managing trustees of the House of Commons Members' Fund on its role in relation to pensions and death benefits applicable to hon. Members and their dependants from 1 January 1993.

Mr. Newton: I spoke informally on 25 November to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) and my hon. Friend the Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern) in their capacities as chairman and member of the trustees of the parliamentary pensions fund: these discussions did not touch specifically on the Members' fund.

Mr. Ray Powell: To ask the Lord President of the Council what powers the House of Commons Members' Fund has to supplement a pensions benefit in cases where an hon. Member now in service dies or retires due to ill-health after 1 January 1993.

Mr. Newton: The trustees' powers to make discretionary payments are very wide indeed since the Ministerial and Other Pensions and Salaries Act 1991.

Mr. Ray Powell: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will make a statement on the circumstances in relation to which it may be necessary to consider the role of the House of Commons Members' Fund in relation to hon. Members' pensions in the very short term.

Mr. Newton: I am discussing pensions matters raised in the debate with the trustees of the parliamentary pensions fund shortly, and have nothing to add at the moment to my remarks at the end of the debate on 25 November.

LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Privy Council

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will conduct a review into the functions of the Privy Council; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I have no plans to review the functions of the Privy Council.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Lord President of the Council how many appeals from the decisions of professional disciplinary bodies have been heard by the Privy Council in each of the last three years; and if he will provide a breakdown by professional body and the number which are *(a)* successful and *(b)* unsuccessful.

Mr. Newton: The total number of appeals in each of the last three years has been:

1990	4
1991	2
1992	8 (to date)

The details are as follows:

General Dental Council

1990	1 successful, 1 unsuccessful
1991	None
1992	1 awaiting judgment

General Medical Council

1990	1 successful, 1 unsuccessful
1991	2 unsuccessful
1992	1 successful, 5 unsuccessful, 1 awaiting judgment

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Lord President of the Council what representations he has received seeking a review of the functions of the Privy Council in relation to its function in hearing appeals from the decisions of professional disciplinary bodies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I have received no such representations.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will make a statement on the functions of the Privy Council.

Mr. Newton: The Privy Council advises the sovereign on the making of Royal Proclamations and Orders in Council, and on the grant and amendment of royal charters. It approves certain rules made by statutory registration councils responsible for the medical and certain other professions, and makes instruments of government for higher education corporations. The Privy Council is also responsible for certain appointments to statutory councils and to the governing bodies of universities and colleges, and for the appointment of high sheriffs. The Judicial Committee of the Privy Council is the final court of appeal from courts of the United Kingdom dependencies and from courts of those independent Commonwealth countries which have retained the right of appeal. The committee also hears appeals from courts of the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man, and from the disciplinary and health committees of the medical and allied professions, together with some ecclesiastical appeals.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Lord President of the Council what plans he has to ensure that appeals heard by the Privy Council from persons resident in Scotland are held in accordance with the principles of Scots law; and if he will maake a statement.

Mr. Newton: It is for the Judicial Committee, on the basis of the facts and circumstances of each case, and having heard argument, to determine the relevant applicable legal principles.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Lord President of the Council how many appeals have been heard by the Privy Council from persons who have had their names erased from the medical register by the Professional Conduct Committee of the General Medical Council under the Medical Act 1983 in each of the last three years; and if he will provide a breakdown showing figures for *(a)* Scotland, *(b)* Wales, *(c)* England, *(d)* Northern Ireland and *(e)* the United Kingdom and the number which were (i) successful and (ii) unsuccessful.

Mr. Newton: The total number of appeals in each of the last three years has been:

1990	1
1991	1
1992	3 (to date)

The details are as follows:

Scotland
1990 None
1991 None
1992 1 awaiting judgment

Wales
1990, 1991 and 1992 None

England
1990 1 unsuccessful
1991 1 unsuccessful
1992 1 successful, 1 unsuccessful

Northern Ireland
1990, 1991 and 1992 None

SOCIAL SECURITY

Ozone Depletion

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he will introduce a leakage prevention programme for all refrigeration and air conditioning equipment owned and operated by his Department; if he will publish targets for reductions in leakages; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will implement a refrigerant recycling and reclaim policy covering all departmental equipment currently using chlorofluorocarbons and hydrochlorofluorocarbons; if he will publish targets for departmental reuse and recycling; if he will implement an equipment conversion and replacement programme for all departmental uses of CFCs and HCFCs; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: The Department will, by the end of 1992, have a green housekeeping strategy in place. It will include a commitment to reducing the use of ozone-depleting substances.

Steps which are being taken to reduce leakages of ozone-depleting refrigerants include regular checks, servicing and maintenance; compliance with professional codes of practice; and installation of leakage detection systems.

The information needed to set targets for reductions is not currently available.

Civil Servants

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many civil servants are currently employed by his Department *(a)* in London and *(b)* elsewhere.

Mr. Burt: There are 11,572 staff employed in London, and 80,413 staff employed elsewhere.

Notes:

1. Staff numbers relate to permanent staff as at 20 November 1992.
2. London has been defined as the London pay area.

Correspondence

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will reply to the letter of 2 November from the hon. Member for Walsall, North, acknowledged under reference S/3644/9, regarding the rule whereby women over 60 years are not allowed to pay the extra sum to qualify for a state pension.

Miss Widdecombe: I replied to the hon. Member's letter yesterday. The delay arose because it was necessary to contact both the Benefits and the Contributions Agencies regarding aspects of the individual case in question.

Child Support Agency

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate *(a)* the costs for the setting up of the Child Support Agency, *(b)* the running costs of the Child Support Agency in 1993-94, and for each of the financial years up to the year the agency will be fully operational, *(c)* the total number of staff the agency will employ, *(d)* how many staff will be located in the six regional centres, *(e)* how many child support officers the agency will employ and *(f)* how many of the child support officers will be located in the six regional centres.

Mr. Burt: The current estimates are:

(a) Total costs of setting up the agency—£146 million.
(b) Running costs of the agency—

£ million

Year	*Costs*
1993-94	94
1994-95	111
1995-96	117
1996-97	114
1997-98	116

(c) The agency will employ around 5,000 staff when fully operational.
(d) About 500 staff employed will be employed in each of the six Child Support Agency centres.
(e) The agency will employ around 1,500 child support officers.
(f) There will be about 250 child support officers located in each Child Support Agency centre.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many applications it is estimated that the Child Support Agency will deal with in each year from 1993-94 to the year in which it becomes fully operational.

Mr. Burt: The Child Support Agency will become fully operational during 1997-98. On current predictions, the number of applications per year until then are estimated to be as follows:

(thousands)

Year	*Applications*
1993-94	830
1994-95	570
1995-96	650
1996-97	430

Income Support

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many *(a)* male and *(b)* female (i) pensioners and (ii) people of working age were in receipt of income support at the latest available date; and what proportion they made of the relevant population in each case.

Mr. Burt: The information requested is in the table.

	Number of income support recipients	Percentage of relevant population in Great Britain
Male claimants over 65	270,000	7·64
Female claimants over 60	1,140,000	16·86
Total number of claimants who are of pensionable age	1,410,000	13·70
Male claimants of working age	1,390,000	6·34
Female claimants of working age	1,700,000	7·15
Total number of claimants who are of working age	3,080,000	6·76

Notes:

1. Figures are rounded to the nearest ten thousand
   Figures may not sum due to rounding
   Pensioners are defined as males over age 65 and females over age 60
2. Source: Income Support Statistics Annual Enquiry, May 1991
   Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, 1990

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people on income support had automatic deductions for *(a)* electricity, *(b)* gas, *(c)* social fund loan repayments, *(d)* rent arrears, *(e)* mortgage arrears, *(f)* water charges and *(g)* community charge arrears at the latest available date; and what were the average amounts for each type of deduction.

Mr. Burt: The latest available information showing the numbers of income support recipients with deductions is as follows:

	Numbers
Fuel	[1]305,000
Social fund loan repayments	[2]637,000
Rent arrears	[1]134,000
Mortgage interest	[3]461,000
Water charges	[1]147,000
Community charge arrears	[1]337,000

[1] These figures are based on Management Information Statistics (MIS) collected by the Benefits Agency at the end of August 1992. MIS figures do not distinguish between gas and electricity deductions or provide an average amount for each type of deduction. These figures have been rounded to the nearest thousand, are provisional and may be subject to amendments.

[2] It is not possible to exclude from the social fund figure repayments made by people not in receipt of income support.

[3] The figures for mortgage interest deductions is based on the number of direct payments made during November 1992. Recipients with more than one mortgage will be counted more than once.

The latest information available showing separate figures for gas and electricity deductions and the average amount of individual deductions is contained in table 10.1 of volume 1 of the "Department of Social Security Income Support Statistics Annual Statistical Enquiry, May 1991", a copy of which is in the Library.

Figures distinguishing between deductions for current charges and those for arrears are not available.

Prioritisation

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what guidance is given by his Department in respect of prioritisation within high priority groups for community care grants and budgeting loans.

Mr. Scott: National guidance on the priority to be accorded to social fund applications is contained in the social fund guide, a copy of which is in the Library.

Child Benefit

Ms. Eagle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate what the level of child benefit would be in 1993-94 if it had been fully uprated since 1979 and its structure had remained the same.

Mr. Burt: The rate of child benefit in April 1979 was £4 a week for each child. If this level had been uprated annually in line with the retail prices index, and with the normal rounding to the nearest five pence, it would become £9·55 at April 1993.

Invalidity Pension

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many women are in receipt of the housewives' non-contributory invalidity pension; and how many men were in receipt of non-contributory invalidity pension in each year since 1984.

Mr. Scott: Severe disablement allowance replaced the two non-contributory invalidity pensions from 29 November 1984. I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him on 23 October, at column *396*.

Income-related Benefits

Ms. Eagle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish the latest figures showing the take-up rates of income-related benefits.

Mr. Burt: Work on the statistics on the take-up of income-related benefits in 1989 has not yet been completed. The results will be published early in the new year.

Benefits Agency

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow can expect to receive an answer to his letter, dated 28 October, to Mr. Michael Bichard, chief executive, Benefits Agency, concerning his constituent, Mr. McMaster—Ref. DB103169.

Mr. Scott: Correspondence on operational issues is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Dr. Norman Godman, dated 2 December 1992:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security concerning correspondence about your constituent Mr. McMaster (Ref. DB103169).

I can confirm that decisions have now been made on Mr. McMaster's claims and these have been notified to him. I replied on 1 December to your letter of 28 October and this explains the position in greater detail.

I offer my sincere apologies to Mr. McMaster for the delay in dealing with his claims and for delay in responding to your correspondence. Clearly neither you nor your constituent have received the standard of service to which you have every

right to expect of the Agency. You will be aware from my letter of 19 October to all MPs of the problems we have encountered since the successful launch of the new benefits and the positive steps taken to improve the situation.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the Official Report. Copies are also being placed in the Library.

Disability Allowances

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will set up an emergency office in Stoke on Trent North to deal with outstanding disability living allowance and attendance allowance applications.

Mr. Scott: The administration of disability living allowance and attendance allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Ms. Joan Walley, dated 2 December 1992:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about setting up an emergency office in Stoke on Trent North to deal with Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and Attendance Allowance (AA) claims.

There are no plans to set up an emergency office in Stoke on Trent. New claims to DLA and AA are dealt with by ten Disability Benefit Centres (DBCs) around the country. All claims from the Stoke on Trent area are dealt with by the DBC in Birmingham.

My letter of 19 October to all MPs outlined the measures that were implemented to deal with the backlog of claims successfully. We are of course closely monitoring the effectiveness of the procedures and organisation in place for DLA. As with all new benefits, procedures and organisation will be reviewed and I can assure you that every opportunity will be taken to identify new initiatives to speed up processing times.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the Official Report. Copies are also being placed in the Library.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Plutonium and Uranium

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 23 October, *Official Report*, column 411, how many representations on plutonium exports his Department has received; and if he will indicate the nature of the representations from the *(a)* United Kingdom and *(b)* abroad.

Mr. Eggar: Over the past four months or so, my Department has received over 50 letters which mentioned, in most cases among other topics, the transfer of plutonium overseas. None of these letters came from abroad. Further representations may have been received by other Departments.

The letters came either direct from members of the public or through hon. Members and raised the possible misuse of the plutonium and its safe transport. The replies explained that civil plutonium is transferred overseas only subject to the application of safeguards and on receipt of assurances covering peaceful use, physical protection and controls on re-transfer.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what quantities of plutonium are contained in *(a)* nuclear fuel in reactors and *(b)* spent nuclear fuel in one-site cooling ponds at reactor sites in England and Wales; and what information on this plutonium his Department is required to report to the Euratom safeguards authorities.

Mr. Eggar: The information requested by the hon. Member is given in the annual plutonium figures published by my Department. Operators meet the requirements of the Euratom safeguards authorities by supplying monthly inventory change reports. These reports, which are sent via my Department's safeguards office, include any shipments off site of their irradiated fuel. Reports on such shipments contain estimates of the plutonium content of the fuel.

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how long plutonium and depleted uranium is permitted to be stored before these substances can no longer be used as fuel for nuclear power stations without further processing.

Mr. Eggar: The properties of uranium, whether natural, depleted or recovered from reprocessing, do not vary significantly over time. In the case of plutonium, the material changes its characteristics over time, mainly as a result of the formation of americium 241. The rate of this change depends on the burn-up of the fuel and the cooling period before reprocessing. The acceptable levels of americium when re-cycling plutonium are a commercial matter for the manufacturer of the recycled fuel and the operator of the reactor in which it will be used.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when current supplies of uranium will be depleted; and if he will make a statement on the future of the United Kingdom's energy resources.

Mr. Eggar: The United Kingdom has no uranium resources which could be extracted economically under current world market conditions. The Government's aims are to promote the economic development of our indigenous energy resources and to ensure that the United Kingdom's energy needs are met cost-effectively.

Ozone Depletion

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) if he will implement a refrigerant recycling and reclaim policy covering all departmental equipment currently using chlorofluorocarbons and hydrochlorofluorocarbons; if he will publish targets for departmental reuse and recycling; if he will implement an equipment conversion and replacement programme for all departmental uses of CFCs and HCFCs; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will introduce a leakage prevention programme for all refrigeration and air conditioning equipment owned and operated by his Department; if he will publish targets for reductions in leakages; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: My Department is committed to eliminating the use of ozone-depleting substances on its estate. As an interim measure, the Department has established policies for the use and disposal of such substances which are designed to minimise releases to atmosphere.

Control procedures have been introduced to minimise leakages, including arrangements for the regular monitoring and servicing of refrigerant and air conditioning

systems containing ozone-depleting substances. When discharging equipment containing ozone-depleting substances, every effort is made to recover CFCs/HCFCs rather than release them to atmosphere. Wherever practicable, ozone-depleting substances are recycled in order to minimise purchases of new supplies.

Waste to Energy

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make it his policy to halt any approvals for waste to energy incinerators pending the outcome of the Select Committee inquiry into the pit closure programme.

Mr. Eggar: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Tipping) on 30 November, at column *33*.

Fossil Fuel Levy and Renewable Energy

Mr. Cash: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) how much has been levied under the fossil fuel levy in 1990-91 and 1991-92;

(2) what proportion of the amounts levied has been used under the NFFO for renewable energy schemes; and what value this represented in 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Mr. Eggar: The fossil fuel levy raised £1,175 million in 1990-91,and £1,324 million in 1991-92. The proportion going to renewables was about 0·5 per cent. (£6 million) in 1990-91, and 1 per cent (£15 million) in 1991-92.

Mr. Cash: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what is his latest assessment of the proportion and value of the fossil fuel levy that will be used for renewable energy schemes over the entire life of its operation until December 1998; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what assumptions were made about the proportion and value of the fossil fuel levy that would be used for renewable energy schemes over the entire life of its operation until December 1998.

Mr. Eggar: The proportion of levy receipts going to renewables is set to rise through the 1990s. The exact amounts will depend on a number of factors, including the pool price and the number of projects coming forward under the non-fossil fuel obligation.

Electricity

Mr. Cash: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proportion of the electricity bought from the pool by RECs was from renewable energy sources in 1990-91 and 1991-92; how many megawatts this represented; and what are the RECs' obligations under the NFFO in comparable terms.

Mr. Eggar: The great majority of renewables-sourced electricity in the United Kingdom is not traded through the pool. In 1990-91 and 1991-92 about 2 per cent. of electricity generated in the United Kingdom came from renewable energy sources. This represented the output from, respectively, about 1500MW and 1600MW of capacity. The aggregate obligation on the regional electricity companies to contract for electricity from renewable sources eventually builds up to 102MW under the 1990 order and 457MW under the 1991 order. At the end of 1990-91 the obligation was 29MW, and at the end of 1991-92 it was 37MW.

Gas

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether his review of energy policy will address the consequences for long-term gas supplies and gas prices caused by purchasing policies of the regional electricity companies; and what representations he received on this aspect of policy during 1992.

Mr. Eggar: The terms of reference of the Government's coal review were set out in the answer which the President of the Board of Trade gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Waveney (Mr. Porter) on 26 October, at columns 522-23. Estimates of likely reserves of gas and the scale of gas-fired power generation in the United Kingdom are being considered in the context of the review, as are the relative costs of gas and coal-fired power generation.

Excluding evidence submitted to the coal review, by the end of November 1992, Ministers had received around 20 representations on these issues.

EC Industry Council

Mr. Hague: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the outcome of the discussions which took place in the EC Industry Council on 24 November.

Mr. Heseltine: I chaired the meeting of the Industry Council in Brussels on 24 November. My right hon. Friend the Minister for Industry represented the United Kingdom.

From the United Kingdom point of view, this was a highly successful Council which met all our objectives. In particular, we secured adoption of two resolutions: one on deregulation which highlights the importance of the Commission's impact assessment system in helping to reduce the burdens of EC legislation on industry and will ensure regular scrutiny and review of the Community's record on deregulation; and one which underlines the importance of dialogue with business on the best way of achieving environmental objectives and ties the Commission to assess the costs and benefits of different means of achieving these objectives.

We also succeeded in securing satisfactory Council conclusions on the future of the European Coal and Steel Community which call for substantial reductions in the levy on coal and steel producers.

A discussion of the Commission's annual report on competition policy resulted in Presidency conclusions supporting the vigorous and even-handed application of EC competition policy.

The main debate in the Council centred on proposals for aid to the Spanish steel industry. The Council was unable to approve the derogations from the steel aids code required to accommodate the Spanish proposals. The Council decided that further work was needed and the issue should be reconsidered under the Danish Presidency. The Council discussed recent Commission ideas on restructuring the steel industry, which will also need further consideration under the next Presidency.

Other items briefly discussed included future policy on small and medium-sized enterprises and a Commission communication on the non-energy mining industry.

Telecommunications Council

Mr. Hague: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Telecommunications Council on 19 November.

Mr. Leigh: The Council continued its discussion, begun at the last Council meeting in June, of the European Commission's proposal for a Council decision on an action plan for the introduction of advanced television services in Europe. The action plan proposes a subsidy of up to 850 mecu to help accelerate the development of the market for widescreen and high-definition television services. Agreement was reached on the text of the action plan, subject to a reservation by one member state and consideration of amendments proposed by the European Parliament. However, member states were unable to reach agreement on funding. The United Kingdom opposed the sume of 850 mecu as unacceptably high and questioned the justification for any subsidy. Several other member states could not give agreement to funding while the Community's overall financial perspectives remain to be settled. A number of member states have sought a further meeting of the Telecommunications Council on this issue before the end of the year, but the possibility of further progress on this question will be clearer after the Heads of Government summit in Edinburgh.

The Council also discussed the Commission's review of the situation in the Community telecommunications sector, which considers further liberalisation of the European telecommunications market. It agreed a resolution calling upon the Commission, to report to the next Telecommunications Council, currently scheduled for 10 May 1993, on the results of its consultations on the review document.

Presidency proposals on the process and time scale for taking forward the work on the Commission's Green Paper on postal services, once the present consultation period has ended, were also adopted. The Commission agreed to prepare for the next Council, a summary of the results of the consultation period, the main conclusions which the Commission draw from the consultations and a detailed and signposted timetable for subsequently moving forward to draft directives. The Council also agreed on the urgent need to seek reform of arrangements at both European and global level under which postal administrations account with each other for imbalances in mail flows between them.

The Council adopted resolutions on frequencies and numbering, setting out a framework for future Community action in both these fields. It also reviewed progress on the ONP voice telephony directive and discussed trans-European networks and a Commission communication on the European telecommunications equipment industry.

British Coal Corporation

Mr. Hague: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the final response from the British Coal Corporation concerning the 1989 report of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission into the corporation's investment programme.

Mr. Eggar: British Coal has prepared a comprehensive final response to the 1989 report into the corporation's investment programme, which has now been placed in the Library of the House. Many of the issues mentioned in the response, such as the market prospects for coal and the competitiveness of British Coal as an organisation, will be examined in the coal review which was announced in October.

Argentina

Mr. Shersby: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the value of imports from Argentina for the most recent 12 month period for which figures are available; and what is the value of British exports for the same period.

Mr. Needham: The value of imports from Argentina for the 12 months ended September 1992 was £122·3 million. The value of British exports to Argentina was £103·4 million for the same period.

Collieries (Redundancy Applications)

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will place in the Library regularly updated details of how many people are applying for redundancy at each of the 31 collieries originally planned for closure; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 1 December 1992]:* This is a matter for British Coal.

SCOTLAND

Food Safety

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many inspections of food premises have been carried out by each local authority in Scotland under the Food Safety Act 1990; and how many of those inspections have resulted in *(a)* the issuing of improvement and emergency prohibition notices, *(b)* informal warnings letters or *(c)* the voluntary closure of companies.

Sir Hector Monro: At present information is available only for 1991. This is given in the table[1]:

Enforcement authority	*Number of inspections of food premises*[2]	*Number of establishments subject to*		
		Issue of improvement and emergency prohibition notices	*Written warnings*	*Closures (voluntary and compulsory)*
Aberdeen City	944	41	191	—
Angus	1,676	4	189	2
Annandale and Eskdale	664	1	12	1
Argyll and Bute	968	—	371	—
Badenoch and Strathspey	212	—	83	—
Banff and Buchan[3]	2,055	—	181	—

Enforcement authority	Number of inspections of food premises[2]	Number of establishments subject to Issue of improvement and emergency prohibition notices	Written warnings	Closures (voluntary and compulsory)
Bearsden and Milngavie	156	2	6	—
Berwickshire[3]	178	1	26	—
Caithness[3]	135	2	38	—
Clackmannan[3]	390	31	110	—
Clydebank	697	6	32	—
Clydesdale[3]	481	1	—	—
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth[3]	62	22	23	—
Cumnock and Doon Valley[3]	741	10	411	—
Cunninghame[3]	995	—	—	—
Dumbarton[3]	607	7	15	1
Dundee City[3]	1,570	—	581	—
Dunfermline	1,119	55	—	—
East Kilbride	482	—	413	—
East Lothian	820	12	325	—
Eastwood	284	—	20	—
Edinburgh City[3]	5,374	120	892	3
Ettrick and Lauderdale	409	2	101	—
Falkirk	3,396	16	442	—
Glasgow City	9,670	259	490	7
Gordon[3]	394	3	246	—
Hamilton	987	24	190	—
Inverclyde	645	6	431	—
Inverness[3]	510	—	236	—
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	755	—	209	—
Kincardine and Deeside	317	—	103	—
Kirkcaldy[3]	1,940	9	631	1
Kyle and Carrick[3]	1,338	10	309	3
Lochaber	229	22	11	—
Midlothian[3]	240	16	65	—
Monklands	1,222	40	463	2
Moray[3]	622	—	217	—
Motherwell[3]	1,298	2	458	—
Nairn[3]	111	—	—	—
Nithsdale[3]	472	—	68	—
North East Fife[3]	509	12	275	—
Orkney[3]	92	—	48	—
Perth and Kinross	1,281	11	661	—
Renfrew	2,671	72	3	—
Ross and Cromarty	703	1	16	4
Roxburgh[3]	199	25	64	4
Shetland[3]	258	—	44	—
Skye and Lochalsh[3]	85	—	55	—
Stewartry[3]	336	17	195	—
Stirling[3]	578	6	17	—
Strathkelvin	769	29	11	—
Sutherland[3]	474	3	19	3
Tweeddale	120	—	39	—
West Lothian[3]	597	53	53	—
Western Isles[3]	104	—	—	—
Wigtown[3]	467	1	54	—

[1] These statistics cover work carried out by local authorities under the Food Safety Act 1990, regulations made under it and the Official Control of Foodstuffs Directive. They exclude:
meat hygiene inspections carried out under EC veterinary legislation;
inspections carried out by the Wine Standards Board under EC wine legislation.

[2] The number of food hygiene and food standards inspections covers:
inspection of premises;
inspection of equipment including cleaning and maintenance equipment;
inspection of process or operational procedure;
inspection of the hygiene or practices of personnel;
inspection of food (including ingredients, additives and products at any stage of manufacture) or contact materials;
inspection of labels, labelling equipment and advertising matter and/or inspection of records.
These figures exclude all other visits, eg revisits to check compliance with notices, sampling visits and visits to follow up complaints.

[3] Excluded figures for first quarter of 1991. This was only required on a voluntary basis.

University Students

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many Scots were attending Scottish universities; and how many students were attending Scottish universities from other parts of the United Kingdom in each year since session 1979-80; and if he will list the regions that all students attending Scottish universities were from in each year since session 1979-80.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 13 November 1992]:* The information requested on students attending the eight traditional Scottish universities in the academic years 1979-80 to 1990-91 is given in the tables.

Students attending Scottish universities
Full-time postgraduate

Domicile of student	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
Total (all domiciles)	4,716	4,758	4,871	4,976	5,261	5,626	6,201	6,689	6,762	6,910	7,387	7,625	8,539
Scotland	2,053	2,299	2,467	2,416	2,522	2,637	2,720	2,705	2,726	2,761	2,862	2,976	3,388
Borders	22	24	29	29	30	44	45	41	23	40	41	35	54
Central	107	122	137	131	134	128	146	159	144	124	116	141	129
Dumfries and Galloway	32	33	32	28	40	45	49	46	51	43	61	38	52
Fife	126	133	132	130	143	156	170	167	156	145	146	159	189
Grampian	185	209	234	207	215	214	203	228	270	247	247	252	349
Highland	44	52	57	49	58	67	62	71	71	75	76	60	70
Lothian	512	536	544	537	515	528	557	539	540	559	596	624	711
Strathclyde	847	999	1,072	1,093	1,165	1,204	1,249	1,212	1,231	1,289	1,315	1,374	1,522
Tayside	165	178	214	190	189	214	219	210	219	208	233	255	271
Islands	13	13	16	22	33	32	20	32	21	31	31	36	41
Not known	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	2	0
Other United Kingdom	884	851	829	909	1,003	1,088	1,197	1,299	1,306	1,390	1,494	1,539	1,848
England	767	740	726	787	881	963	1,077	1,172	1,160	1,220	1,320	1,358	1,649
Wales	30	33	42	46	48	51	49	45	49	72	68	62	71
Northern Ireland	85	77	61	76	72	74	69	81	96	98	106	119	128
United Kingdom not known	2	1	0	0	2	0	2	1	1	0	0	0	0
Overseas	1,779	1,608	1,575	1,650	1,736	1,901	2,284	2,685	2,730	2,759	3,031	3,110	3,303

Full-time undergraduate

Domicile of student	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
Total (all domiciles)	38,568	39,688	40,081	39,824	39,588	39,647	40,008	40,541	41,579	42,869	44,966	46,417	49,989
Scotland	29,536	30,198	30,412	29,904	29,129	28,715	27,982	27,744	28,324	29,128	30,045	30,300	31,741
Borders	412	450	495	478	505	513	483	496	489	514	556	550	599
Central	1,477	1,557	1,588	1,589	1,563	1,539	1,545	1,576	1,580	1,629	1,698	1,702	1,783
Dumfries and Galloway	795	835	823	837	799	752	745	719	724	752	764	752	752
Fife	1,785	1,812	1,912	1,861	1,879	1,793	1,710	1,683	1,768	1,823	1,916	1,897	2,028
Grampian	2,324	2,343	2,325	2,243	2,206	2,168	2,132	2,160	2,315	2,444	2,729	2,902	3,099
Highland	1,039	1,041	1,036	1,016	1,009	1,009	995	974	1,009	1,034	1,085	1,111	1,180
Lothian	4,561	4,713	4,717	4,657	4,436	4,375	4,212	4,138	4,294	4,515	4,665	4,696	4,978
Strathclyde	14,549	14,741	14,836	14,544	14,143	13,997	13,632	13,446	13,548	13,718	13,888	13,860	14,271
Tayside	2,292	2,397	2,357	2,359	2,284	2,252	2,202	2,191	2,208	2,287	2,329	2,429	2,627
Islands	292	306	321	320	305	317	326	360	388	411	414	399	423
Not known	10	3	2	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	2	1
Other United Kingdom	6,535	7,071	7,452	7,763	7,992	8,223	8,724	9,196	9,670	10,103	10,824	11,634	13,425
England	5,761	6,206	6,504	6,780	6,902	7,130	7,495	7,901	8,265	8,516	9,011	9,687	11,200
Wales	147	165	162	163	176	176	201	198	214	233	258	289	295
Northern Ireland	627	700	786	819	914	916	1,027	1,096	1,190	1,353	1,555	1,658	1,930
United Kingdom not known	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0
Overseas	2,497	2,419	2,217	2,157	2,467	2,709	3,302	3,601	3,585	3,638	4,097	4,483	4,823

Total full-time students

Domicile of student	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
Total (all domiciles)	43,284	44,446	44,952	44,799	44,849	45,273	46,209	47,230	48,341	49,779	52,353	54,042	58,528
Scotland	31,589	32,497	32,879	32,320	31,651	31,352	30,702	30,449	31,050	31,889	32,907	33,276	35,129
Borders	434	474	524	507	535	557	528	537	512	554	597	585	653
Central	1,584	1,679	1,725	1,720	1,697	1,667	1,691	1,735	1,724	1,753	1,814	1,843	1,912
Dumfries and Galloway	827	868	855	865	839	797	794	765	775	795	825	790	804
Fife	1,911	1,945	2,044	1,991	2,022	1,949	1,880	1,850	1,924	1,968	2,062	2,056	2,217
Grampian	2,509	2,552	2,559	2,450	2,421	2,382	2,335	2,388	2,585	2,691	2,976	3,154	3,448
Highland	1,083	1,093	1,093	1,065	1,067	1,076	1,057	1,045	1,080	1,109	1,161	1,171	1,250
Lothian	5,073	5,249	5,261	5,194	4,951	4,903	4,769	4,677	4,834	5,074	5,261	5,320	5,689
Strathclyde	15,396	15,740	15,908	15,637	15,308	15,201	14,881	14,658	14,779	15,007	15,203	15,234	15,793

Domicile of student	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
Tayside	2,457	2,575	2,571	2,549	2,473	2,466	2,421	2,401	2,427	2,495	2,562	2,684	2,898
Islands	305	319	337	342	338	349	346	392	409	442	445	435	464
Not known	10	3	2	0	0	5	0	1	1	1	1	4	1
Other United Kingdom	7,419	7,922	8,281	8,672	8,995	9,311	9,921	10,495	10,976	11,493	12,318	13,173	15,273
England	6,528	6,946	7,230	7,567	7,783	8,093	8,572	9,073	9,425	9,736	10,331	11,045	12,849
Wales	177	198	204	209	224	227	250	243	263	305	326	351	366
Northern Ireland	712	777	847	895	986	990	1,096	1,177	1,286	1,451	1,661	1,777	2,058
United Kingdom not known	2	1	0	1	2	1	3	2	2	1	0	0	0
Overseas	4,276	4,027	3,792	3,807	4,203	4,610	5,586	6,286	6,315	6,397	7,128	7,593	8,126

Part-time postgraduate

Domicile of student	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
Total (all domiciles)	2,964	3,084	3,161	3,158	3,394	3,688	3,585	4,142	4,122	4,480	4,902	5,134	5,549
Scotland	2,327	2,394	2,457	2,447	2,653	2,817	2,916	3,308	3,265	3,490	3,827	3,890	4,162
Borders	21	32	26	22	21	15	18	26	32	44	47	46	44
Central	184	180	172	159	163	167	163	187	185	194	186	169	180
Dumfries and Galloway	18	15	14	22	22	30	22	27	30	31	41	44	40
Fife	160	146	134	164	157	159	172	179	163	173	212	228	227
Grampian	147	148	161	146	183	187	195	265	253	280	353	361	409
Highland	14	17	17	25	25	33	33	30	33	39	49	66	58
Lothian	498	586	621	649	717	768	698	791	780	891	973	996	1,023
Strathclyde	1,087	1,089	1,127	1,085	1,216	1,295	1,440	1,591	1,560	1,608	1,715	1,697	1,879
Tayside	191	179	179	172	146	154	161	195	210	212	234	263	286
Islands	7	2	6	3	3	9	14	17	19	18	17	20	16
Not known	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other United Kingdom	263	289	305	345	350	397	370	440	475	531	567	606	568
England	236	256	277	308	313	357	332	391	433	487	519	558	534
Wales	9	7	8	12	14	19	11	17	15	18	16	15	13
Northern Ireland	17	26	18	25	23	21	24	28	24	25	30	32	21
United Kingdom not known	1	0	2	0	0	0	3	4	3	1	2	1	0
Overseas	374	401	399	364	391	374	299	394	382	459	508	638	819

Part-time undergraduate

Domicile of student	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
Total (all domiciles)	650	732	998	1,260	1,546	1,845	2,033	2,285	2,194	1,835	1,674	1,277	1,299
Scotland	525	558	807	1,061	1,321	1,643	1,826	2,080	1,938	1,618	1,497	1,128	1,140
Borders	2	2	8	8	7	8	9	29	12	22	18	15	7
Central	29	61	93	108	131	125	150	178	152	148	126	106	159
Dumfries and Galloway	10	11	21	27	33	35	37	42	39	30	22	11	11
Fife	17	9	25	33	30	38	45	50	45	38	45	35	49
Grampian	9	8	21	34	49	141	177	248	270	252	257	244	231
Highland	8	8	11	20	23	32	27	29	52	42	51	28	16
Lothian	89	77	111	129	149	137	184	197	175	171	178	116	119
Strathclyde	347	365	480	650	828	1,053	1,111	1,214	1,107	818	686	519	471
Tayside	9	8	26	40	57	58	70	74	68	66	97	50	71
Islands	5	8	11	12	14	16	16	17	16	12	15	2	5
Not known	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	19	2	2	1
Other United Kingdom	32	18	43	57	69	78	93	104	128	103	75	42	46
England	26	15	39	50	61	71	86	89	110	86	64	33	39
Wales	1	0	0	0	0	3	3	7	5	3	4	1	3
Northern Ireland	5	3	4	7	8	4	4	8	13	14	7	7	4
United Kingdom not known	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Overseas	93	156	148	142	156	124	114	101	128	114	102	107	113

Total part-time students

Domicile of student	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*
Total (all domiciles)	3,614	3,816	4,159	4,416	4,940	5,433	5,618	6,427	6,316	6,315	6,576	6,411	6,848
Scotland	2,852	2,952	3,264	3,508	3,974	4,460	4,742	5,388	5,203	5,108	5,324	5,018	5,302
Borders	23	34	34	30	29	23	27	55	44	66	65	61	51
Central	213	241	265	267	294	292	313	365	337	342	312	275	339
Dumfries and Galloway	28	26	35	49	55	65	59	69	69	61	63	55	51
Fife	177	155	159	197	187	197	217	229	208	211	257	263	276
Grampian	156	156	182	180	232	328	372	513	523	532	610	605	640
Highland	22	25	28	45	48	65	60	59	85	81	100	94	74
Lothian	587	663	732	778	866	905	882	988	955	1,062	1,151	1,112	1,142
Strathclyde	1,434	1,454	1,607	1,735	2,044	2,348	2,551	2,805	2,667	2,426	2,401	2,216	2,350
Tayside	200	187	205	212	203	212	231	269	278	278	331	313	357
Islands	12	10	17	15	17	25	30	34	35	30	32	22	21
Not known	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	19	2	2	1
Other United Kingdom	295	307	348	402	419	475	463	544	603	634	642	648	614
England	262	271	316	358	374	428	418	480	543	573	583	591	573
Wales	10	7	8	12	14	22	14	24	20	21	20	16	16
Northern Ireland	22	29	22	32	31	25	28	36	37	39	37	39	25
United Kingdom not known	1	0	2	0	0	0	3	4	3	1	2	2	0
Overseas	467	557	547	506	547	498	413	495	510	573	610	745	932

Grand total students

Domicile of student	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*
Total (all domiciles)	46,898	48,262	49,111	49,215	49,789	50,706	51,827	53,657	54,657	56,094	58,929	60,453	65,376
Scotland	34,441	35,449	36,143	35,828	35,625	35,812	35,444	35,837	36,253	36,997	38,231	38,294	40,431
Borders	457	508	558	537	563	580	555	592	556	620	662	646	704
Central	1,797	1,920	1,990	1,987	1,991	1,959	2,004	2,100	2,061	2,095	2,126	2,118	2,251
Dumfries and Galloway	855	894	890	914	894	862	953	834	844	856	888	845	855
Fife	2,088	2,100	2,203	2,188	2,209	2,146	2,097	2,079	2,132	2,179	2,319	2,319	2,493
Grampian	2,665	2,708	2,741	2,630	2,653	2,710	2,707	2,901	3,108	3,223	3,586	3,759	4,088
Highland	1,105	1,118	1,121	1,110	1,115	1,141	1,117	1,104	1,165	1,190	1,261	1,265	1,324
Lothian	5,660	5,912	5,993	5,972	5,817	5,808	5,651	5,665	5,789	6,136	6,412	6,432	6,831
Strathclyde	16,830	17,194	17,515	17,372	17,352	17,549	17,432	17,463	17,446	17,433	17,604	17,450	18,143
Tayside	2,657	2,762	2,776	2,761	2,676	2,678	2,652	2,670	2,705	2,773	2,893	2,997	3,255
Islands	317	329	354	357	355	374	376	426	444	472	477	457	485
Not known	10	4	2	0	0	5	0	3	3	20	3	6	2
Other United Kingdom	7,714	8,229	8,629	9,074	9,414	9,786	10,384	11,039	11,579	12,127	12,960	13,821	15,887
England	6,790	7,217	7,546	7,925	9,157	8,521	8,990	9,553	9,988	10,309	10,914	11,636	13,422
Wales	187	205	212	221	238	249	264	267	283	326	346	367	382
Northern Ireland	734	806	869	927	1,017	1,015	1,124	1,213	1,323	1,490	1,698	1,816	2,083
United Kingdom not known	3	1	2	1	2	1	6	6	5	2	2	2	0
Overseas	4,743	4,584	4,339	4,313	4,750	5,108	5,999	6,781	6,825	6,970	7,738	8,338	9,058

Small Businesses

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many small businesses have gone out of business in Scotland in each of the last five years.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 17 November 1992]:* Comprehensive information on all types of businesses is not available. The figures in the table refer to liquidations of limited companies registered in Scotland, but it is not possible separately to identify those company liquidations involving small firms.

	Number of companies
1987	636
1988	651
1989	674
1990	689
1991	848

Source: Companies house.

Disabled Persons' Housing

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many payments were made by Scottish Homes for adaptations to houses for disabled persons in each region in each month since May.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 17 November 1992]:* This information is not held by the Scottish Office Environment Department. I shall ask the chairman of Scottish Homes to write to the hon. Member.

Public Conveniences

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what advice is given to *(a)* Scot Rail and *(b)* local authorities on the proper provision of public conveniences suitable for (i) disabled and elderly people, (ii) public transport users and (iii) those with children; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 17 November 1992]:* Requirements and standards for sanitary facilities, including access, are given in the Technical Standards for Compliance with the Building Standards (Scotland) Regulations 1990. These apply to all buildings open to the public including railway stations and other transport facilities. Guidance on the design of public conveniences with facilities for the disabled was given by the Scottish Office to local authorities in SDD circular No. 53/68.

Police (Court Appearances)

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many man hours were used by police officers attending courts in *(a)* Dundee and *(b)* Scotland in each of the past five years for which figures are available; and what proportion of total police manpower hours this represented in each year.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 19 November 1992]:* This information is not recorded.

Legal Proceedings

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many defendants appeared before the High Court on criminal charges in each of the past three years; how many were *(a)* convicted and *(b)* acquitted; how many of those acquitted had pleaded guilty in the first instance; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 2 December 1992]:* The particular information requested is not held centrally. The number of indictments which called in the High Court in each of the past three years, and to the end of October 1992, is as follows:

	Number
1989	773
1990	795
1991	833
1992	786

The information requested on disposals is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many charges were *(a)* brought and *(b)* withdrawn by the Procurator Fiscal in each sheriffdom in each of the last three years in (i) the district court and (ii) the sheriff court; how many guilty pleas were tendered to the original charges; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 2 December 1992]:* The information requested is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Monkfish

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what policy he has for raising the precautionary total allowable catch on monkfish fishing west of 4° w; and if he will make a statement on fishing access to deep water fisheries.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 1 December 1992]:* Scientific studies of west of Scotland anglerfish have been conducted in response to representations from the industry for an increase in total allowable catch. Unfortunately the results suggest that the stock is already fully exploited.

The Government view the development of deep water fisheries as a useful extension of the fishing opportunities available to our fleet.

Haddock

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received from the fishing community about the accuracy of the calculations used to determine the 1992 North sea haddock total allowable catch.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 1 December 1992]:* I have received a number of representations from the industry about the possibility of increasing the North sea haddock total allowable catch for this year. Scientific surveys conducted during 1992 confirmed the estimates of stock size on which the TAC was set.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made of the accuracy of the methodology used to arrive at the 1992 haddock North sea total allowable catch; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 1 December 1992]:* The North sea haddock total allowable catch was set on the basis of the stock assessment and of scientific advice on the need for a 30 per cent. reduction from the 1989 level of fishing effort. This advice was based on the standard methodology employed for stock assessment and the reduction in effort was considered necessary in order to reduce the very high level of mortality of the stock.

Marine Mammals

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many reports regarding incidental catches of marine mammals by fishermen his fisheries officers have received to date under the scheme set up to monitor the extent of this interaction.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 1 December 1992]:* Since the voluntary report scheme was introduced in

January 1992, there have been three confirmed reports of incidental capture of a marine mammal in Scottish waters. These were two porpoises and one dolphin. The dolphin was successfully released.

New Town Housing Stocks

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he proposes to announce the financial arrangements for the transfer of new town housing stocks.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 1 December 1992]:* The draft guidance was issued for consultation on 27 November and comments are due to be submitted by 31 January 1993. A copy has been sent to the hon. Member.

Rural Employment

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give an estimate of the effect on job numbers in rural Scotland of *(a)* the current common agricultural policy reform package and *(b)* further changes arising from the GATT agreement; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 2 December 1992]:* The impact of the CAP measures agreed in May on employment in rural Scotland will depend on the response of the farming community over the next few years. The draft GATT settlement is consonant with those reform measures and should therefore have no separate employment impact.

Voluntary Organisations

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when the Leukaemia and Cancer Children's Fund applied for a special grant of £35,000 for the Millerfield family centre; when it was paid; what criteria he applied in considering this application; which fund was the source of the grant; and if he will list the grants given in 1992 from the same source.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 2 December 1992]:* The Leukaemia and Cancer Children's Fund applied to the Scottish Office Home and Health Department in May this year for funding under the scheme of grants operated under section 16B of the National Health Service (Scotland) Act 1978. The grant was paid in June this year to meet the organisation's immediate funding difficulties. As with all such applications, the criteria employed were those set out in statute and in the memorandum of guidance approved by Her Majesty's Treasury which applies to the scheme. The possibility of assisting the fund in 1993-94 is still under consideration. Expenditure on the section 16B grant scheme is borne on vote 12 subhead K6(1). Total expenditure on that sub-programme in the current financial year will amount to some £300,000, and the following bodies will benefit:

Action on Smoking and Health (Scotland)
Age Concern Scotland
ACET—AIDS Care and Education Training
Alzheimers Scotland
Bell's Palsy Self-Help Group
Breast Care and Mastectomy Association
British Association of Immediate Care Schemes
British Fluoridation Society
Brook Advisory Centre
Cancerlink
Community Service Volunteers
Dementia Services Department Centre
Disability Scotland
Enuresis Resource and Information Centre
Epilepsy Association
Family Planning Association
Hypogammaglobulinaemia Society
Leukaemia and Cancer Children's Fund
Medical Commission on Accident Prevention
Muscular Dystrophy Group
National AIDS Trust
National Association for the Childless
National Association for the Welfare of Children in Hospital
National Childbirth Trust
National Family Planning Group
National Schizophrenia Fellowship
Play Matters
Play in Scottish Hospitals
Red Cross Society
RSPCC—Overnewton Centre
Scottish AIDS Monitor
Scottish Association for Mental Health
Scottish Catholic Marriage Advisory Council
Scottish Child and Family Alliance
Scottish Cot Death Trust
Scottish Council on Alcohol
Scottish Drugs Forum
Scottish Heart and Arterial Risk Prevention Group
Scottish Huntington's Association
Scottish Motor Neurone Disease Association
Scottish National Blood Transfusion Association
Scottish Partnership Agency for Palliative and Cancer Care
Sense in Scotland
Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Society
Twins and Multiple Birth Association
Volunteer Development Scotland

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many special grants have been awarded in 1992 to voluntary and charitable organisations;

(2) how many grant applications his Department received from voluntary organisations in the last year for which figures are available; and how many of these applications were not successful in obtaining his Department's funding.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 2 December 1992]:* My right hon. Friend is directly responsible for a wide range of voluntary sector grant schemes. Grants may be for continuing administrative costs, projects, capital expenditure or in exceptional circumstances single payments. In 1991-92 the Department received 722 applications from voluntary organisations from which 463 grants were given.

ACCOMMODATION AND WORKS COMMITTEE

Westminster Hall (Fire Prevention)

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Chairman of the Accommodation and Works Committee if he will review fire prevention in respect of Westminster hall *(a)* generally and *(b)* in relation to its historic roof.

Mr. Ray Powell: A 10-year programme for upgrading fire precautions within the Palace of Westminster is nearing its completion. It has been agreed by Her Majesty's inspector of fire services. Following the appointment of a fire safety manager earlier this year, those measures and related procedures are already under review. As part of the existing procedures, all areas of the parliamentary estate, including Westminster hall, are patrolled regularly by members of the Palace of

Westminster fire section. Plans for further preventive measures, which will specifically include protection for the roof of Westminster hall, are in hand.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Church Property Investments

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners, what is the value of Church property investments for each year since 1987.

Mr. Alison: The value of the Church Commissioners' property investments held at the end of each year was as follows:

	£ million
1987	1,128
1988	1,327
1989	1,441
1990	1,171
1991	1,034

There is no centrally held information of the value of other Church property.

Fulham Football Club Ground

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners, what was the independent valuation of the Fulham football club ground at Craven Cottage prior to its sale to Mr. Ernie Clay.

Mr. Alison: As I said in my answer on 26 November to an earlier question from the hon. Member for Pendle, the Commissioners' property investments are professionally valued each year. Their freehold interest in Fulham Football Club ground was valued at £70,000 as at 31 December 1984.

DEFENCE

RAF (Schools)

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of state for Defence if he will list the RAF establishment bases within the United Kingdom that currently have an on-site school for the children of RAF personnel.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The following RAF stations within the United Kingdom currently have on-site schools for children of service personnel aged between five and 18:

RAF Benson
RAF Coltishall
RAF Coningsby
RAF Cottesmore
RAF Digby
RAF Henlow
RAF High Wycombe
RAF Kinloss
RAF Leeming
RAF Odiham
RAF Scampton
RAF St. Mawgan
RAF Wyton

In all cases, the local education authority is responsible for the school and admission is not restricted to RAF dependants.

Amphibious Helicopter Carrier

Dr. Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the prospects are of the proposed amphibious helicopter carrier for the Royal Navy being built in the near future.

Mr. Aitken: Our current plans are to place a contract in the autumn of 1993.

Nuclear Submarines

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many SSNs and SSBNs will be decommissioned in the next five years; and what are the Navy's plans for laying up of these submarines.

Mr. Aitken: It is not our practice to reveal in advance details of plans for decommissioning nuclear-powered submarines. Our policy remains that when nuclear-powered sumarines have been decommissioned the hulls are stored afloat at a suitable berth, pending eventual disposal.

Strategic Nuclear Force (Employee Costs)

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current cost per employee of the strategic nuclear force.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I gave the estimated cost of the nuclear strategic force for the current financial year in an answer to the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) on 6 November 1992, *Official Report*, column *533*. This equates to approximately £2,700 for each of the Ministry of Defence's 469,000 service and civilian employees.

Challenger

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what has been the total cost to date of Challenger; and if he will report on progress with regard to the sale of this vessel.

Mr. Aitken: The total project acquisition cost of HMS Challenger, together with the cost of the two docking periods which she has undergone is some £240 million at 1990-91 prices. The marketing of the ship continues.

Defence Exports

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy relating to the release of information on the export of British defence equipment to *(a)* Argentina and *(b)* Iraq; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: The policy of successive Governments has been to treat information about specific defence exports as commercially confidential. In the special circumstances of Argentina and Iraq, information that is not commercially sensitive has exceptionally been made public.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, further to his oral remarks of 23 November, *Official Report*, columns 705-6, if he will now release information on the export of British defence equipment to Argentina; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: Information on the export of defence equipment to Argentina was given in the answer to

question 7 of the minutes of evidence before the Foreign Affairs Committee on 10 November 1982. A defence equipment embargo has been in force since the 1982 Falklands conflict.

AWACS Contract

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the figure of offset business placed with British firms on the AWACS contract following the Nimrod cancellation; was this greater or less than the 13 per cent. offset agreement; what proportion of this business would have been placed in the United Kingdom if Nimrod had not been cancelled; and if he will list which firms benefited.

Mr. Aitken: As I stated in my answer of 20 May, *Official Record*, column *190*, Boeing has submitted to my Department reports listing contracts placed with United Kingdom firms totalling some $2·1 billion, of which we have agreed some $1·57 billion to count for offset credit. This latter figure exceeds the 130 per cent. target set in the agreement and Boeing have therefore met their obligation. It is not possible to say what proportion of these orders would have been placed in the United Kingdom had Nimrod not been cancelled. Details of Boeing's reports of the firms which benefited are commercially confidential and cannot be released.

Warships (Refitting and Repair)

Dr. Liam Fox: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when he now intends to publish his proposals for future arrangements for warship refitting and repair; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: We continue to receive from a variety of sources much detailed and important information which bears on future arrangements for the refitting and repair of Royal Navy vessels, particularly nuclear-powered submarines. This information has recently included a further series of proposals from the contractors at the royal dockyards for the provision of the new dockyard facilities that will be needed to support Trident submarines. We now expect that the need to assess properly the latest contractor proposals will preclude an announcement before the House returns after the Christmas recess, but we will make an announcement thereafter as soon as we responsibly can.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Alcohol Products

12. Mr. Enright: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what discussion he has held in the Council of Agriculture Ministers on equal treatment for British alcohol products in continental countries of the EC; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: I defend British interests at all times, but there has been no recent discussion within the Council of Agriculture Ministers on this subject.

Departmental Canteen

13. Mr. Bellingham: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has for introducing into his Department's official canteen animal welfare friendly and environmentally friendly foods, including game meat and game fish.

Mr. Soames: The Government's policy on consumer choice is fully reflected in menus offered in the Department's staff restaurants.

Fish Laboratories

14. Mr. Ian Bruce: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on progress on the new building programme at his Department's fish laboratories in Weymouth.

Mr. Curry: Tenders for the main building works were received on 23 November and are being evaluated. We expect to appoint a contractor before Christmas with a view to completing the works early in 1994.

Retirement Schemes

15. Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will reconsider the Government's policy on pre-pension retirement schemes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: No.

Slaughterhouses

16. Mr. Nicholls: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will make a statement about the implementation of the costs directive and the hygiene directive in their application to slaughterhouses.

Mr. Soames: In response to the widespread concern across Europe about the impact of these directives on small abattoirs, my right hon. Friend announced yesterday that he is arranging for the December Council of Agriculture Ministers to consider whether any further action at Community level is required to safeguard small traditional slaughtering businesses.

As far as implementation in Great Britain is concerned, local authorities are at present responsible for meat inspection and hygiene control in slaughterhouses and are required to charge for this service. Where their actual costs are higher than the standard charge specified in the EC decision on meat inspection charges, they have discretion to recover less than their full costs. The Department has this week issued further guidance which should enable some local authorities to provide the inspection service at a lower cost than they have been estimating.

GATT

17. Mr. Knapman: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the implications for agriculture of the current situation in the GATT talks.

Mr. Gummer: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave earlier to the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes).

22. **Mr. Denham:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the action taken by his Department to monitor the effects of the GATT negotiations on food standards.

Mr. Soames: The GATT round negotiations have not specifically addressed food standards, but will provide for greater transparency in the setting and enforcement of animal and plant health requirements affecting trade.

28. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received about the GATT negotiations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: I have had discussions about the GATT negotiations with a wide range of individuals and organisations.

Potato Marketing

18. **Mrs. Browning:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the future of the United Kingdom potato marketing scheme.

Mr. Curry: The Government will take decisions on the future of the potato marketing scheme in the light of the recently published proposals for an EC potato regime and following extensive consultations.

Common Agricultural Policy

19. **Mr. Peter Atkinson:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the current level of total CAP expenditure received by the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The United Kingdom's share of receipts from the CAP is around 7 per cent. or approximately £1·8 billion per annum. CAP reforms agreed earlier this year are likely to increase the United Kingdom's share of receipts to over 9 per cent.

Milk Marketing Boards

20. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the Government's proposals for reform of the milk marketing board.

26. **Mr. Wilson:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the future of milk marketing boards.

Mr. Gummer: The Agriculture Bill received its Second Reading in another place on 23 November.

Transport of Live Animals

21. **Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received about the transportation of live animals.

Mr. Soames: The Department continues to receive a very large number of representations on this subject. The Government attach great importance to this issue and will continue to press for the high standards in this country to be adopted throughout the European Community.

Agricultural Tenancies

23. **Mr. Clifton-Brown:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he will bring forward legislation on agricultural tenancy reforms arising out of his consultations.

Mr. Gummer: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and I plan to introduce legislation as soon as parliamentary time becomes available.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

24. **Mr. Dafis:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give details of his intentions in relation to the designation of further environmentally sensitive areas.

Mr. Curry: We plan to launch six new English environmentally sensitive areas in January next year, and a further six the following winter.

Sheep

25. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he is next due to meet the President of the National Farmers Union to discuss the sheep sector.

Mr. Curry: My right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture and I meet the president of the NFU regularly on this subject.

Fisheries Council

27. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress was made with the review of the Common Fisheries Policy at the council meeting of EC Fisheries Ministers on 23 November.

Mr. Curry: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Finchley (Mr. Booth) on 24 November at column 570.

Wheat and Barley

Sir Richard Body: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what quantity of *(a)* wheat and *(b)* barley was exported from the United Kingdom in the last 12-month period.

Mr. Curry: For the year October 1991 to September 1992, the latest for which data are available, the quantities exported were 4·707 million tonnes and 1·942 million tonnes for wheat and barley respectively.

Hens

Mr. Jopling: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give the number of hens kept for *(a)* laying eggs and *(b)* poultrymeat production in each county.

Mr. Soames: The information requested is given in the following table. Data are from the 1991 June agricultural census. Estimates for minor holdings are excluded.

Number of laying hens and table chicken by county
June 1991 agricultural and horticultural census[1]

County	Hens kept mainly for producing eggs for eating[2]	Breeding hens	Table chicken
Cleveland	28,706	28	1,249,027
Cumbria	396,012	48,455	1,488,874
Durham	151,800	16,234	335,786
Northumberland	58,702	16,110	38,276
Tyne and Wear	64,479	22	0
Humberside	188,969	165,630	1,021,189
North Yorkshire	1,073,912	83,911	3,950,065
South Yorkshire	251,935	7,047	313,644
West Yorkshire	619,922	60,220	343,922
Derbyshire	223,991	492	1,757,260
Leicestershire	289,574	17,211	1,014,567
Lincolnshire	2,286,927	626,543	2,786,702
Northamptonshire	386,490	81,358	686,315
Nottinghamshire	1,199,964	27,450	274,084
Cambridgeshire	357,039	40,421	1,621,364
Norfolk	1,695,264	507,712	4,054,052
Suffolk	543,750	67,881	4,191,549
Bedfordshire	396,483	370	213,728
Berkshire	163,084	198	109,068
Buckinghamshire	214,583	106	1,763,907
East Sussex	219,883	400	554,579
Essex	874,972	284,330	2,214,152
Greater London	33,471	25,364	110
Hampshire	1,383,803	290,694	2,577,162
Hertfordshire	115,655	137,445	495,366
Isle of Wight	11,453	778	12
Kent	1,316,886	55,420	764,210
Oxfordshire	467,661	86,686	271,376
Surrey	185,977	29,397	390,929
West Sussex	549,236	1,113	511,241
Avon	488,420	534	171,525
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	685,752	862	94,489
Devon	1,247,897	93,654	2,070,086
Dorset	456,225	12,522	892,766
Gloucestershire	452,697	139,418	546,763
Somerset	409,954	161,620	2,670,988
Wiltshire	966,905	96,648	2,580,654
Hereford and Worcester	776,566	360,045	4,935,620
Shropshire	1,876,694	39,032	1,758,698
Staffordshire	683,927	40,863	549,589
Warwickshire	357,932	86,527	903,101
West Midlands	108,862	43	24,108
Cheshire	663,548	120,712	1,232,193
Greater Manchester	257,017	270	198,141
Lancashire	1,273,554	159,359	1,855,844
Merseyside	236,419	9,566	113,905
England	26,692,952	4,000,701	55,590,986

Notes:
[1] Minor holdings excluded.
[2] Growing pullets excluded.

Civil Servants

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many civil servants are currently employed by his Department *(a)* in London, *(b)* in Scotland and *(c)* elsewhere.

Mr. Curry: The information as at 1 December 1992 is shown as follows. The figures include permanent and casual staff but exclude fee-paid staff, and those on loan or unpaid leave.

	Number
(a) London	3,468·0
(b) Scotland	205·5
(c) Elsewhere	7,092·0

Part-time staff are counted as half posts.

Rapeseed

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what estimate he has of the effects of a discontinuance of the rapeseed subsidies on British farmers.

Mr. Curry: EC subsidies to rapeseed growers have not been discontinued, though the previous tonnage payments have been replaced by an area payment scheme.

Fisheries (Rating)

Ms. Walley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will introduce legislation to introduce into the Water Resources Act 1991 a right of appeal against rating of fisheries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: I have no plans to do so. Section 115 of the Water Resources Act 1991 already provides for the inclusion of supplemental and consequential provisions in any order providing for the payment of contributions by owners and occupiers of fisheries. A right of appeal could be introduced under such provisions. This is a matter which the National Rivers Authority will have to take into account in developing its proposals for a contribution scheme.

Food Premises (Inspection)

Mr. McFall: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many inspections of food premises have been carried out by each local authority in England under the Food Safety Act 1990; and how many of those inspections have resulted in *(a)* the issuing of improvement and emergency prohibition notices, *(b)* informal warning letters of *(c)* the voluntary closures of companies.

Mr. Soames: At present information is available only for 1991. This is given in the table[1].

Counties

Enforcement authority	Number of inspections of food premises[2]	Number of establishments subject to Issue of improvement notices	Issue of emergency prohibition notices	Written warnings	Closures (voluntary and compulsory)
Avon[3]	1,451	0	0	0	0
Bedfordshire	772	0	0	3	0
Berkshire	570	0	0	0	0
Buckinghamshire[3]	410	0	0	0	0
Cambridgeshire	907	0	0	172	0

Enforcement authority	Number of inspections of food premises[3]	Number of establishments subject to Issue of improvement notices	Issue of emergency prohibition notices	Written warnings	Closures (voluntary and compulsory)
Cheshire[3]	459	0	0	62	0
Cleveland[3]	864	0	0	44	0
Cornwall[3]	363	0	0	0	0
Cumbria	741	0	0	90	0
Derbyshire[3]	851	0	0	167	0
Devon	4,694	0	0	0	0
Dorset[3]	623	0	0	0	0
Durham	943	0	0	13	0
East Sussex[3]	405	0	0	0	0
Essex	500	0	0	66	0
Gloucestershire	356	0	0	45	0
Hampshire[3]	3,435	0	0	5	0
Hereford and Worcester	583	0	0	231	0
Hertfordshire[3]	578	0	0	0	0
Humberside[3]	1,277	0	0	15	0
Isle of Wight	144	0	0	0	0
Kent	3,286	0	0	91	0
Lancashire[3]	1,350	0	0	497	0
Leicestershire	1,071	0	0	120	0
Lincolnshire	502	0	0	10	0
Norfolk	837	0	0	40	0
Northamptonshire[3]	301	0	0	0	0
Northumberland[3]	297	0	0	0	0
North Yorkshire[3]	155	0	0	0	0
Nottinghamshire	723	0	0	23	0
Oxfordshire	279	0	0	0	0
Shropshire[3]	630	0	0	154	0
Somerset	430	0	0	8	0
Staffordshire[3]	182	0	0	0	0
Suffolk[3]	130	0	0	4	0
Surrey[3]	969	0	0	0	0
Warwickshire[3]	851	0	0	10	0
West Sussex[3]	772	0	0	0	0
Wiltshire[3]	889	0	0	0	0

English district

Enforcement authority	Number of inspections of food premises[3]	Number of establishment subject to Issue of improvement notices	Issue of emergency prohibition notices	Written warnings	Closures (voluntary and compulsory)
Adur	159	2	0	10	0
Allerdale[3]	224	36	0	114	0
Alnwick[3]	137	26	0	16	0
Amber Valley[3]	707	15	0	644	0
Arun	838	19	0	31	12
Ashfield[3]	279	25	1	168	1
Ashford	634	86	0	230	0
Aylesbury Vale[3]	446	33	0	136	2
Babergh[3]	276	11	0	66	0
Barrow-in-Furness[3]	536	87	1	240	0
Basildon	446	26	1	131	2
Basingstoke and Deane[3]	593	89	0	536	0
Bassetlaw[3]	636	78	0	79	0
Bath City[3]	187	20	0	20	0
Berwick-upon-Tweed[3]	97	0	0	1	0
Beverley	940	6	0	97	0
Blaby	547	12	0	132	0
Blackburn[3]	424	220	0	159	0
Blackpool	280	69	2	171	9
Blyth Valley[3]	127	13	0	190	0
Bolsover[3]	200	32	0	227	0
Boothferry	523	48	1	542	6
Boston	512	5	1	205	0
Bournemouth	906	19	0	865	0
Bracknell Forest[3]	302	1	0	0	2
Braintree[3]	181	2	0	179	0
Breckland	390	8	0	174	0
Brentwood	419	50	0	73	0
Bridgnorth[3]	148	15	0	128	0
Brighton	814	78	1	0	1
Bristol City	832	175	4	564	0
Broadland[3]	673	7	1	161	4

Enforcement authority	Number of inspections of food premises[3]	Number of establishment subject to Issue of improvement notices	Issue of emergency prohibition notices	Written warnings	Closures (voluntary and compulsory)
Bromsgrove[3]	217	5	0	130	0
Broxbourne[3]	485	31	0	378	0
Broxtowe[3]	577	72	0	475	0
Burnley[3]	268	87	1	60	1
Cambridge City	1,163	78	1	802	0
Cannock Chase[3]	228	1	0	67	0
Canterbury City[3]	1,280	148	0	1,010	0
Caradon[3]	538	4	0	377	0
Carlisle City	716	122	10	417	0
Carrick[3]	768	8	0	632	0
Castle Morpeth	748	213	0	179	0
Castlepoint	458	39	0	243	0
Charnwood[3]	656	1	0	628	0
Chelmsford[3]	930	25	0	178	2
Cheltenham	368	14	1	267	1
Cherwell	927	282	0	67	0
Chester City	1,476	53	0	925	0
Chester-le-Street[3]	31	6	4	20	0
Chesterfield[3]	297	29	0	299	0
Chichester[3]	918	50	0	313	0
Chiltern[3]	428	15	0	190	3
Chorley[3]	272	86	0	65	0
Christchurch[3]	55	12	0	30	0
Cleethorpes[3]	371	35	0	407	1
Colchester	608	102	0	142	2
Congleton[3]	334	12	0	15	0
Copeland[3]	403	28	0	246	0
Corby[3]	177	22	2	143	2
Cotswold[3]	666	52	0	529	1
Craven[3]	373	7	0	187	0
Crawley	643	4	0	132	0
Crewe and Nantwich[3]	242	32	0	139	1
Dacorum	650	5	0	82	0
Darlington	243	5	0	175	0
Dartford[3]	346	7	0	173	0
Daventry	362	46	1	178	0
Derby City[3]	272	93	4	272	4
Derbyshire Dales[3]	584	63	0	163	0
Derwentside[3]	683	7	0	94	0
Dover[3]	381	23	0	93	0
Durham City[3]	97	0	0	127	0
Easington[3]	206	73	1	148	0
East Cambridgeshire[3]	500	3	0	99	0
East Devon	996	112	0	269	1
East Dorset[3]	241	34	0	187	0
East Hampshire	688	15	0	144	0
East Hertfordshire	445	44	0	319	0
East Lindsey[3]	838	14	1	250	1
East Northamptonshire[3]	251	46	0	56	0
East Staffordshire	845	74	1	888	1
East Yorkshire[3]	1,211	24	0	228	0
Eastbourne[3]	754	9	0	436	0
Eastleigh	606	27	0	262	0
Eden[3]	696	14	0	195	0
Ellesmere Port and Neston	369	0	0	131	0
Elmbridge[3]	55	20	0	28	1
Epping Forest[3]	489	28	2	383	2
Epsom and Ewell[3]	55	1	0	20	0
Erewash[3]	573	68	0	274	0
Exeter City[3]	584	32	0	56	0
Fareham	544	57	0	399	0
Fenland[3]	440	29	0	293	0
Forest Heath	398	8	0	104	0
Forest of Dean[3]	789	18	0	291	0
Fylde[3]	355	115	0	144	0
Gedling	983	12	0	634	0
Gillingham[3]	307	63	0	209	0
Glanford[3]	146	20	0	80	0
Gloucester City[3]	284	1	0	128	0
Gosport	321	24	0	178	0
Gravesham[3]	671	117	0	346	0
Great Grimsby[3]	1,332	3	0	477	0
Great Yarmouth[3]	1,059	163	0	682	3
Guildford	585	135	2	207	2

Enforcement authority	Number of inspections of food premises[2]	Number of establishment subject to: Issue of improvement notices	Issue of emergency prohibition notices	Written warnings	Closures (voluntary and compulsory)
Halton[3]	333	20	0	182	1
Hambleton[3]	186	62	0	45	0
Harborough	406	0	0	164	0
Harlow[3]	173	24	2	76	2
Harrogate[3]	843	142	0	442	0
Hart	561	19	0	304	0
Hartlepool[3]	301	33	0	166	0
Hastings	767	105	0	608	0
Havant[3]	842	86	0	447	0
Hereford City[3]	516	0	0	229	0
Hertsmere[3]	776	123	0	400	0
High Peak[3]	340	33	0	239	0
Hinckley and Bosworth	712	16	0	269	0
Holderness[3]	86	0	0	49	0
Horsham[3]	771	10	0	68	0
Hove[3]	545	120	0	282	0
Huntingdon[3]	441	85	0	333	6
Hyndburn[3]	447	73	1	451	0
Ipswich[3]	339	101	1	125	1
Kennet[3]	551	23	0	299	0
Kerrier[3]	479	28	0	311	0
Kettering[3]	358	112	0	83	0
Kings Lynn and West Norfolk[3]	499	42	0	750	0
Kingston-Upon-Hull[3]	1,070	85	0	545	23
Kingswood[3]	406	61	0	322	0
Lancaster City[3]	362	206	0	96	0
Langbaurgh-on-Tees[3]	107	1	0	25	0
Leicester City	413	57	1	209	0
Leominster	341	144	0	197	0
Lewes	388	30	0	341	0
Lichfield[3]	425	2	0	234	1
Lincoln City[3]	383	37	0	134	0
Luton	966	112	0	346	0
Macclesfield[3]	910	164	0	287	0
Maidstone[3]	243	0	0	68	0
Maldon[3]	151	6	0	64	0
Malvern Hills[3]	163	59	0	106	0
Mansfield	1,157	83	1	554	0
Medina[3]	763	69	0	146	2
Melton[3]	276	8	0	219	0
Mendip[3]	822	97	1	114	1
Mid Bedfordshire[3]	480	8	0	333	0
Mid Devon[3]	223	6	0	44	0
Mid Suffolk	269	43	0	23	0
Mid Sussex[3]	356	19	0	117	0
Middlesbrough	260	36	0	138	0
Milton Keynes[3]	463	18	0	0	2
Mole Valley	324	42	0	280	0
North West Leicestershire[3]	960	8	0	586	0
New Forest	565	42	0	194	0
Newark and Sherwood[3]	236	35	0	118	0
Newbury[3]	310	23	1	130	0
Newcastle Under Lyme	349	4	0	411	1
North Bedfordshire[3]	566	3	0	588	0
North Cornwall[3]	314	2	0	68	1
North Devon[3]	311	153	0	29	0
North Dorset	257	8	0	204	0
North East Derbyshire[3]	180	7	0	120	6
North Hertfordshire[3]	813	94	0	79	0
North Kesteven	376	30	0	236	3
North Norfolk[3]	627	2	0	130	0
North Shropshire[3]	169	6	0	87	0
North Warwickshire[3]	365	62	1	80	1
North Wiltshire[3]	1,119	35	0	428	0
Northampton	814	50	1	534	2
Northavon[3]	699	20	0	409	0
Norwich City[3]	793	97	0	418	0
Nottingham City[3]	2,252	75	0	1,552	1
Nuneaton and Bedworth[3]	856	195	1	341	1
Oadby and Wigston[3]	148	26	0	126	0
Oswestry[3]	205	20	0	227	0
Oxford City[3]	334	109	0	199	0
Pendle[3]	849	35	0	496	0

Enforcement authority	Number of inspections of food premises[3]	Number of establishment subject to Issue of improvement notices	Issue of emergency prohibition notices	Written warnings	Closures (voluntary and compulsory)
Penwith[3]	673	32	0	168	1
Peterborough City[3]	1,042	1	0	117	0
Plymouth City[3]	879	40	0	299	0
Poole[3]	340	36	0	313	0
Portsmouth City[3]	1,416	66	0	407	1
Preston[3]	470	93	3	3	5
Purbeck	158	11	0	18	0
Reading	815	77	0	284	0
Redditch[3]	180	35	0	179	0
Reigate and Banstead[3]	295	13	1	178	1
Restormel[3]	420	2	0	421	0
Ribble Valley[3]	206	0	0	14	0
Richmondshire	482	0	0	208	0
Rochester upon Medway[3]	911	22	0	797	0
Rochford[3]	85	50	1	7	1
Rossendale[3]	352	253	0	163	1
Rother[3]	804	30	0	80	0
Rugby	570	141	0	495	0
Runnymede[3]	382	27	0	267	0
Rushcliffe	85	23	0	62	0
Rushmoor[3]	575	86	1	95	2
Rutland[3]	237	39	0	13	0
Ryedale[3]	407	29	0	84	0
Salisbury[3]	397	13	0	223	0
Scarborough	1,060	78	0	536	0
Scunthorpe	571	40	0	158	1
Sedgefield[3]	184	15	2	23	2
Sedgmoor[3]	642	19	0	64	0
Selby	288	98	0	142	0
Sevenoaks[3]	258	1	0	172	0
Shepway[3]	821	72	0	36	0
Shrewsbury and Atcham	209	22	0	124	0
Slough[3]	393	34	0	168	0
South Bedfordshire[3]	366	164	0	0	0
South Buckinghamshire[3]	186	51	0	157	0
South Cambridgeshire[3]	373	18	0	261	0
South Derbyshire[3]	998	11	0	256	0
South Hams	502	45	0	319	0
South Herefordshire	232	0	0	147	0
South Holland[3]	606	10	0	268	0
South Kesteven[3]	796	0	0	343	0
South Lakeland[3]	1,857	64	0	36	0
South Norfolk[3]	805	201	0	318	2
South Northamptonshire	360	5	0	62	0
South Oxfordshire	712	8	0	442	0
South Ribble[3]	319	11	0	200	0
South Shropshire[3]	87	49	1	0	1
South Somerset[3]	906	0	0	109	0
South Staffordshire[3]	108	20	0	34	2
South Wight	539	6	0	330	2
Southampton City	1,086	37	1	297	3
Southend-on-Sea	447	221	1	98	1
Spelthorne	158	15	0	25	0
St. Albans City	547	105	0	122	0
St. Edmundsbury	975	23	0	394	0
Stafford[3]	747	188	1	231	1
Staffordshire Moorlands[3]	1,346	0	0	220	4
Stevenage[3]	78	1	0	0	0
Stockton-on-Tees	775	36	0	429	0
Stoke-on-Trent City[3]	714	281	0	316	0
Stratford-on-Avon	675	489	2	132	7
Stroud	541	24	0	346	0
Suffolk Coastal[3]	470	30	0	460	0
Surrey Heath[3]	214	4	0	210	0
Swale[3]	435	50	0	265	0
Tamworth[3]	263	138	0	241	0
Tandridge[3]	314	7	0	315	0
Taunton Deane[3]	343	48	0	144	0
Teesdale	281	1	0	29	0
Teignbridge	1,272	58	0	1,086	0
Tendring	2,133	149	1	1,050	1
Test Valley[3]	734	5	0	200	0
Tewkesbury[3]	657	21	0	326	0
Thamesdown	1,312	57	0	571	0
Thanet[3]	1,569	117	0	344	3

Enforcement authority	Number of inspections of food premises[2]	Issue of improvement notices	Number of establishment subject to Issue of emergency prohibition notices	Written warnings	Closures (voluntary and compulsory)
The Wrekin[3]	623	95	1	153	1
Three Rivers[3]	610	228	0	157	0
Thurrock[3]	419	23	0	136	0
Tonbridge and Malling[3]	423	215	0	173	0
Torbay[3]	662	22	0	656	0
Torridge[3]	125	6	0	6	0
Tunbridge Wells[3]	388	51	0	313	0
Tynedale[3]	58	20	0	21	2
Uttlesford	378	0	0	88	0
Vale of White Horse[3]	438	1	0	307	3
Vale Royal[3]	248	28	1	221	7
Wansbeck[3]	5	4	0	2	0
Wansdyke[3]	411	27	0	76	0
Warrington	432	36	0	350	2
Warwick[3]	252	149	3	0	1
Watford[3]	718	6	0	172	0
Waveney	354	18	0	245	0
Waverley[3]	150	24	0	141	0
Wealden	506	24	0	112	0
Wear Valley[3]	223	17	0	283	2
Wellingborough	369	35	0	141	0
Welwyn Hatfield	344	1	0	137	0
West Devon[3]	523	7	0	86	0
West Dorset[3]	346	72	0	130	0
West Lancashire[3]	711	23	0	460	0
West Lindsey[3]	592	38	0	202	0
West Oxfordshire[3]	281	1	0	0	0
West Somerset[3]	224	0	0	118	0
West Wiltshire[3]	385	17	0	666	0
Weymouth and Portland[3]	174	108	0	15	0
Winchester City[3]	176	7	0	128	0
Windsor and Maidenhead[3]	518	135	0	0	0
Woking[3]	175	28	0	46	0
Wokingham	609	13	1	37	0
Woodspring[3]	1,152	401	2	1,167	1
Worcester City[3]	215	101	0	108	0
Worthing	1,266	21	0	294	0
Wychavon[3]	93	1	0	6	0
Wycombe	610	7	0	261	0
Wyre	703	230	0	237	0
Wyre Forest	451	42	0	206	0
York City	555	106	0	153	0

Counties

Enforcement authority	Number of inspections of food premises[2]	Issue of improvement notices	Number of establishment subject to Issue of emergency prohibition notices	Written warnings	Closures (voluntary and compulsory)
Isles of Scilly	48	0	0	12	0

London boroughs

Enforcement authority	Number of inspections of food premises[2]	Issue of improvement notices	Number of establishments subject to Issue of emergency prohibition notices	Written warnings	Closures (voluntary and compulsory)
Barking and Dagenham[3]	518	36	3	0	2
Barnet[3]	597	31	2	446	2
Bexley[3]	759	238	3	201	3
Brent	565	29	6	274	10
Bromley[3]	1,074	43	0	217	0
Camden[3]	757	19	2	54	1
Croydon	2,251	262	1	1,033	1
City of London[3]	25,309	12	0	93	0
Ealing[3]	546	57	2	256	2
Enfield	680	100	4	469	4
Greenwich	219	32	3	88	4
Hackney[3]	461	54	2	380	2
Hammersmith and Fulham[3]	156	6	0	0	0

Enforcement authority	Number of inspections of food premises[2]	Number of establishments subject to: Issue of improvement notices	Issue of emergency prohibition notices	Written warnings	Closures (voluntary and compulsory)
Haringey[3]	425	87	4	90	5
Harrow	1,690	27	0	232	0
Havering[3]	729	121	1	291	1
Hillingdon[3]	1,633	455	0	402	9
Hounslow[3]	460	55	0	37	0
Islington[3]	512	233	1	92	2
Kensington and Chelsea[3]	1,222	132	3	620	16
Kingston upon Thames	1,204	69	0	280	0
Lambeth[3]	1,335	204	0	569	10
Lewisham[3]	1,212	58	0	553	0
Merton	677	147	0	403	0
Newham[3]	109	20	0	57	0
Redbridge[3]	298	24	0	134	0
Richmond upon Thames[3]	179	10	0	126	0
Southwark[3]	803	262	16	509	37
Sutton[3]	716	24	0	215	0
Tower Hamlets[3]	1,225	138	1	464	9
Waltham Forest[3]	654	18	0	130	0
Wandsworth[3]	473	81	1	72	1
Westminster[3]	1,615	79	0	0	0

Metropolitan councils

Enforcement authority	Number of inspections of food premises[2]	Number of establishments subject to: Issue of improvement notices	Issue of emergency prohibition notices	Written warnings	Closures (voluntary and compulsory)
Barnsley[3]	841	13	0	345	0
Birmingham[3]	4,283	572	56	505	64
Bolton[3]	1,146	51	4	589	6
Bradford	2,413	276	11	680	9
Bury[3]	890	266	0	315	0
Calderdale[3]	1,211	97	1	374	1
Coventry[3]	699	227	9	173	9
Doncaster[3]	972	102	0	40	0
Dudley[3]	1,401	106	0	1,071	0
Gateshead[3]	867	11	0	444	0
Kirklees	4,354	234	1	1,124	1
Knowsley[3]	2,109	135	1	154	0
Leeds	2,175	79	1	1,203	0
Liverpool[3]	3,086	258	10	246	2
Manchester[3]	854	230	6	33	9
Newcastle upon Tyne	769	200	0	470	0
North Tyneside[3]	163	12	0	125	0
Oldham	1,638	81	3	856	4
Rochdale[3]	361	73	4	218	4
Rotherham[3]	565	134	1	231	1
St. Helens[3]	810	69	0	117	0
Salford[3]	649	90	2	247	3
Sandwell	1,045	153	1	584	5
Sefton[3]	1,399	95	0	196	1
Sheffield	4,401	21	0	438	0
Solihull[3]	1,286	174	1	255	1
South Tyneside	474	156	0	75	0
Stockport[3]	1,312	121	5	21	5
Sunderland[3]	3,080	37	1	1,929	0
Tameside[3]	1,585	33	0	0	0
Trafford[3]	282	0	1	201	1
Wakefield[3]	1,051	121	3	411	0
Walsall	2,402	215	6	691	2
Wigan[3]	742	27	1	616	5
Wirral[3]	1,450	947	0	411	0
Wolverhampton[3]	1,255	468	8	254	1

Port health authorities

Enforcement authority	*Number of inspections of food premises*[2]	*Number of establishments subject to*			
		Issue of improvement notices	*Issue of emergency prohibition notices*	*Written warnings*	*Closures (voluntary and compulsory)*
Barnstaple	Nil Return	—	—	—	—
Barrow	Nil Return	—	—	—	—
Boston	34	0	0	0	0
Bridgewater[3]	1	0	0	0	0
Bristol[3]	16	0	0	7	0
Colchester[3]	Nil Return	—	—	—	—
Cowes[3]	Nil Return	—	—	—	—
Dover	36,200	0	0	48	0
Exeter[3]	Nil Return	—	—	—	—
Exmouth[3]	Nil Return	—	—	—	—
Falmouth and Truro[3]	5	0	0	0	0
Faversham	Nil Return	—	—	—	—
Felixstowe[3]	4,919	0	0	26	0
Fleetwood[3]	35	35	0	0	0
Folkestone[3]	3,436	0	0	0	0
Fowey	73	0	0	1	0
Great Yarmouth[3]	477	0	0	0	0
Grimsby[3]	1,044	0	0	4	0
Hartlepool	Nil Return	—	—	—	—
Harwich	3,120	0	0	54	0
Hull and Goole[3]	1,285	0	0	17	0
Immingham[3]	383	0	0	2	0
Ipswich[3]	981	0	0	1	0
King's Lynn	1	0	0	0	0
Lancaster[3]	25	0	0	0	0
Littlehampton	Nil Return	—	—	—	—
Liverpool[3]	780	0	0	0	0
London[3]	30,087	0	0	87	0
Lowestoft[3]	203	0	0	0	0
Maldon	Nil Return	—	—	—	—
Manchester	1,563	0	0	19	0
Medway[3]	91	0	0	2	0
Newhaven	468	0	0	1	0
New Shoreham	52	0	0	0	0
Penwith	Nil Return	—	—	—	—
Plymouth[3]	68	0	0	9	0
Poole Harbour[3]	4,677	0	0	2	0
Portsmouth[3]	2,128	0	0	1	0
Ramsgate[3]	460	0	0	3	0
River Blyth	10	0	0	2	0
River Tees[3]	1,455	0	0	0	0
Southampton[3]	1,528	0	0	12	0
Stroud	Nil Return	—	—	—	—
Sunderland	Nil Return	—	—	—	—
Teignbridge	0	0	0	0	0
Tyne[3]	1,196	0	0	0	0
Wells[3]	Nil Return	—	—	—	—
Weymouth[3]	13	0	0	0	0
Whitstable[3]	Nil Return	—	—	—	—
Wisbech	Nil Return	—	—	—	—
Workington[3]	Nil Return	—	—	—	—

[1] These statistics cover work carried out by local authorities under the Food Safety Act 1990, regulations made under it and the Official Control of Foodstuffs Directive. They exclude:
meat hygiene inspections carried out under EC veterinary legislation;
milk hygiene inspections of production plants;
inspections carried out by the Wine Standards Board under EC wine legislation.

[2] The number of food hygiene and food standards inspections covers:
inspection of premises;
inspection of equipment including cleaning and maintenance equipment;
inspection of process or operational procedure;
inspection of the hygiene or practices of personnel;
inspection of food (including ingredients, additives and products at any stage of manufacture) or contact materials;
inspection of labels, labelling equipment and advertising matter and/or
inspection of records.
These figures exclude all other visits to check compliance with notices, sampling visits and visits to follow up complaints.

[3] Excludes figures for first quarter of 1991. This was only required on a voluntary basis.

[4] For port health authorities this includes the number of consignments and ships' kitchens inspected.

Wildlife Incident Investigation

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the future funding of the wildlife incident investigation scheme in England and Wales.

Mr. Soames: Officials are reviewing the information required to monitor the effects of pesticides on wildlife and will be putting proposals to the Advisory Committee on Pesticides. Arrangements for funding will need to be considered in the light of their conclusions.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he or his officials last met representatives of the agrochemical industry to discuss the future funding of the wildlife incident investigation schemes.

Mr. Soames: Officials met representatives of the agrochemical industry and other interested organisations on 30 October to discuss industry funding of pesticides related work, including the wildlife incident investigation schemes.

Animal Carcases

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what action has been taken against farmers reported for leaving animal carcases in fields during the last 12 months;

(2) what information he has regarding recent cases of decomposing sheep carcases being left in fields with grazing cattle; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: The state veterinary service has continued over the last 12 months to monitor closely reports of dumping of animal carcases wherever they occur. Whenever evidence of offenders is available they act with local authorities to try to ensure that prosecutions are secured as appropriate. Legislation is being drawn up to implement the EC directive on the disposal of animal waste, which will increase the penalties for the dumping of carcases.

Calves (Transport)

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his answer of 27 November, *Official Report*, column 890, what are the welfare implications of sealing vehicles transporting calves from Great Britain to Holland.

Mr. Soames: Any sealing of vehicles would be required to be carried out without prejudicing the welfare of the animals and in conformity with legislation on the protection of animals during transportation.

Mink

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what changes in procedure have been adopted by his Department on mink farming since August 1989.

Mr. Soames: No changes to departmental procedures have been implemented in this time.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food for what reasons his officials did not inspect two adjoining mink sheds when inspecting Swalesmoor Mink Farm to ensure compliance with the Mink (Keeping) Order 1987 in 1987, 1988 and in April and September 1989.

Mr. Soames: An additional inspection covering the buildings in question was carried out in September 1989, when officials were made aware that mink were being kept in them. The visit confirmed that the security arrangements in operation complied with the Mink (Keeping) Regulations 1975, as amended, which lay down the manner in which mink can be kept under licence. The mink farm owner was therefore acting within the terms of the licence issued to him, to keep mink in any building on the farm.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what monitoring his Department conducts of breaches of the Mink (Keeping) Order 1987.

Mr. Soames: All mink farms are inspected annually by officials of ADAS, the Ministry's wildlife experts, to ensure that they meet the security requirements laid down for the keeping of mink. Any reported breaches of these security requirements would also be investigated by ADAS.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many applications for licences to operate a mink farm have been rejected since the coming into operation of the Mink (Keeping) Order 1987.

Mr. Soames: No applications for licences to keep mink in a mink farm have been rejected since the coming into operation of the Mink (Keeping) Order 1987.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) how many reports of mink escapes from fur farms have been officially notified since 1980;

(2) how many reports of mink escapes from fur farms have been officially notified since 1987.

Mr. Soames: Based on available information, the Ministry has received only one report of escapes of mink from a fur-farming establishment since 1980.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what provisions are made by his Department to protect the welfare of mink during transportation.

Mr. Soames: Welfare of mink during transport is protected by provisions of the Transit of Animals (General) Order 1973, as amended. The legislation imposes a duty of care on all those who transport animals. It requires transport in suitable conditions and animals must be fed and watered at appropriate intervals.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what conditions apply to the transportation of mink between licensed premises under the Mink (Keeping) Order 1987.

Mr. Soames: The Mink (Keeping) Regulations 1975, as amended, as currently applied by the Mink (Keeping) Order 1987, require that no mink shall be transported from place to place except in closed cages or other containers constructed in such a manner and of such materials as to prevent their escape.

Horses (Export)

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects the export and transit of horses next to be discussed in the EC Agriculture Ministers' Committee; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: Directive 91/628 provides for national safeguards to remain applicable until the Council decides what additional safeguards are necessary. No timetable has been set for a return to the subject.

Intervention Board

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his answer of 4 November, *Official Report*, columns *283-86*, if he will list by name and location the company that the chief executive of the Intervention Board visited on his fact-finding visit in respect of deboning beef for intervention storage; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: Since this question concerns a matter which is the direct responsibility of the chief executive of the Intervention Board Executive Agency, I am asking him to write directly to the hon. Member.

Letter from Guy Stapleton to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 3 December 1992:

You asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, following his Answer of 4 November reported in Hansard at columns 283-6, whether he would list by name and location the deboning company I included in my previous letter to you as one of my fact-finding visits. As this is a matter within the operational responsibility of this Agency, the Minister has asked me to reply to you direct.

The company was Barretts & Baird of West Bromwich.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 4 December 1992

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Legal Aid

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many people received legal aid this year; and how many of these would have been eligible and how many would pay increased contributions, if the changes in legal aid announced for England and Wales were to be introduced to Northern Ireland.

Mr. John M. Taylor: In the year ended 31 March 1992, the legal aid department of the Law Society of Northern Ireland, issued 14,585 civil legal aid certificates. In addition 56,508 bills for legal advice and assistance and 11,320 bills for legal assistance by way of representation were paid.

In the above cases contributions were required in 1,601 —11 per cent.—of civil legal aid cases, in 1,607—3 per cent.—of legal advice and assistance cases and in 1,242 —11 per cent.—of assistance by way of representation cases. In all other cases no contribution was required.

Information regarding how many of those involved would be eligible and how many would pay increased contributions, if the changes in legal aid announced for England and Wales were to be introduced in Northern Ireland, is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

The system of granting criminal legal aid in Northern Ireland is different from that in operation in England and Wales and a direct comparison of the effect of proposed changes in England and Wales is not possible.

Divorce

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he has completed his review of all aspects of divorce reform and conciliation following the Law Commission's recommendations; and what proposals he has to establish a counselling and mediation service.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor is considering the Law Commission's recommendations and the role and funding of family mediation services. His review of these matters is not yet complete and therefore it would be premature to put forward proposals on what are difficult and controversial issues.

TRANSPORT

Civil Servants

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many civil servants from his Department have been relocated from London to other parts of the United Kingdom *(a)* in the last five years and *(b)* in the last 10 years; and to where they were relocated.

Mr. Norris: The Department of Transport has relocated 267 posts from London in the last five years and 307 in the last 10 years, as follows:

New Location	*Unit*	*Posts Relocated*
Farnborough—	Air Accidents Investigation Branch	40
Nottingham—	Driving Standards Agency Headquarters	120
Leeds—	Highways Computing	42
Coventry—	Motorway Widening Unit	105

Roadside Testing

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action he proposes to take to introduce roadside testing to ensure on-road compliance of motor cycles, cars, light vans, buses and heavy goods vehicles with emission standards for *(a)* carbon monoxide, *(b)* smoke and *(c)* noise; and if he will set annual targets for such testing.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The police and the Department's vehicle examiners have the power to check vehicles at the roadside for emissions. The use of those powers by the police is a matter for the chief constables. The Department's examiners make a visual assessment of emissions at the roadside as part of roadworthiness inspections. The targets for these inspections in 1992-93 are 125,000 heavy goods vehicles, 23,000 public service vehicles and 33,000 cars and light goods vehicles. In addition, there will be metered roadside checks of smoke and carbon monoxide emissions from some 13,000 vehicles.

By 1 January next year, annual roadworthiness tests of most vehicles apart from motorcycles will include metered checks of carbon monoxide and smoke. Those tests are the main way of dealing with excessive on-road emissions from individual vehicles.

Excessive noise arising from a missing or a faulty silencer would lead to failure at annual test and prohibition at the roadside.

Catalytic Converters

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many responses he has received to his proposal to allow a derogation for the sale of cars not fitted with catalytic converters after 1 January 1993; how many respondents *(a)* supported and *(b)* opposed his proposal; which motor manufacturing companies (i) supported and (ii) opposed his proposal; what estimate he has made of the number of vehicles not fitted with a catalytic converter left unsold on 1 January 1993; and when he will announce his decision.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Of some 400 representative organisations consulted in accordance with section 195(2) of the Road Traffic Act 1988, only 25 replied with substantive comments. Of these, 18 were in favour or raised no objection and seven opposed the derogation. The Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders welcomed the measures on behalf of the industry as a whole. Of individual motor manufacturing companies, Ford, Mazda, Proton, Rolls-Royce and Rover welcomed the proposal, whereas Bristol Cars did not consider it would be of use to them. No motor manufacturers opposed the proposal. We estimate that there may be some 32,000 cars

left unsold by 31 December which will benefit from the proposal. This represents a little under 2 per cent. of projected registrations this year. Having considered the representations, I made the related regulations (SIs 1992 Nos. 2908 and 2909) on 19 November and they were laid before the House on 26 November.

Motorcycles

Mr. Jopling: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received *(a)* at the international motorcycle show or *(b)* elsewhere about the desirability of relaxing rules which prevent motorcycles with plastic petrol tanks being sold in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: There have been a number of representations from the motorcycle industry requesting a relaxation of the current rules so as to allow plastic fuel tanks to be used on motorcycles. We are actively considering a change and intend to consult on draft amending regulations very soon.

Thames Bridges (Traffic)

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the information he has about plans to close or restrict vehicular and pedestrian traffic during the next six months in respect of each of those Thames bridges between Tower bridge and Hampton Court bridge which allow vehicular or pedestrian access.

Mr. Norris: The Thames bridges which carry trunk roads and for which my right hon. Friend is the highway authority are those at Twickenham (A316), Chiswick (A316), and Kew (A205). He has no plans to close or restrict any of these bridges in the next six months.

The appropriate London borough councils, and the City of London, are responsible for the other Thames bridges. The following restrictions apply or are planned:-

Tower Bridge
17 tonnes weight. Weekend closure on 22-23 and 29-30 January for renovation.

London Bridge
Lane closures for one week at some time in the summer for resurfacing the King William street approach.

Waterloo Bridge
Closure on 2-15 January to replace an expansion joint.

Westminster Bridge
7·5 tonnes weight. The co-ordination of work to upgrade the bridge, starting in the summer, and work to extend the Jubilee Line is currently under discussion.

Lambeth Bridge
Closures and lane closures to renew expansion joints, but no start date yet decided.

Chelsea Bridge
Footways will be repaired in January and February.

Albert Bridge
Closure for one weekend in March for programmed maintenance. Further weekend closures in the summer for deck repairs.

Battersea Bridge
Closed since 29 November and expected to re-open in February.

Hammersmith Bridge
3 tonnes weight. Lane closures from 4 January to mid-February for programmed maintenance.

Blue Light Emergency Services

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list all those companies registered with his Department who are offering blue light emergency services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Operators of vehicles using blue warning beacons and special warning lights are not required with this Department.

The Road Vehicles Lighting Regulations make provision for these lamps to be used on "emergency vehicles" which are defined as motor vehicles of any of the following descriptions:

(a) a vehicle used for fire brigade, ambulance or police purposes;

(b) an ambulance, being a vehicle (other than an invalid carriage) which is constructed or adapted for the purposes of conveying sick or injured persons and which is used for such purposes;

(c) a vehicle owned by a body formed primarily for the purposes of fire salvage and used for those or similar purposes;

(d) a vehicle owned by the Forestry Commission or by a local authority and used from time to time for the purposes of fighting fires;

(e) a vehicle owned by the Secretary of State for Defence and used—
(i) for the purposes of the disposal of bombs or explosives,
(ii) by the Naval Emergency Monitoring Organisation for the purposes of a nuclear accident or an incident involving radioactivity,
(iii) by the Royal Air Force mountain rescue service for the purposes of rescue operations or any other emergencies, or
(iv) by the Royal Air Force armament support unit;

(f) a vehicle primarily used for the purposes of the Blood Transfusion Service provided under the National Health Service Act 1977 or under the National Health Service (Scotland) act 1978;

(g) a vehicle used by Her Majesty's Coastguard or Coastguard Auxilliary Service for the purposes of giving aid to persons in danger or vessels in distress on or near the coast;

(h) a vehicle owned by the British Coal Corporation and used for the purposes of rescue operations at mines;

(i) a vehicle owned by the Royal National Lifeboat Institution and used for the purposes of launching lifeboats; and

(j) a vehicle primarily used for the purpose of conveying any human tissue for transplanting or similar purposes.

London Buses Ltd.

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the privatisation of London Buses Ltd.

Mr. Norris: My right hon. Friend has written to the chairman of London Transport to inform him of the Government's agreement in principle to the early privatisation of the subsidiaries of London Buses Ltd.

Before the companies can be sold, the services they operate on behalf of London Transport must be put on a clear contractual basis. Forty per cent. of the London Transport network is already operated under contract by private firms or London Buses Ltd. companies, and there will be a further round of competitive tendering next year to increase that proportion. The remaining routes operated by London Buses Ltd. subsidiaries will be put on a formal contractual basis from 1 April 1993, paving the way for the London Buses Ltd. companies to be offered for sale from late 1993 onwards.

The Government remain firmly committed to de-regulating the London bus market at the earliest opportunity. Early privatisation will help to ensure that competition in the deregulated market takes place on a free and fair basis.

ENVIRONMENT

Emissions

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what work has been undertaken to date by his Department to monitor emission levels from manufacturing industries in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Maclean: The main polluting industries are controlled under part I of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and the Alkali etc. Works Regulation Act 1906. The emphasis is on operators of these industries monitoring their own emissions. The relevant enforcing authorities have powers to check that this monitoring is undertaken satisfactorily and to carry out their own monitoring in order to substantiate the operator's results or to investigate matters not covered by the operator's monitoring programme.

Water Quality

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what financial assistance Her Majesty's Government gave to improve water quality for each of the last five years before water privatisation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: A considerable proportion of investment by the former water authorities had the effect of improving water quality. Some details of that expenditure were given in the DOE chapters of the annual public expenditure White Paper. Investment expenditure was met from water charges and borrowing: the limits for the latter were set out in the White Papers.

Water Supplies

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment to which authorities the disconnection of a water supply to an inhabited premises with a water meter is notifiable.

Mr. Maclean: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 4 November 1992, at column *235*, which applies irrespective of the method of charging in use.

Housing Starts

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the number of private sector housing starts in England for the 1991-92 year.

Mr. Baldry: It is estimated that in England during the financial year 1991-92 there were 113,300 private enterprise and 19,700 housing association starts.

Unleaded Petrol

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what analyses of the safety, or impact on human health, of unleaded petrol have been carried out; if he will give details; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The hon. Member may have in mind the fact that the benzene content of unleaded petrol in the United Kingdom is typically rather higher, at 3 to 4 per cent., than for leaded petrol—2·5 per cent. Benzene is a genotoxic carcinogen. A number of studies have been made of the effects of occupational exposure to benzene, and the Department's expert panel on air quality standards has been asked to make recommendations on an ambient air quality standard for benzene. However, the major source of benzene emissions in the United Kingdom is not the evaporation of petrol but rather petrol engine exhaust, and most of the benzene in this exhaust arises from the "cracking" of aromatics in the engine rather than from the original benzene content of the fuel. Harmful exhaust emissions, including benzene, can be drastically reduced by fitting three-way catalytic converters to cars. This will be mandatory under EC standards for new cars from the end of 1992. Cars with catalytic converters will run only on unleaded petrol.

Tarmac

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many meetings took place between Tarmac and individual members of the Property Services Agency Projects board from October 1991 to October 1992; and if he will make a statement on the nature of these meetings;

(2) if he will list the meetings between Tarmac and the Property Services Agency Projects board from October 1991 to October 1992; and if he will make a statement on the nature of these meetings.

Mr. Redwood: Many meetings would have taken place between individual members of the PSA Projects board and Tarmac as with any major construction company, in the normal course of business. The PSA board has met Tarmac twice during this period as part of projects' efforts to establish itself as a commercial organisation. In addition during the due diligence phase of the sale process, both the board and individual board members met Tarmac on the same basis as other shortlisted bidders. Following Tarmac's selection as preferred bidder at the end of September there were frequent meetings between board members and Tarmac in preparation for staff consultation about the sale and to develop Tarmac's plans for the business.

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list and quantify all existing claims for liquidated damages *(a)* from the former Property Services Agency Projects board against Tarmac and *(b)* from Tarmac against the former Property Services Agency Projects board.

Mr. Redwood: There are no existing claims between Tarmac and the former Property Services Agency Projects board. Property Services Agency Projects no longer advises client departments on current claims against or by Tarmac. The contracts relating to such claims have been the responsibility of client departments since 1 April 1990. The amounts of claims by commercial companies against Government Departments are commercially confidential.

City Grant

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what was the expenditure on city grant in the assisted areas in each year since its inception;

(2) how much city grant expenditure there has been in the metropolitan borough of Wirral council district in each year since its inception;

(3) what percentage of city grant spending took place in the assisted areas *(a)* in each year since its inception and *(b)* in total since its inception.

Mr. Robin Squire: City grant expenditure approved for projects in assisted areas since the introduction of city grant in 1988, and the percentage of total expenditure is as follows:

	£ million	per cent.
In assisted areas		
1988-89	4·752	19
1989-90	28·684	44
1990-91	34·741	65
1991-92	56·468	74
1992-93[1]	31·128	66
In Wirral metropolitan borough council aarea		
1988-89	0·000	—
1989-90	0·000	—
1990-91	0·126	—
1991-92	2·173	—
1992-93	0·000	—

[1] In first eight months.

Total expenditure approved for projects in assisted areas represents 58 per cent. of all city grant expenditure approved to date.

All figures exclude grant offers not taken up.

City Challenge

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what criteria or performance indicators will be taken into account, apart from measuring each authority's performance against the strategic objectives and outputs specified in the action plans, for the purposes of the city challenge scheme in considering which pacemaker authorities should receive more or less than the average sum originally promised per pacemaker authority.

Mr. Robin Squire: The 11 city challenge pacemakers will each receive £37·5 million over five years, subject only to an annual review of progress toward achieving the strategic objectives and outputs specified in their action plans.

Building Control Fees

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what is the current level of building control fees; and what was the level of those fees in each of the last 10 years for which figures are available;

(2) what was the rise in both actual and percentage terms of the most recent increase in building control fees; when that increase was implemented; and upon what basis that increase was calculated;

(3) if he will make a statement outlining the reasons for levelling building control fees; and for which precise categories of building work they are levied.

Mr. Baldry: The current level of building control fees payable to local authorities in England and Wales is set out in the Building (Amendment of Prescribed Fees) Regulations 1992 (1992 No. 2079). These regulations, which were laid before Parliament on 9 September 1992 and came into operation on 1 October 1992, provided for an increase in fees for all three categories of building work: new housing, domestic extensions and alterations, and all other types of work including industrial and commercial.

Building control fees are levied so that the costs of providing the service are paid for primarily by the developer rather than by the taxpayer generally. The purpose of the increase was threefold: to keep fee levels in line with inflation since the previous increase in February 1991; to reflect increased local authority workload arising from the Building Regulations 1991; and to reduce the deficit between fee income and the cost of the building control service, which was particularly large for work involving domestic extensions and alterations. The average increase for most categories of work was 9·4 per cent. The actual fee for an average sized house increased from £209 to £228; for 10 houses from £1,802 to £1,972; for a £0·5 million non-domestic building from £2,440 to £2,668. For non-domestic work above £1 million the fees remained unchanged. Fees for domestic extensions and alterations inceased by 50 per cent., involving an actual rise for an average sized extension from £60 to £90; and for larger extensions from £120 to £180.

The level of fees charged by local authorities over the last 10 years are set out in the following statutory instruments which are available in the Library of the House:

Statutory Instrument	*Came into force*
1982 No. 577	1 July 1982
1983 No. 1611 (Amendment)	19 December 1983
1985 No. 1576	11 November 1985
1986 No. 2287 (Amendment)	1 February 1987
1988 No. 871 (Amendment)	13 June 1988
1989 No. 1118 (Amendment)	1 September 1989
1990 No. 2600 (Amendment)	1 February 1991

The separate building regulations system for London was incorporated into the national arrangements in 1985 and 1987 and the building regulation fees existing at the time in England and Wales were applied to London under the Building (Inner London) Regulations, Statutory Instruments 1985 No. 1936 and 1987 No. 798 which came into force on 6 January 1986 and 1 July 1987 respectively.

Home Improvements (Compensation)

Mrs. Roe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he proposes to publish a consultation paper on the new right to compensation for home improvements in the Housing and Urban Development Bill.

Mr. Baldry: My right hon. and learned Friend, and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales have today published a consultation paper entitled "Compensation for Tenants' Improvements". The consultation paper seeks views from interested parties on the operation of a new mandatory scheme whereby local authority tenants can receive compensation for carrying out worthwhile home improvements, once their tenancy ends. In line with the citizens charter, the scheme will benefit all council tenants, and provide encouragement and recognition for the commitment some tenants make towards improving their homes.

The powers to establish this new scheme are contained in clause 109 of the Housing and Urban Development Bill.

A consultation paper on the introduction of a similar scheme in Scotland will be issued by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland. Copies of both consultation papers will be placed in the Libraries of the House.

Waste (Definition)

Mr. Marland: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will seek to amend the regulations governing the definition of waste; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 2 December 1992]:* Waste is defined in section 75 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990. The Government have no plans to amend the section. The definition of controlled waste in the same section of that Act is qualified in the Controlled Waste Regulations 1992 (SI 1992 No. 588).

Ozone Depletion

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what contribution has been promised by the United Kingdom to the interim multilateral fund to assist with the prevention of ozone depletion; and what funds have so far been paid.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I have been asked to reply. I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Burnely (Mr. Pike) on 3 December (column 302).

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Citizens Charter

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will describe the place and the date on which each of the photographs in the citizens charter first report: 1992 Cm. 2101 was taken; and if he will place in the Library an untrimmed copy of the photograph facing the contents page, showing the background behind the people.

Mr. Waldegrave:

Page 6 St. Marys Hospital Paddington, London W2—October 1992.
Page 11 Woodcote Primary School, Croydon—October 1992.
Page 17 Dorking BR station—February 1992.
Page 18 Victoria BR station, London SW1—October 1992.
Page 24 South West Mechanised Letter Office, London SW8—August 1992.
Page 33 Watford Tax Office—October 1992.
Page 36 Sheffield—October 1992.

An untrimmed version of the photograph that faces the contents page has been placed in the Library of the House. It was taken in Victoria street, London SW1, in June 1989.

EDUCATION

School Curriculum and Assessment Authority

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what arrangements he is making for the appointment of the proposed school curriculum and assessment authority.

Mr. Patten: To ensure that the appropriate preparations can be made for the establishment of the school curriculum and assessment authority, my Department has appointed a firm of management consultants to help draw up a list of appropriate candidates with the qualities and skills necessary to a successful chairman. A panel, chaired by the first civil service commissioner, will consider their advice, interview those on the shortlist and make recommendations to me. Any appointment will be subject to the passage of the legislation.

Sir Anthony Durant: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what arrangements he has made for setting up the new school curriculum and assessment authority.

Mr. Patten: The Government intend, subject to the passage of the necessary legislation, to establish a new authority in England to be responsible for matters relating to the national curriculum and the associated assessment arrangements. Parliamentary approval to expenditure associated with preparing for the establishment of the new authority will be sought in a supply estimate for the schools, research and miscellaneous services vote (class X, vote 1, in 1993-94). Pending that approval, essential preparatory expenditure estimated at £90,000 in 1992-93 will be met by a repayable advance from the contingencies fund.

Teacher Training

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement on the bursary scheme for students on courses of initial teacher training in shortage subjects.

Mr. Forth: The shortage subject bursary scheme provides incentive payments to students taking post-graduate certificate in education and two-year BEd courses in mathematics, science, technology and modern foreign languages. Although recruitment to these and other courses of initial teacher training is buoyant and the vacancy rate for teachers is now lower than it has been for over 10 years, the bursary scheme is still needed to help maintain teacher supply in those subject areas which are most difficult to recruit to. My right hon. Friend will therefore make expenditure provision available for the scheme in the next financial year; but, to reflect spending priorities, the current bouyancy of recruitment to teacher training and the lw loevel of teacher vacancies, my right hon. Friend and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales intend to seek parliamentary approval for a change in the relevant statutory instrument to alter the level of payment at which the bursary will be set.

The current main rate of bursary is £1,500 a year, and there are extra payments to those on courses in physics and craft, design and technology. We intend to introduce a flat-rate bursary of £1,000 for all students commencing eligible courses on or after 1 September 1993.

Engineers

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) what plans his Department has to encourage qualified engineers to enter teaching; how many qualified engineers and electrical engineers have been recruited to the teaching profession for each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what is the total number of *(a)* qualified engineers and *(b)* electrical engineers currently in the teaching profession at (i) school and (ii) university and higher education level; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: The Government do not collect statistics on the number of qualified engineers in or joining the teaching profession in schools and higher education.

The Department provides bursaries to encourage graduates in appropriate disciplines—including engineering—to undertake initial teacher training in certain secondary school subjects including technology and physics. The Department has also initiated a number of specific measures to encourage mature career changers, including engineers, to enter school teaching. These include organising and part funding a programme of "Taste of Teaching" courses run by higher education institutions; encouraging the development of new shortened teacher training courses for mature entrants, including engineers; and introducing and financing new entry routes into the profession via the licensed teacher and articled teacher schemes.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans his Department has to increase the use of outside engineers in technology courses.

Mr. Forman: There has been a considerable expansion of links between industry and education over the last decade. Government have encouraged and welcomed this development which has led to an increase in the involvement of engineers with education at all levels. Within this context, it is for individual institutions to decide the form particular links with industry should take, and the extent to which this could include the involvement of practising engineers in engineering and technology courses.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans his Department has to encourage qualified engineers and electrical engineers to enter teaching at university and higher education level.

Mr. Forman: It is for institutions to recruit the staff they need to provide high-quality teaching in engineering and other subjects. The Government have no plans to intervene in this process. More flexible pay structures in recent years have enabled management to target pay on specific areas of recruitment difficulty.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans his Department has to promote engineering within technology courses in the national curriculum; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: A number of national curriculum subjects, including mathematics, science, technology and art, offer pupils the opportunities to acquire fundamental knowledge, skills and understanding appropriate for the study of engineering after the age of 16. My right hon. Friends, the Secretaries of State for Education and for Wales are currently considering the recommendations of the national curriculum technology review group and will make a full statement when their joint proposals are published for consultation later in December.

Technology

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to promote technology courses within the national curriculum in *(a)* city technology colleges and *(b)* other schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: Under the national curriculum, the study of technology is now compulsory for all pupils in maintained schools aged between five and 14 (unless specifically excepted) and will become so for pupils aged between 14 and 16 from August 1993. It is for local authorities and individual schools to decide how best to support this study from within the £176 million of expenditure supported through the Department's grants for education support and training programme to assist with the implementation of the national curriculum.

City technology colleges have been established specifically to promote the teaching of mathematics, science and technology. Similarly, schools funded under the technology schools initiative are committed to promoting particularly their technology teaching and its vocational aspects. My right hon. Friend will be announcing a further tranche of funding under this initiative shortly.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list for each city technology college *(a)* the total number of pupils taking GCSE in technology, *(b)* the total number per grade obtained and *(c)* the percentage of pupils who participated in technology courses for the latest year figures are available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: The first pupils to have undertaken a full CTC secondary education will not take GCSE until 1993, and the majority not until 1995. There are therefore no GCSE results for CTC technology yet. All CTC pupils undertake technology courses.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what percentage of pupils participate in technology courses in schools other than city technology colleges; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: Under the national curriculum, the study of technology is compulsory for all pupils in maintained schools aged between five and 14 (unless specifically excepted) and will become so for pupils aged between 14 and 16 in August 1993. Information about the number of pupils aged between 14 and 16 following general courses in technology in the current academic year is not available centrally.

Higher Education

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the proportion of students in England who currently go on to higher education.

Mr. Forman: The usual indicator of participation by young people in higher education is the age participation index (API)—that is the number of full-time and sandwich home initial entrants aged less than 21 expressed as a percentage of the averaged 18 to 19 age group. The API for Great Britain in 1991-92 was 23·5 per cent. and is thought to have reached about 28 per cent this autumn. No corresponding figures for England are available.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Coastal Protection

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many miles of (a) sea defences and (b) coast protection works there are in Northern Ireland; where each is situated; who is responsible for them; and what is the residual life of each.

Mr. Atkins: Roads service of the Department of the Environment carries out work to deal with coastal erosion at the following locations where the structural stability of the road is threatened:

Road	*Location*	*Length (miles)*	*Approximate residual life (years)*
A2	Warrenpoint	1·55	20
A2	Drumesk Road, Rostrevor	0·12	20
A2	Rostrevor Quay	0·12	20
U6573	Harbour Road, Kilkeel	0·06	20
G316	Benagh Road, Kilkeel	0·06	20
C317	Benagh Road, Kilkeel	0·19	20
A2	Islandmagee	4·35	20
A2	Larne—Garron Point	15·50	20
B202	Point Road, Magilligan	1·25	10
A2	Garron Road, Waterfoot	6·00	3
A2	Coast Road, Waterfoot	0·75	3
B92	Main Street, Cushendum	0·10	10
B92	Bay Road, Cushendun	0·50	0
B15	Whitepark Road, Ballintoy	0·25	1
U88	Murlough Road, Ballycastle	0·75	0
U83	Carrickmore Road, Ballycastle	2·50	3
U26	Giants Causeway Road, Bushmills	0·50	0
U5113	Dunseverick, Bushmills	0·50	5
U5115	Harbour Road, Ballintoy	0·30	3
U5114	Portbraden Road, Bushmills	0·10	5
U5224	Dalriada Park, Cushendall	0·25	3
A2	Quay Route (Craigavon Bridge/Guildhall)	0·50	25
A2	Quay Route (Craigavon Bridge/Boating Club Lane)	0·50	25
U1119	Point Road, Culmore	0·75	10
U1515	Bay Road, Panneburn	0·50	25
U3557	Beach Road, Portballintrae	0·10	10
A2	Portstewart Promenade	0·40	20
U3533	Strand Head, Portstewart	0·10	10
A20	Newtownards to Greyabbey		
A20	Kircubbin		
U301	Portaferry	11·20	20
A2	Donaghadee/Millisle/Ballywalter/Ballyhalbert/Cloughy		
A2	Holywood	0·93	20
A2	Killough		
A2	South of Strangford	5·90	20
U240	Ballyhornan		

Northern Ireland Railways carries out running repair sea defence work on the following lines:

Location	*Length (miles)*	*Approximate residual life (years)*
Larne line	8·00	20
Londonderry line (along Foyle Estuary)	10·00	20
Bangor line at Holywood	0·25	20

The Department of Agriculture has statutory powers under the Drainage (NI) Order 1973 to maintain sea defences which have been designated by the Drainage Council for Northern Ireland. The locations and lengths of designated sea defences are:

	Miles
North Down	
Newtownards/Comber Dyke	3·0
Holywood	0·2
North Londonderry	
Myroe Embankment	3·0
Ballykelly Embankment	2·0
Longfield Embankment	3·8
Black Brae Embankment	2·0

It is not possible to determine accurately the residual life of each designated sea defence as this depends on future weather and tidal combinations as well as the condition of the defence.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what surveys have been carried out funded by his Department on coastal erosion in Northern Ireland in recent years; and where the conclusions were published.

Mr. Atkins: Two studies have been carried out by Professor R. W. G. Carter and funded by the environment service of the Department of the Environment.

(i) "Coastal Erosion and Management in Antrim Coast and Glens and Causeway Coast AONBs" published by HMSO Belfast in early 1991 as "Shifting Sands"; and

(ii) "Monitoring Sand Removal in Antrim Coast and Glens and Causeway Coast AONBs". The findings of this survey were published in "Aquatic Conservation" Vol 2 in 1992.

In addition the Department of Agriculture has agreed to make a contribution towards a feasibilty study which was commissioned by Coleraine borough council into coastal erosion problems at Portballintrae. The study report has just been completed and its publication is now a matter for Coleraine borough council.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has to improve *(a)* sea defences and *(b)* coastal protection in Northern Ireland in each of the next three years.

Mr. Atkins: Subject to the availability of finance, the roads service of the Department of the Environment proposes to spend approximately £21,000 and £50,000 in the 1993-94 and 1994-95 financial years respectively to improve existing coastal protection measures in the Coleraine and Ballycastle areas. The Department of Agriculture has plans to commence works in 1993 to refurbish the Myroe embankment at Lough Foyle. Following a recent preliminary inspection of the other three Lough Foyle embankments, the Department is about to commission more detailed feasibilty studies on the Ballykelly and Longfield embankments. A study of the Black Brae embankment will also be initiated within the next three years.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what sums were expended by Government on *(a)* sea defences and *(b)* coastal protection works in Northern Ireland in each of the last five years; and how much in each year was expended on *(a)* capital works, *(b)* repairs and *(c)* maintenance.

Mr. Atkins: The information is as follows:

Financial year	*[1] Roads service Department of the Environment* £'000	*[2] Northern Ireland railways* £'000	*[3] Department of Agriculture* £'000
1987-88	146	2	40
1988-89	291	137	109
1989-90	93	15	164
1990-91	251	21	223
1991-92	202	99	332

[1] Expenditure on repairs and maintenance to protect coasts where structural stability of a road was threatened—no capital expenditure incurred.
[2] Mostly capital expenditure on running repairs.
[3] Expenditure on maintenance and repairs of designated sea defences.

In addition the environment service, Department of the Environment has paid out the following amounts in grant-aid towards local anti-erosion schemes carried out by agencies:

Agency and financial year	*Amount* £'000
1987-88	0
Ballycastle Golf Club	
1988-89	7
1989-90	15
North Down Borough Council	
1990-91	16
1991-92	11

Draught Proofing

Mr. A. Cecil Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has for replacing the energy grant for draught proofing in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Atkins: The Department of Economic Development is reviewing the administrative arrangements for assistance with draught proofing and insulating low income homes in Northern Ireland and I hope to announce the outcome early in the new year.

DEFENCE

RAF Elvington

Mr. Alison: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if, in considering the future of the runway at the erstwhile RAF station at Elvington, near York, he will undertake to give first priority to potential purchasers representing recreational organisations;

(2) whether the disposal of the runway and flying facilities at the erstwhile RAF station at Elvington, near York, will be with, or without, flying rights;

(3) if he will list the potential alternative uses being considered for the runway at the erstwhile RAF station at Elvington, near York; and what consideration has been given to the practicality of the dismantling of the runway for the provision of construction infill;

(4) what proposals he has for retaining, or disposing of, the headquarters building and residential accommodation associated with the erstwhile RAF station at Elvington near York;

(5) what proposals are under consideration, or what decisions taken, for the future of all, or part, of the runway at the erstwhile RAF station at Elvington, near York.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: RAF Elvington ceased being a relief landing ground with effect from September 1992. My Department is currently examining whether there is an alternative defence use for all or part of the station. It is therefore too early to say what the possible future uses for RAF Elvington may be but, in keeping with our obligation to secure the best possible receipts from the sale of public assets, we would wish to explore all available options in consultation with the local authorities should the site become surplus to requirements.

Potential options indentified to date include the return of the airfield to agricultural use; its sale for outdoor recreational or flying purposes; and its use as a source of construction infill through the removal of the runway and hardstandings. Preliminary specialist advice in respect of the latter option has been sought. It is not possible to foreclose any option at this stage or to give priority to any particular use, either for the runway or the airfield as a whole. All relevant factors, including local aspirations and our own operational interests, would be assessed before decisions were taken on whether any disposal would be with or without flying rights.

There are no headquarters buildings or residential accommodation specifically associated with RAF Elvington although our requirement for facilities at RAF Church Fenton, which were previously used to support RAF Elvington, is currently being reviewed following the former's transition to relief landing ground status from April 1992.

Low Flying

Mr. Jopling: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many investigations into incidents involving low-flying jets were conducted in Cumbria over each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Records are not kept by county of the number of investigations conducted into incidents involving low-flying aircraft.

Submarines (Irish Sea)

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions have been held with representatives of the fishing industry in the constituency of South Down concerning the operation of submarines in the Irish sea and north channel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The operation of submarines in inshore fishing waters, including the Irish sea and North channel, has been discussed at a number of meetings of the relevant sub-group of the Fishing Industry Safety group, on which the Northern Ireland Fishermen's Federation is represented.

Civil Emergencies

Mr. Churchill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will set out all the occasions since 1962 in which Her Majesty's forces personnel have been used in support or assistance to national and local authorities, as a result of civil emergencies, including industrial action, showing the number of personnel involved, their units and the approximate duration of their deployment.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Details of military assistance during industrial disputes is given in the table. I also refer the hon. Member to table 6.3 in successive editions of the "Statement on the Defence Estates" volume 2 and to table 3.13 in the "Defence Statistics 1992".

Details of assistance during civil emergencies is not held in the form requested and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Year and period	*Event*	*Location*	*Military action*
1966			
16 May to 30 June	Seamen's strike	Nationwide	5 RN vessels delivered essentials to Scottish Isles
1970			
13 to 29 July	Dock strike	Nationwide	34,000 troops placed on standby
27 September to 5 November	Local Authority manual workers strike	Nationwide	1. On 21 October, 12 soldiers on standby to take over a sewage plant at Swindon 2. On 24 October, 30 to 40 Grenadier Guardsmen and Sappers with military vehicles cleared refuse in Tower Hamlets (London)
7 to 14 December	Power workers overtime ban	Nationwide	Loan of some 400 mobile generators to Hospital Boards nationwide
1972			
9 January to 28 February	Miners' strike	Nationwide	1. Fabric storage tanks loaned to the CEGB 2. Contingency plans concerning the distribution of coal and oil to power stations considered but not implemented
28 July to 16 August	Dock strike	Nationwide	1. Parade ground in Connaught Barracks, Dover, loaned to Harbour Board as vehicle sorting area awaiting ferry services 2. RAF delivered supplies to Orkney and Shetland 3. Army landing craft delivered supplies to Western Isles
1973			
26 October to 5 November	Fire Brigade strike	Glasgow	618 Servicemen (130 RN, 311 Army and 177 RAF) with 28 Green Goddesses
1974			
10 February to 11 March	Miner's strike	Nationwide	No direct action but logistic support was provided to the civil police
14 to 28 May	Ulster Workers' Council general strike	Northern Ireland	2 infantry battalions and over 700 specialists (total 1,831) sent to the Province as reinforcement for contingency plans covering electricity, gas, water, and sewage, post and oil. Only the last plan was actually implemented
1975			
13 January	Refuse	Glasgow	2,000 troops cleared refuse

Year and period	Event	Location	Military action
1977			
August to 1 November	Air Traffic Control Assistant's strike	West Drayton, London	12 × 4,000 gallon military oil tankers driven by RAF personnel delivered fuel to RAF West Drayton
4 September to 7 November	Electricity workers' dispute	Nationwide	Contingency plan involving 6,000 Servicemen considered but not implemented
14 November to 16 January 1978	Fire Brigades' strike	Nationwide	20,750 Servicemen with over 1,000 Green Goddesses in Operation
1978			
February	Oil tanker drivers' dispute	Nationwide	15,000 troops on standby
26 July to 14 August	Naval Dockyard workers dispute	Faslane (Scotland)	Royal Navy personnel replaced civilian workforce to load Polaris submarine HMS *Revenge*
3 to 10 November	Prison Officers Association dispute	Nationwide	1. In Great Britain: RVH Netley and Gordon Barracks, Guildford, reconnoitred as possible temporary prisons 2. In Northern Ireland: WETC Magilligan converted to Her Majesty's Prison Foyle 118 soldiers provided the outer guard force and 20 cooks the catering facilities
18 December to 10 January 1979	Oil tanker drivers' overtime ban	Nationwide	1. In Great Britain: Soldiers on standby 2. In Northern Ireland: 672 soldiers deployed
1979			
Early to 12 January	Water workers' strike	North West England and South Yorkshire	Servicemen on standby
22 January to 9 April	Ambulance Service strikes	Nationwide	Over 2,000 Servicemen crewed Service ambulances
Mid May to late June	Civil Service dispute	Clyde, Devonport, Glascoed (Gwent)	Some Royal Navy personnel involved in naval work in Devonport
September	Industrial Civil Servants selective strikes	Naval Dockyards, Ordnance Factories, RAF stations, Aldermaston	Some Service personnel used to take over emergency tasks, e.g., a RAF fire-fighting crew was deployed to AWRE Aldermaston and RAF fitters replaced civilians at St. Athan
24 October to 3 December	Charing Cross Hospital engineers' strike	London	Assistance in providing oil considered but not implemented
1 to 17 December	Oil tanker drivers' overtime ban	Nationwide	Troops on standby
1980			
17 January to 21 February	Water Workers' dispute	Nationwide	Services on standby
November to December	Fire Service dispute	Nationwide	472 Service crewed Green Goddesses on standby
6 October to 20 February 1981	Prison Officers Association dispute	Nationwide	1,000 Servicemen at Her Majesty's Prisons Frankland and Rollestone in Great Britain and Her Majesty's Prison Foyle in Northern Ireland
1981			
7 to 14 January	Ambulance Service strike	South Yorkshire	Some crews on standby. Dispute ended before military assistance needed
16 February to 16 March	Water workers' strike	North East and North West England	Troops on standby
9 March to 3 August	Non-industrial Civil Servants' strike	Defence Establishments Nationwide	16 Royal Navy personnel used at Coulport to Re-arm Polaris submarine HMS *Resolution*

Year and period	Event	Location	Military action
15 June to 3 August	Ambulance Service strike	Nationwide	Although military ambulances and crews were stoodby, only 9 RAF ambulances were actually involved in Wales
16 November to 2 December	Oil tanker drivers' strike	Nationwide	15,000 Servicemen on standby
1982			
June to July	British Railways and London Transport strike	Nationwide	Sappers laid Somerfield and Class 30 Trackway in Hyde Park and Regents Park in London
May to September	Ambulance Service strike	Nationwide	Military ambulances and crews on standby. Only one recorded use in London. Dispute ended 16 December 1982
1983			
24 January to 24 February	Water Workers' strike	Nationwide	Troops placed on standby
31 March to 8 April	Merchant Navy Crew dispute	Tyneside	55 Royal Navy personnel replaced civilian crew of the *Keren*
April	Fire Brigade dispute	Nationwide	13,000 Servicemen and 850 Green Goddesses on standby
1984-85			
12 March 1984 to 5 March 1985	Miners' strike	Nationwide	Logistic assistance to police
1986			
April to August	Prison Officers' Association dispute	Nationwide	6 Field Support Squadron Royal Engineers, with a troop of 3 Field Squadron, converted Rollestone Camp to a temporary prison. Troops earmarked to operate the prison not deployed
29 May to 4 June	Post Office dispute	West Yorkshire	Temporary Field Post Office set in York (4–6 June) to handle official mail. 'Self-help' Plan not fully implemented
1987			
June to November	Prison overcrowding	Nationwide	9 Paratroop Squadron Royal Engineers, converted Rollestone Camp to a temporary prison for civilian use. Handed back to Ministry of Defence 27 November
5 to 7 October	Fire Brigade strike	West Glamorgan	1 Royal Hampshire Battalion Group with 320 Servicemen (including 17 Royal Navy and 20 Royal Air Force) manned 15 Green Goddesses and 3 Fire Rescue Teams
1988			
30 March to 2 December	Prison overcrowding	Nationwide	400 troops, mainly Royal Engineers, converted Rollestone and Alma-Dettingen Camps to temporary prisons. 500 tri-Service personnel operated the two prisons
8 to 23 September	Post Office dispute	Nationwide	21 British Forces Post Offices set up in United Kingdom to provide an emergency postal service for Ministry of Defence and Her Majesty's Forces at home and abroad
5 to 10 October	Fire Brigade dispute	Bedfordshire	One convoy 2 Green Goddesses with drivers from 27 Regiment Royal Corp Transport, to man a total of 5 Green Goddesses, plus 2 Royal Navy and 4 Royal Air Force FRTs. Troops were warned for the operation, but did not deploy
1988-89			
8 November to 19 March	Ambulance Services strike	Nationwide	Over 1,200 Servicemen crewed Service ambulances
4 July to 25 August	British Railways and London Transport strike	London	Sappers laid Trackway in Hyde Park and Regents Park

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Historic Buildings (Fires)

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what advice has been given to those who manage, on behalf of the nation, the royal palaces, Crown and stately homes following the result of the investigations into the cause and extent of the fire at the National Trust property, Uppark house, West Sussex in 1989.

Mr. Brooke: In 1990 the Fire Protection Association, on behalf of the United Kingdom working party on fire safety in historic buildings, published a guide to the protection of historic buildings—"Heritage under Fire". This publication, which had full Government support, was intended to help the owner or occupier of an historic building to implement procedures to reduce the possibility of fire and, in the event of fire, to minimise its impact on the building and its contents. It drew on the experience of a number of fires, including those at Uppark house and Hampton Court palace. The guide has been distributed widely to owners of historic buildings, including the Historic Royal Palaces Agency and Government Departments. The Department of the Environment also produces a series of regularly updated guidance notes on fire prevention in historic buildings.

Windsor Castle

Mr. Fabricant: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage, when the Berkshire fire service report on the cause of the Windsor castle fire will be published.

Mr. Brooke: Both the royal household and I have received the report. The royal household is publishing the report today and I am placing a copy in the Library of the House.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Cars (Security Systems)

Ms. Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will bring forward proposals to legislate to ensure that all British car manufacturers provide in-built security systems to all models of motor cars.

Mr. Jack: Manufacturers selling into the United Kingdom market are already obliged to comply with the Motor Vehicle (Type Approval) (Great Britain) Regulations 1984 which, in turn, require them to meet certain minimum standards as regards preventing the unauthorised use of motor vehicles.

Work is in hand to update these requirements but new legislation on car security is dependant on reaching agreement within the European Community. Discussions are therefore taking place within Europe on vehicle alarm systems, door locks and improved steering locks. The Department of Transport is taking the lead in these discussions and has the full support of the Home Office. The requirements of any future European Commission directives on car security will form the basis of legislative proposals.

In the meantime, we are encouraging motor manufacturers to improve voluntarily the level of vehicle security. Many manufacturers have responded positively, and many more new cars are now being fitted with security systems as standard equipment. We shall continue to press for further improvements in this area.

Metropolitan Police (Damages)

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much in compensation, both in court and in out of court settlements, the Metropolitan police have paid to members of the public who have brought court cases for damages in each of the last five years.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information is set out in the table.

Year	*Out of court settlements £*	*Court awards £*
1988	250,000	104,000
1989	267,000	252,000
1990	557,000	188,000
1991	390,000	21,000
1992[1]	401,000	193,000

[1] To 30 November.

Asylum

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will provide an up-to-date account of the number of applications for asylum currently outstanding.

Mr. Charles Wardle: During the first week in November we undertook a full count of asylum cases. This shows that on 1 November there was a total of 51,800 initial applications awaiting decisions. These figures exclude dependants.

Life Prisoners

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home department how many life licence prisoners who are currently the subject of a Parole Board recommendation for release on licence are awaiting a ministerial decision; and what is *(a)* the average time taken in processing and *(b)* the target time for processing such decisions.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: As at 27 November, the cases of 64 life sentence prisoners who had been recommended for release by the Parole Board were under consideration.

In the 12 months ending 30 September, the average time taken to notify life sentence prisoners of the outcome of reviews—from the date of the local review committee's initial consideration—was 6·5 months. We aim to get the average down to six months by next March.

Arrests

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people were arrested in each police force area in England and Wales in 1990 and 1991.

Mr. Jack: The information is contained in the following table:

Arrests for all types of offence by police force area England and Wales

Police force area	Number arrested 1990	1991
Avon and Somerset	42,421	39,216
Bedfordshire	17,705	17,543
Cambridgeshire	18,389	17,699
Cheshire	27,823	29,684
Cleveland	26,584	28,061
Cumbria	19,479	21,275
Derbyshire	23,079	23,708
Devon and Cornwall	31,404	34,024
Dorset	17,487	18,382
Dyfed Powys	12,699	13,466
Durham	25,965	25,125
Essex	39,990	40,100
Gloucestershire	17,043	17,020
Greater Manchester	116,678	116,916
Gwent	17,060	17,796
Hampshire	63,171	62,330
Hertfordshire	22,648	23,191
Humberside	36,066	35,847
Kent	47,007	47,992
Lancashire	57,235	62,104
Leicestershire	24,949	26,417
Lincolnshire	21,474	22,680
City of London	4,809	4,688
Merseyside	69,207	72,930
Norfolk	22,727	20,898
Northamptonshire	18,242	19,353
Northumbria	65,694	68,847
North Wales	22,629	24,338
North Yorkshire	20,221	20,936
Nottinghamshire	45,468	46,487
South Wales	56,061	57,143
South Yorkshire	43,979	45,722
Staffordshire	36,861	39,142
Suffolk	13,905	15,796
Surrey	20,920	19,940
Sussex	37,358	39,247
Thames Valley	59,098	59,458
Warwickshire	13,161	14,138
West Mercia	32,285	32,048
West Midlands	123,868	131,062
West Yorkshire	84,172	85,867
Wiltshire	14,507	13,670
England and Wales (excluding Metropolitan Police District)	1,531,528	1,572,286
Metropolitan Police District[1]	116,865	113,570

[1] Notifiable offences only.

Juvenile Offenders

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many juveniles were convicted of offences in each of the years 1990, 1991 and 1992; and what percentage were aged *(a)* between 10 and 14 years and *(b)* between 15 and 17 years.

Mr. Jack: Information for 1990 and 1991 (which is provisional) is given in the table. 1992 data will not be available until autumn 1993.

Number and percentage of persons aged 10 to under 18 years convicted at all courts by age and type of offence 1990 and 1991[1] England and Wales

Year/Offence	Aged 10 and under 18 (=100 per cent.)	Aged 10 and under 15 Number	Per cent.	Aged 15 and under 18 Number	Per cent.
1990					
Indictable	46,117	6,692	15	39,425	85
Sumamry non-motoring	21,696	2,026	9	19,670	91
Summary motoring	16,564	416	3	16,148	97
All offences	84,377	9,134	11	75,243	89
1991[1]					
Indictable	42,019	5,714	14	36,305	86
Summary non-motoring	17,918	1,831	10	16,087	90
Summary motoring	13,869	341	2	13,528	98
All offences	73,806	7,886	11	65,920	89

[1] Provisional.

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many convicted teenagers are in prison; and how many on remand.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: According to the records held sencentrally, which are approximate, there were 1,413 untried, 585 convicted unsentenced and 3,127 sentenced persons aged 14 to 19 held in prison service establishments in England and Wales on 30 June 1992.

Refugees

Sir Russell Johnston: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many citizens from *(a)* Serbia, *(b)* Montenegro, *(c)* Croatia and *(d)* Bosnia-Herzegovina have been granted refugee status in the United Kingdom during the months of September, October and November;

(2) how many citizens from *(a)* Serbia, *(b)* Montenegro, *(c)* Croatia and *(d)* Bosnia-Herzegovina have been granted permanent residence status in the United Kingdom during the months of September, October and November.

Mr. Charles Wardle *[holding answer 3 December 1992]:* In the period January to October 1992 a total of around 4,000 nationals of the former Yugoslavia (excluding dependants) have applied for asylum in the United Kingdom, of which around 2,000 applied during September and October 1992. The large majority of the applications are still under consideration. More detailed information on the origin of the applicants is not available.

Information on asylum applications in November, and on acceptances for settlement in the United Kingdom in the period September to November of nationals of the former Yugoslavia, is not yet available.

Prison Population

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total prison population on the last day of September, October and November 1992; and in each case what was *(a)* the breakdown by sex and age and *(b)* the numbers (i) on remand and (ii) serving a sentence.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 3 December 1992]:* The readily available information is given in the table.

Prison population by sex, age and type of custody: September, October and November 1992[1]

	30 September	31 October	[3]30 November
MALES			
Remand			
Aged under 21	2,394	2,287	—
Aged 21 and over	6,680	6,518	—
Sentenced			
Aged under 21	5,266	4,998	—
Aged 21 and over	28,829	27,771	—
Total[1]	43,394	41,855	41,309
FEMALES			
Remand			
Aged under 21	57	55	—
Aged 21 and over	324	303	—
Sentenced			
Aged under 21	118	115	—
Aged 21 and over	1,126	1,049	—
Total[1]	1,626	1,522	1,494
Total prison population[1,2]	45,020	43,377	42,803

[1] Excludes prisoners held in police cells (815 in September, 528 in October and 356 in November).
[2] Includes non-criminal prisoners.
[3] Provisional figures; detailed breakdown not available.

Windsor Castle

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his reply of 30 November to the hon. Member for Thurrock, *Official Report*, column *445*, if Windsor castle has a fire certificate under the Fire Precautions Act 1971.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 3 December 1992]:* No. Windsor castle itself has no fire certificate. A premises within Windsor Great park used as offices already holds a fire certificate and a certificate is likely to be issued in respect of a similar designated premises shortly.

WALES

Private Detectives

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) of 19 November, *Official Report*, column *322*, if he will give details of the numbers of private detective agencies currently under contract to his Department.

Mr. David Hunt: The information requested is not held centrally, and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish his current guidelines for approved use of private detectives by his Department.

Mr. David Hunt: Enquiry agents have been used from time to time in cases of damage to trunk road furniture; personal injuries and medical negligence claims. There are no specific guidelines for their use other than value-for-money considerations in individual cases.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) of 19 November, *Official Report*, column *322*, if he will specify the names and addresses of private detective agencies currently approved for hire by his Department.

Mr. David Hunt: The information requested is not held centrally, and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Civil Servants

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many civil servants are currently employed by his Department *(a)* in London, *(b)* in Cardiff and *(c)* elsewhere.

Mr. David Hunt: The number of civil servants currently employed by my Department in the locations specified is:

	Number
(a) London	28
(b) Cardiff	1,734
(c) Elsewhere	556

Manufacturing Jobs

145 **Mr. Jon Owen Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many new jobs have been created in the manufacturing sector in Wales since 1990.

Mr. David Hunt: While comprehensive information on total jobs created is not available, levels of employment in the manufacturing sector in Wales each year are given in the following table:

Employees in manufacturing industries

Year	Thousands at June
1990	238
1991	223
1992	220

Source: Employment Department, Quarterly estimate series.

National House Building Council

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what checks on the discharge of functions of the National House Building Council and its approved inspectors his Department has made during 1991-92 with regard to properties built in Delyn during that period.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: None, although the Department has corresponded with the National House Building Council about a particular property in Delyn.

Hearing Impairment

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many children in South Glamorgan and in each county in Wales have been statemented in regard to special educational needs involving hearing impairment in each of the last five years.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Information on the types of disabilities of children with statements of special educational needs was not collected centrally for 1991.

The number of children with hearing impairments for whom statements of special education needs were made in each of the years 1986-90, in each county in Wales, is given in the following table:

	1986	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*
Clwyd	5	9	3	10	19
Dyfed	8	4	4	4	4
Gwent	9	4	3	6	3
Gwynedd	—	—	—	3	4
Mid Glamorgan	14	10	6	33	22
Powys	3	—	—	1	—
South Glamorgan	10	7	7	11	3
West Glamorgan	11	9	8	12	7
Wales	60	43	31	80	62

South Glamorgan Health Authority

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what requirements he has imposed on South Glamorgan health authority and Llandough hospital unit for public consultation before any plan to close Ward West 2 is implemented.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave him on 3 December at columns *304-5*.

Bechtel Corporation

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 30 November, *Official Report*, column 28, if the contract secured by Bechtel Corporation was won in competitive tender; when it was advertised; and what percentage or fixed sum fee has been agreed for the contract.

Mr. David Hunt: The contract for the project management consultancy for Cardiff Bay barrage was the subject of a competitive tendering exercise. Selected companies were invited to tender on 17 August 1992. The contract has not yet been signed, and it would therefore be inappropriate to release proposed details at this stage.

Ministry Land

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, how many acres of land in Wales are currently under the control of the Ministry of Defence; what rights of way across this property have been rescinded whilst it is being used for military purposes; and what information he has on land contamination on these sites.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I have been asked to reply.

My noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State will write to the hon. Member.

EMPLOYMENT

Health and Safety Executive

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many *(a)* nurses and *(b)* doctors were employed in the Health and Safety Executive area offices in Scotland in each year since 1978.

Mr. McLoughlin: The number of *(a)* nurses and *(b)* doctors employed in Health and Safety Executive area offices in Scotland in each year since 1978 was:

	(a) Nurses	*(b) Doctors*
1978	11·0	10·0
1979	11·5	9·0
1980	9·0	8·0
1981	9·0	8·5
1982	7·5	8·0
1983	7·5	7·5
1984	7·5	7·5
1985	6·0	7·5
1986	6·0	7·5
1987	6·0	7·5
1988	6·0	5·5
1989	4·5	6·0
1990	8·0	6·0
1991	7·0	6·0
1992	5·0	6·5

Note:
Figures are for 1 April each year and show full-time equivalent staff.

The reduction in the number of doctors and nurses reflects primarily a policy of HSE not itself directly providing occupational health services. For example, it appoints local doctors to conduct statutory medical examinations that were previously conducted by HSE staff.

Labour Statistics

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many new job vacancies were notified to job centres in Birmingham in each month of 1991 and 1992; and what was the proportion of jobs offering day rate remuneration of £3 per hour or less for the last month for which these figures are available.

Mr. McLoughlin: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Dr. Lynne Jones, dated 4 December 1992]:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to write to you direct to respond to your Parliamentary Question to her about the number of new job vacancies notified to Jobcentres in Birmingham in each month of 1991 and 1992 and the proportion of jobs offering day rate renumeration of £3 per hour or less for the last month for which these figures are available. This is something which falls within the responsibilities delegated to me as Chief Executive of the Agency.

I am unable to let you have details of the number of vacancies offering wage rates of £3 per hour or less since Jobcentres do not retain information on rates of pay. The attached table shows the number of vacancies notified to Jobcentres in the Birmingham area in the specified period.

As decided by the Administrative Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written

Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the *Official Report*. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Vacancies notified to jobcentres in the Birmingham area

Statistical period	*Vacancies notified*
January 1991[1]	2,599
February 1991	1,920
March 1991	1,919
April 1991	2,309
May 1991[1]	3,035
June 1991	3,406
July 1991	3,027
August 1991[1]	2,905
September 1991	2,656
October 1991[1]	3,231
November 1991	2,454
December 1991	1,176
January 1992[1]	2,741
February 1992	2,382
March 1992	2,447
April 1992[1]	2,398
May 1992	2,049
June 1992	2,017
July 1992[1]	2,870
August 1992	2,052
September 1992	2,877

Note: All months are 4 week statistical periods except those marked[1] which are 5 weeks.

Civil Servants

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many civil servants are currently employed by her Department *(a)* in London and *(b)* elsewhere.

Mr. McLoughlin: A total of 11,333 in London and 55,774 elsewhere on 13 November 1992.

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many civil servants from her Department have been relocated from London to other parts of the United Kingdom *(a)* in the last five years and *(b)* in the last 10 years; and to where they were relocated.

Mr. McLoughlin: Between 1982 and 1992 some 4,380 civil service posts from the Department were relocated to other parts of the United Kingdom. In the last five years 1,504 posts were transferred: 938 to Sheffield; 400 to Runcorn; 85 to Aberdeen; 56 to Merseyside and 25 to Bootle. In the previous five years 2,877 posts were moved: 1,877 to Sheffield and 1,000 to Bootle.

Training

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment she has made of the risks of 18-year-olds slipping through the net between what is available under YTS and the options available under the various adult training and employment schemes.

Mr. McLoughlin: There should be no risk of 18-year-olds missing out on training or employment measures. Those who leave full time education are immediately eligible for YT, and those who have been unemployed for six months or more are guaranteed appropriate support under the range of provision for unemployed adults.

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps she is taking to establish a simplified and co-ordinated information service targeted at 17 to 18-year-olds following merger of the employment action and employment training schemes; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: Comprehensive information, advice and guidance to 17 and 18-year-olds is provided by local education authority careers services. They will provide information on the new training for work arrangements, as they do for the range of training programmes. Information will also be available from the Employment Service, athough it will mainly deal directly with those 18-year-olds who might be eligible for adult programmes through being unemployed for six months or more.

Safety Helmets (Sikhs)

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to her answer to the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Duncan) of 20 November, *Official Report*, column *396*, for what reasons she will not include special provision for turban-wearing followers of the Sikh religion in the proposed regulations to implement the European directive on the use of personal protective equipment at work.

Mr. McLoughlin: The regulations in question have been made under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. Exemptions cannot be granted other than on grounds of health and safety. It was not therefore possible to include any exemption or special provision in the regulations to implement the use of personal protective equipment directive. Exemptions can only be secured by primary legislation, as in the case of the current exemption from the requirement to wear head protection on construction sites which was secured by the Employment Act 1989.

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans she has to extend the existing exemptions under the Employment Act 1989 concerning Sikhs, to non-construction sites; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has no plans to extend the existing exemptions under the Employment Act 1989 for turban-wearing followers of the Sikh religion.

Older Workers

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will now announce the membership of the Advisory Group on Older Workers.

Mr. McLoughlin: I announced the membership of the Advisory Group on Older Workers on 2 December. I am very pleased to have secured the services of 11 people with wide experience of industry and the problems caused by age discrimination. The group, which I shall chair, will start work in the new year.

The members are:

Lilian Bennett	Chairman, Manpower plc
Roslin Fraser	Deputy President Royal College of Nursing
Anne Gibson	National Officer, MSF
Archie Gibson	former General Manager, Bank of Scotland
Sally Greengross	Director, Age Concern
Anne Mackie	former employee relations manager, Unilever plc
Rafiq Malik	member of Blackburn Racial Equality Council
Anthea Tinker	Professor of Gerontology, King's College

Stephen Ward	Personnel Director, Birmingham City Council
Denis Waxman	Managing Director, Hays Personnel
Dianah Worman	Equal Opportunities Adviser, Institute of Personnel Management

Domiciliary Care Agencies

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if, pursuant to her answer of 30 November, *Official Report*, column *55*, if she will break down the overall figure of licensed employment agencies whose activities may include domiciliary care work indicating in which local authority or travel to work areas these agencies are located.

Mr. McLoughlin: A breakdown in the form requested is not available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Greater Manchester Ambulance Service

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many Greater Manchester ambulance service personnel have successfully proved unfair dismissal at industrial tribunals in each of the past four years and 1992 to date; and what is the total sum of money awarded by tribunals over the same period.

Mr. McLoughlin: According to the records held by the regional office of the industrial tribunals—Manchester—there have been three such cases. The awards made in respect of these cases totalled £21,183.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Budget Proposals

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the budget proposals for 1993 for *(a)* income support, *(b)* family credit, *((c)* council tax benefit and *(d)* the social fund; and if he will list these budgets indexed against, (i) the retail price index and (ii) average male earnings.

Mr. Burt: Details of our expenditure plans, including those for income support, family credit and council tax benefit for the next financial year will be available when the departmental report is published in February 1993. On 12 November it was announced that income support, family credit, and council tax benefit would be uprated, from April 1993, by the Rossi index (3·6 per cent.), which increased at the same rate as the retail price index (RPI) for September 1991 to September 1992. The average male earnings index for the same period was 4·7 per cent.

The social fund discretionary budget will be around £340 million in 1993-94. This represents an increase of 12 per cent. over the previous year.

Income Support

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much money is included in income support payments to meet water charges; and how many income support claimants have water charges of *(a)* less than £2 per week and *(b)* £2 per week or more, giving the number for each additional range of £1.

Mr. Burt: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) on 18 May 1992 at cols *28-9*. It is estimated that in 1989 the distribution of water charges for income support recipients was as shown in the table.

Water charges (£ per week)	*Caseload*
Nil	745
0 - 2	2,330
2 - 3	960
3 - 4	110
4 and over	20
Total	4,160

Notes:
1. Caseloads are thousands rounded to the nearest 5,000
2. Source: 1989 Family Expenditure Survey. Caseloads have been weighted to the 1989 Income Support statistical enquiry.
3. Amounts for water include sewerage and environmental charges.

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the level of income support and other benefits in real and at 1983 price terms for each of the last 10 years for *(a)* 16 and 17-year-olds, *(b)* 18 to 24-year-olds and *(c)* those aged 25 years or over.

Mr. Burt: Income support was introduced in April 1988. The tables provide the rates for each year since 1988 and at 1992 prices.

Table (A) single person (aged 16-17)

	Income support rate	*Average real value of benefit at April 1992 prices over the period*	*Equivalent value of benefit at April 1992 prices at date of uprating*
	£		
April 1988	19·40	24·33	24·83
April 1989	20·80	24·73	25·28
April 1990	21·90	24·28	25·03
April 1991	23·65	24·35	24·91
April 1992	25·55	—	25·55
Table (B) single person (aged 18-24)			
April 1988	26·05	32·67	33·34
April 1989	27·40	32·58	33·30
April 1990	28·80	31·93	32·91
April 1991	31·15	32·07	32·81
April 1992	33·60	—	33·60
Table (C) single person (aged 25 or over)			
April 1988	33·40	41·89	42·75
April 1989	34·90	41·50	42·41
April 1990	36·70	40·69	41·94
April 1991	39·65	40·83	41·76
April 1992	42·45	—	42·45

Notes:
1. As supplementary benefit (the predecessor to income support) varied according to household status and entitlement to a range of special additions, it is not appropriate to make comparisons with income support. Because of this, the reply is restricted to 1988 onwards and 1992 prices.
2. Anyone receiving income support is entitled to maximum housing benefit and community charge benefit (ie 100 per cent. of eligible rent and 80 per cent. of eligible community charge).
3. A wide range of other benefits are available to single people subject to their meeting the qualifying conditions.

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much money is included in income support payments to meet water and sewerage charges.

Mr. Burt: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) on 18 May at cols *28-9*.

National Insurance Fund

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when the maximum figure for the transfer of funds from Parliament to the national insurance fund of 17 per cent. of benefit outgoings from 1994-95 onwards was fixed; and what working assumptions were used.

Mr. Burt: Proposals for the maximum amounts of Treasury grant were finalised at the time of the Chancellor's autumn statement. The working assumptions used to inform consideration of the maximum amounts were those published in table 2D.1 of Cm. 2096.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what were the reasons for the decrease in the Treasury supplement to the national insurance fund *(a)* between 1981 and 1985 and *(b)* currently.

Mr. Burt: *(a)* The Social Security (Contributions) Act 1981 permited the amount of the Treasury supplement to be varied by up to 2 per cent. The changes in amounts between the tax years 1981-82 and 1985-86 reflected the views taken by the Government at successive re-ratings on the appropriate balance of national insurance fund expenditure to be met by contributors and taxpayers, in the light of the circumstances at the time.

(b) The Treasury supplement was abolished in 1989.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether the assumptions used in calculating the maximum level of transfers from Parliament to the national insurance fund of 20 per cent. of benefit outgoings in 1993-94 and 17 per cent. in future years were identical to those used in table 20.1 of Cm. 2096.

Mr. Burt: Yes.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what effect each increase in unemployment of 100,000 would have on the national insurance fund in 1993-94, 1994-95 and 1995-96 in cash and constant prices.

Mr. Burt: The effect in 1993-94 is set out in paragraph 22 of the Government Actuary's report (Cm. 2097). In later years the figures would be broadly similar.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what working assumption of unemployment levels was used for 1994-95 and future years to calculate the maximum transfer of money provided by Parliament to the national insurance fund of 17 per cent. of benefit outgoings.

Mr. Burt: The working assumptions published in table 2D.1 of Cm. 2096 were taken into consideration in setting the maximum level of Treasury grant for the years 1994-95 onwards.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Staffordshire, Moorlands (Mr. Knox), *Official Report*, column 690, what percentage of the national insurance fund has been paid out in national insurance rebates, tax reliefs and other incentives paid in respect of personal pensions contracted out of the state earnings-related pension scheme for each of the past four years; and what is the equivalent expected percentage in each of the next four years.

Mr. Burt: Although for administrative reasons tax relief is paid with the rebate, because it is claimed back from the Inland Revenue it is not a charge on the national insurance fund.

Not all the information requested is available. Such information as is available is in the tables.

Table 1

Tax Year	*NI Fund Income (£m)*	*Percentage*
1988-89	29,825	1·1
1989-90	30,446	8·5
1990-91	34,490	6·3
1991-92	34,679	7·4

Table 2

Tax Year	*Estimated NI Fund Income (£m)*	*Percentage*
1992-93	35,993	8·1
1993-94	45,684	6·3

Maintenance Payments

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what means are used in pursuing maintenance payments from males under the age of 18 years.

Mr. Burt: All absent parents are liable to support their children. If under the age of 18, cases are referred to a manager who will consider the circumstances and decide whether the absent parent should be approached. If the absent parent is under the age of 16, a parent or guardian must be present at any interview. If between 16 and 18, the absent parent can choose to have someone else present.

War Pensions

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what changes he is making to the criteria by which war pensions are awarded from 1 January 1993; what is the estimated number of people likely to be affected by the new regulations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State anounced proposals to introduce, from 7 January 1993, a threshold for claims for noise-induced hearing loss bringing the war pension rules more into line with those for industrial injury awards. The effect would be that those with less than 20 per cent. disablement in respect of that condition would receive no award. No existing war pensioners with an award in respect of noise induced hearing loss would be affected. It is estimated that in 1993-94 some 10,000 new claimants would be affected.

It is also proposed that savings from this proposal be used to remove rank differential in war disablement pensions from April 1993. Almost 200,000 war disablement pensioners would gain up to £5 a week as a result.

These proposals were discussed yesterday with the Central Advisory Committee on War Pensions; the comments of committee members are under consideration.

Benefit Offices (Newham)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if Newham district Benefits Agency offices are paying all social fund claims falling into revised high priority groups for community care grants and budgeting loans;

(2) what items and circumstances previously eligible for community care grants and budgeting loans have been removed from high priority lists in Newham's benefit offices during the current year;

(3) what guidance was given to the Newham Benefits Agency social fund manager in respect of categories removed from the high priority list of items and circumstances for community care grants and budgeting loans between August and October; and if he will make a statement;

(4) what changes in the level of priority of items for community care grants and budgeting loans in the Newham district Benefits Agency social fund resulted from the budget overspend in June and July;

(5) if he will increase the budget allocation for community care grants and budgeting loans to Newham district Benefits Agency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: The administration of the social fund is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Tony Banks, dated 3 December 1992:

As chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Questions to the Secretary of State for Social Security about Social Fund priorities and budget allocations in the Benefits Agency's Newham District.

Social Fund Officers (SFOs) must determine each application on its own merits in the light of all the relevant factors and circumstances. While SFOs are subject to the law and the Secretary of State's directions, they have discretion about whether to make a payment, having regard to the circumstances of an individual applicant.

SFOs must give priority to high priority needs while adopting as consistent an approach as possible throughout the year. To assist them in this, the Area SFO (District Manager) gives them guidance on priorities. It is for the Area SFO to give guidance on the order of priorities for his area, and which are to be classed as high, medium or low priority. It must be stressed that this is guidance and therefore not binding on the SFO, but it must be taken into account. There is therefore no question of eligibility for payment. All items and circumstances may be paid depending on the individual circumstances of the applicant.

Allocations are made annually to each District for loans and grants. In order for the Area SFO to manage the allocations effectively, monthly profiles of expenditure are planned. These serve as a guide only and it is not the case, therefore, that the Newham District allocation was overspent in June and July.

The Benefits Agency's Newham District is continuing to pay all Social Fund applications that fall into the high priority groups for grants and loans as suggested by the Area SFO.

The Secretary of State requires the Area SFO to monitor monthly expenditure on Social Fund and adjust the guidance to SFOs as required. No specific additional guidance has been given by the Secretary of State. Following the monthly review in August, the Area SFO decided that payment for some items and services could no longer be sustained consistently from the District allocation. She therefore issued amended guidance with effect from 1 September 1992. The effect of this guidance was that some items and services which the previous guidance had indicated would normally attract high priority would now attract medium priority.

Social Fund budgets are closely monitored and Newham District received an increase of £49,525 to its loans budget in November. There are no plans to increase the grants budget of this District.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy of this letter will appear in the Official Report. Copies are also being placed in the Library.

Day Centres

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the reasons why individuals on invalidity and sick benefit are entitled to claim re-imbursement for travel to health service day centres but not to local authority day centres.

Mr. Yeo: I have been asked to reply.

There are statutory arrangements to provide help with the travelling expenses necessarily incurred by National Health Service patients on income support, family credit or low income when they attend a hospital for treatment, including attendance at day hospitals. Local authorities have discretion to charge for the day and domiciliary services they provide, including transport to day centres. In doing so they should have regard to the service user's means and ability to pay.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Tropical Timber

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been received at the recent preparatory committee from Governments of tropical countries concerning the expansion of the International Tropical Timber Agreement to encompass timber from all forest types; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: A few tropical timber countries represented at the preparatory committee proposed that the agreement should be extended to include non-tropical timber. No formal proposal for such an extension was put forward by tropical timber countries as a whole.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what commitments have been made by the United Kingdom in relation to the International Tropical Timber Organisation's targets and guidelines.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: As a member of the International Tropical Timber Organisation we are committed to playing our part in achieving the target of the year 2000 for all internationally traded tropical timber from sustainably managed forests and assisting in the implementation of the International Tropical Timber Organisation's guidelines on sustainable management and biodiversity.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much funding has been contributed by the United Kingdom Government to the administrative and special accounts of the International Tropical Timber Organisation since 1987; and what is the Government's overall budget for matters related to the International Tropical Timber Organisation.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Our contributions to the International Tropical Timber Organisations administrative account which are annually assessed in United States dollars are:

	$
1987	58,466
1988	59,895
1989	66,411
1990	74,601
1991	98,602
1992	86,358

The sterling equivalent of the 1992 payment was £49,500. In addition we also make payments on a case by case basis to projects under ITTO's special account. In the United Kingdom financial year ending 31 March 1992 we contributed £213,000.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the steps taken by the Government *(a)* to investigate the feasibility of forest monitoring, timber tracing and product labelling of timber from well managed forests and *(b)* to monitor the level of imports into the United Kingdom of tropical timber from sustainably managed and environmentally benign and socially beneficial sources.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We provided finance to ITTO to carry out an initial study of the feasibility of labelling based originally on a proposal from Friends of the Earth. We are supporting work on incentives which might be introduced at local level in Ghana to ensure sustainable forest management. We are also offering the Soil Association help to finance the preparation of draft standards for tropical forest management as part of its work on timber certification in association with the Forest Stewardship Council.

More work needs to be done on the design and establishment of labelling, certification and monitoring systems before it would be practicable to introduce import monitoring of tropical timber as proposed.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been received by the Government from representatives of the timber industry concerning the renegotiation of the international tropical timber agreement; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Representations have been received from the National Hardwood Association of the Tropical Timber Federation.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what evidence he has of a relationship between tropical deforestation rates and population growth.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The relationship is complex. To improve our knowledge and understanding of the linkages we have commissioned a programme of research through the University of Bradford.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the outcome of the recent preparatory committee to renegotiate the international tropical timber agreement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The recent Preparatory Committee provided for an initial exchange of views on the possible elements of a renegotiated agreement which will be pursued at a further meeting in Quito, Ecuador next January.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been received by the Government from non-governmental environmental organisations concerning the inclusion of timber from all forest types under the international tropical timber agreement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Representations have been received from the World Wide Fund for Nature and Friends of the Earth.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the agreement reached at UNCED regarding the trade in forest products.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: In the forest principles agreed at UNCED, it was decided that trade in forest products should be based on non-discriminatory and multilaterally agreed rules and procedures consistent with international trade law and practices.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps have been taken by the Government to review the progress made in implementing the international tropical timber agreement 1983; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: In preparation for the renegotiation of the ITTA, the ODA, in co-operation with other interested Departments and EC member states and in consultation with interested non-governmental organisations and the relevant trade federation, have been assessing progress on the implementation of the agreement to date.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps are being taken to ensure that commitments made at the UNCED concerning the conservation of the world's forests are promoted through the United Kingdom Government's contribution to the renegotiation of the international tropical timber agreement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: In the renegotiation of the ITTA, we are pressing for the inclusion of the relevant elements of forests principles agreed at UNCED to be incorporated into the agreement.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to expand the mandate of the work of the International Tropical Timber Organisation to deal with timber trade from all forests.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have no such plans but we are prepared to consider proposals put forward formally by the ITTO tropical timber producing countries.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on the prices received by developing countries for their exports of mahogany, iroko, meranti, ramin, sapele and kertuing timbers and timber products since 1985.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The prices received by developing countries fluctuate with market conditions and variations in quality and the specification of the timber product. They are quoted in a range of currencies. In recent years the trend has been for trade in value added goods—eg moulding, and window frames to increase.

The following indicative figures have been supplied by the Timber Trade Federation.

Prices FoB per year

	1985	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*
African Mahogany (£)	209	229	247	212	256	275	260	280
Iroko (£)	170	161	162	155	233	290	233	252
Sapele (£)	250	270	274	256	275	327	302	306
Brazilian Mahogany ($US)	450	610	625	560	795	810	720	655
Meranti (Malaysian $)	706	735	862	870	1,350	1,195	1,395	1,391
Kertuing (Malaysian $)	285	328	466	640	580	600	760	686
Ramin (Malaysian $)	904	1,112	1,412	1,034	1,327	1,600	1,632	1,303

Cameroon

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what overseas development aid is given to Cameroon by either Britain or the EC; and what plans he has to reduce it because of the Cameroon Government's policies.

Mr. Lennox Boyd: Britain's aid programme to Cameroon in the current United Kingdom financial year is £3·2 million, focused on forestry and education. EC aid for 1992 is 49·5 mecu (£37·5 million), devoted to rural development, the environment and roads, of which the United Kingdom share is 8·1 mecu (£6·14 million). We are keeping the situation under review in consultation with other major donors.

Leningrad Model Farm

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 19 June, *Official Report*, column *695*, if he will make a further statement on progress on setting up a model farm in the Leningrad Oblast.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 3 December 1992]:* Following a visit to Russia from 23 July to 2 August 1992, the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service (ADAS), in close consultation wih the St. Petersburg Agrarian university, has drawn up a business plan for the establishment of a privatised model farm in the Leningrad Oblast. The plan has been submitted to the mayor of St. Petersburg. We await his reactions.

Russia

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to provide specialist advice from the know-how fund on the establishment of co-ownership housing schemes in the Russian federation.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 3 December 1992]:* Know-how fund (KHF) assistance to Russia concentrates on four priority sectors: energy, small business development, food distribution and production, and financial services. The establishment of co-ownership housing schemes falls outside these sectors. We have no plans to change this policy.

All-Russia Fund

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what financial and technical assistance he has made available to the all-Russia fund for the promotion of individual flats; and if he will make it his policy to provide the all-Russia fund with expert legal, financial and policy advice from appropriate agencies and companies in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 3 December 1992]:* We have provided no financial and technical assistance to the all-Russia fund for the promotion of individual flats and we have no plans to do so.

Humanitarian Needs Assessments

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessments of humanitarian needs have been conducted by his Department, the European Community and the United Nations in respect of Albania, Bosnia and Croatia for the next six months; what were the results of those assessments; and what funding his Department will provide to meet estimated needs.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 20 November 1992]:* In Albania an assessment of food needs was made by the European Community in June 1992. As a result the EC agreed further food aid of £28 million, bringing total EC food aid in Albania to £84 million. The United Kingdom contribution to this is £12 million. It is estimated that the latest grant, together with assistance pledged by other donors, should be sufficient to satisfy food requirements up to spring 1993. In addition bilaterally we have contributed £1·5 million to needs identified by various NGOs between September 1991 and November 1992. The EC, United Nations and United Kingdom are also monitoring the situation in northern Albania where there are reports of extensive loss of life following recent floods.

In Bosnia and Croatia, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has taken the lead in assessing needs and co-ordinating the international community's response to the crisis. In September they estimated that total requirements for humanitarian relief for all of the former Yugoslavia from September 1992 until April 1993 were approximately $1 billion; and they appealed for $434 million (£287 million) to meet the highest priority needs. We have responded by providing more than £70 million of which £41 million has been channelled through the EC and over £29½ million bilaterally. Virtually all of this has been

used in Bosnia and Croatia but specific figures by country are not available. The UNHCR continues to keep assessments under review.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Self-regulatory Organisations

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the self-regulatory bodies overseeing the banking, insurance and pensions institutions and the number of organisations affiliated to each.

Mr. Nelson: The investment business activities of banks, insurance and pensions institutions are regulated under the Financial Services Act by the Securities and Investments Board, the Life Assurance and Unit Trust Regulatory Organisation, the Investment Management Regulatory Organisation and the Securities and Futures Authority. Latest available information on the total number of firms regulated by each body and the numbers falling within the specified categories are as follows:

	Total	*Banks*	*Life offices*	*Pensions scheme members*
SIB	79	12	6	—
LAUTRO	640	—	226	—
IMRO	1,248	52	8	162
SFA	1,342	203	—	—

Note: Firms can be regulated by more than one body.

Financial Services

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will bring forward proposals to establish a statutory body to monitor the financial services industry.

Mr. Nelson: No. Many of the statutory functions under the Financial Services Act are exercisable by the Securities and Investments Board.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proposals he has to amend the Financial Services Act 1986 to increase protection for savers.

Mr. Nelson: I have no plans to do so.

EC Membership

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will set out in real terms United Kingdom receipts and expenditure arising from EC membership in each year since 1972.

Sir John Cope: The United Kingdom's gross expenditures (after abatement and negotiated refunds) to, and public sector receipts from, the European Community budget in constant 1991 prices for the years 1973 to 1991 are given in the table.

£ million 1991 prices

Year	*Gross contributions after abatement and refunds*	*Public sector receipts*
1973	1,035	460
1974	908	761
1975	1,364	1,587
1976	1,803	1,025
1977	2,240	1,118
1978	3,679	1,435
1979	3,832	1,572
1980	3,332	1,923
1981	2,654	1,943
1982	3,071	2,062
1983	3,432	2,408
1984	4,047	3,055
1985	5,313	2,726
1986	3,862	3,070
1987	5,334	3,067
1988	4,380	2,697
1989	5,111	2,441
1990	4,991	2,339
1991	3,309	2,765

Note: Figures are taken from relevant statements on the Community budget, converted to constant 1991 prices using the GDP deflator at market prices.

Drugs

Mr. Richards: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total value of drugs seized in the United Kingdom for the year 1991-92.

Sir John Cope: In the year 1991-92, the value of drugs seized by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise was £354·87 million.

Drugs Seizures

Mr. Richards: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total value of drugs seized at Welsh ports by customs officers in 1991-92.

Sir John Cope: In the year 1991-92 the value of drugs seized at Welsh ports by customs officers was £3·6 million.

Sundry Payments Account

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what costs relating to hon. Members have been paid out of account HMT 121655999P since 1979; and for what purpose the account is held.

Mr. Nelson: Account HMT 121655999P is a sundry payments account. It is not possible to check records as far back as 1979. However, a check has been made of all records back to 1989. Apart from a payment of £4,700, to Peter Carter-Ruck and Partners, the only payments from this account which relate to hon. Members are for the purchase of minor items of stationery for Ministers' offices, which over the three years from 1989-90 to 1991-92 amounted to some £289. Payments in the current year to date amount to £54.

Inland Revenue

Mr. Onslow: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what action he has taken to ensure that the Inland Revenue "Investigations Interview Manual", filed in the Library under reference 8177, is sufficiently widely available to all those who need professional access to it.

Mr. Lamont: The version currently issued to trainee inspectors is available from the Inland Revenue at Room 3, New Wing, Somerset House, London WC2R 1LB. I have today placed a copy of this version in the Library.

Inheritance Tax

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what inheritance tax changes are proposed for the new London International Financial Futures and Options Exchange.

Mr. Dorrell: The only market makers who qualify for inheritance tax business relief and the option to pay inheritance tax on business assets by interest free instalments at present are those on the stock exchange. New regulations will be made to extend these reliefs with effect from 23 March 1992 to traders performing similar functions in relation to financial futures and options on the London international financial futures and options exchange.

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the average value of inheritances in (i) Pendle, (ii) Lancashire and (iii) England for each year since 1985.

Mr. Baldry: I have been asked to reply.

The average value of inheritances other than of surviving spouses and excluding all inheritances of under £1,000 in England in the years 1985 to 1989 is estimated at £14,700. Figures for individual years are subject to too large a margin of uncertainty to be meaningful. Information about inheritances in Pendle and Lancashire is not available.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Fisheries Pollution

Ms. Walley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he will take to apply the income from fines imposed on those who pollute water to the restoration of polluted fisheries.

Mr. Maclean: I have been asked to reply.

Revenue from fines imposed by the courts is not available to the National Rivers Authority. The authority is however already able to recoup from those responsible the cost of dealing with polluted incidents and, where appropriate, to apply the costs to the restoration of affected fisheries.

HEALTH

Subfertility

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of the availability of treatments for subfertility through the NHS; and what action she is taking to ensure the provision of a comprehensive service.

Mr. Sackville: The national health service provides a wide range of treatments for subfertility. Decisions about the resources to be made available for these services must be left to individual health authorities as they are in the best position to determine priorities in the light of local needs and circumstances.

Advice is available to health authorities and clinicians in two recent publications:

(a) The "Effective Health Care Bulletin" on management of subfertility, published for the NHS Management Executive by a consortium of Leeds and York Universities and the Research Unit of the Royal College of Physicians.

(b) The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists publication "Infertility—Guidelines for Practice".

Copies are available in the Library.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mr. Cann: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of the accuracy of the waiting list information on the numbers waiting for hospital treatment.

Mr. Sackville: Individual hospitals are responsible for the accuracy of waiting lists. To assist in this, last year, the Royal College of Surgeons issued good practice guidance on waiting list management to clinicians and the Department of Health issued complementary guidance to managers.

Community Care

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health for what reasons she had decided not to exemplify a distribution based on the present standard spending assessment with the elderly residential component fully calculated and the resulting population redirected to originating authority using the national health service central register origination data as a basis for assumptions regarding the distribution of community care funding after April 1993.

Mr. Yeo: It was not considered appropriate to do so.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 30 November, *Official Report*, column 77, if she will indicate what proportion of the further additional funding for community care support and other service costs for 1993-94 is expected to meet each of the identified elements.

Mr. Yeo: Authorities have differing priorities for their allocation of the community care special transitional grant and it would not be appropriate to give a break down of the allocation of the additional £140 million.

Home Helps

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the percentage increase in the number of home helps in England from 1979 to 1992.

Mr. Yeo: The latest available information shows that the number of home helps (whole time equivalents) rose from 44,600 in September 1979 to 53,450 at 30 September 1991. This represents an increase of 20 per cent.

Private Ambulance Services

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to introduce regulations to govern the operation of private ambulance services; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: I have no such plans.

Wessex RHA (Dr. Cox)

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will require the Wessex regional health authority to publish the full text of the statement made by the authority on Friday 20 November in connection with its employment of Dr. Cox.

(2) what conditions were imposed by the Wessex regional health authority on Friday 20 November, in deciding to allow Dr. Cox to return to work at the Royal Hampshire county hospital.

Dr. Mawhinney: The conditions imposed by the Wessex regional health authority in deciding to allow Dr. Cox to return to work at the Royal Hampshire county hospital were set out in the authority's statement issued on 20 November 1992.

Homeless Mentally Ill

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress has been made in the implementation of the initiative announced in July 1990 for tackling the problem of the homeless mentally ill in London; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: Considerable progress has been made. Four short term hostels have been opened and two more will open during 1993, providing 73 places in all. A further 77 hostel places are planned for the next phase of the initiative.

Five community psychiatric teams have been established. The work of the teams and client outcomes are being evaluated independently. The indications are that the teams have been effective in making contact with severely damaged individuals who have had little or no previous contact with psychiatric services. Numbers of contacts to date are estimated at 1,700.

The Housing Corporation has undertaken to secure up to 750 move on places for mentally ill people in re-lets of existing housing association stock and new-build, ranging from independent single units to more supported shared accommodation.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the latest estimates for the number of homeless mentally ill who are sleeping rough in *(a)* London, *(b)* Birmingham, *(c)* Manchester, *(d)* Leeds and *(e)* Bristol.

Mr. Yeo: It is difficult to obtain accurate data on homeless people. On the 1991 census night the following numbers of people were found to be sleeping in the open air on sites previously identified by local statutory and voluntary organisations.

	Numbers
(a) Greater London	1,275
(b) Birmingham	[1]—
(c) Manchester	23
(d) Leeds	21
(e) Bristol	128

[1] Not available.

We estimate that at least 30 per cent., and possibly up to 50 per cent., of homeless people living rough on the streets have a mental health problem.

Intentional Deaths of Patients

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance is given by her Department to medical, nursing and ancillary personnel about their rights and obligations when they become aware that medical personnel are seeking to take steps intentionally to bring about the death of patients in their care.

Dr. Mawhinney: None. The rights and obligations of professional personnel in relation to such matters are covered by guidance and codes of conduct and ethics issued by the professional bodies.

Mental Illness (Deaths)

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress is being made with the confidential inquiry into homicides and suicides by mentally ill people; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: A director and steering committee have been appointed. Terms of reference have been established both for the scope of the inquiry and for the steering committee.

Work is in hand to establish confidential working arrangements by which the inquiry may proceed.

London Health Services

Ms. Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what estimate she has made of the capital cost of hospital investment in London resulting from the recommendations of the Tomlinson report; and what provision has been made for this expenditure in public expenditure plans;

(2) what estimate she has made of the cost of transfer or redundancy pay for doctors displaced as a result of the recommendations of the Tomlinson report; and what provision has been made for this expenditure in public expenditure plans;

(3) what assessment she has made of the validity of the estimate in the Tomlinson report of the cost of provision of further primary care services in London; and what provision has been made for this expenditure in public expenditure plans.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 3 December 1992]:* The capital cost implications of Sir Bernard Tomlinson's recommendations are being studied as part of the Government's consideration of the report. Clearly they are dependent on whatever decisions are made.

We shall put forward our proposals for the future direction of London's health services, including the financial implications, in the new year. At that time we will take full account of the implications of any changes for national health service staff working in London.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Non-proliferation Treaty

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which signatories of the non-proliferation treaty are seeking an indefinite extension of the treaty without amendment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We do not know the positions of all signatories of the non-proliferation treaty but in addition

to the United Kingdom and its co-depositaries, the United States and the Russian Federation, all G7, European Community and NATO partners have indicated a commitment to seek indefinite extension of the non-proliferation treaty.

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which states in the Commonwealth of Independent States have signed the non-proliferation treaty; which of these have reached safeguards agreements with the International Atomic Energy Agency; and on what dates these events occurred.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Uzbekistan acceded to the non-proliferation treaty on 7 May 1992. Azerbaijan acceded on 22 September 1992. We understand that neither has yet concluded safeguards agreements with the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which international treaties and arrangements other than the non-proliferation treaty, contribute towards the Government's non-proliferation policies.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Apart from the non-proliferation treaty, the main international treaties which contribute to the Government's non-proliferation policies are: the 1925 Geneva protocol, dealing with chemical weapons, and the 1972 convention on the prohibition of the development, production and stockpiling of bacteriological and toxin weapons and on their destruction (the BTWC). The United Kingdom has also pledged to be an early signatory of the chemical weapons convention, which is likely to enter into force in 1995. There are in addition a number of international arrangements, notably the safeguards administered by the International Atomic Energy Agency and Euratom, and the export controls agreed by COCOM, by the Zangger committee, by the Nuclear Suppliers Group and by the Australia Group. We have also signed and ratified the two additional protocols to the treaty of Tlatelolco which is aimed at creating a nuclear weapons free zone in Latin America. The United Kingdom is also a founder member of the missile technology control regime which controls the transfer of missile systems capable of delivering nuclear, biological and chemical warheads.

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has relating to the possession of nuclear weapons by *(a)* Israel, *(b)* Iran and *(c)* Syria; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have no information either to confirm or deny the rumours that Israel may have nuclear weapons. We continue to emphasise the importance we attach to Israeli accession to the treaty on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. As states parties to this treaty both Iran and Syria have undertaken formal commitments not to acquire nuclear weapons which we expect them to honour in full. However, the experience with Iraq has demonstrated that membership of the non-proliferation treaty alone is no longer a guarantee of non-proliferation. We therefore take every opportunity both bilaterally and in international fora to stress the significance we attack to all states parties to the NPT complying fully with all their obligations.

IAEA

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which states have made a commitment to the International Atomic Energy Agency to open any site and any installation on their territory to visits from Agency inspectors; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We understand that the following states have indicated to the IAEA that they would allow unrestricted access to any sites the agency may wish to visit: Iran, North Korea, South Africa.

Nuclear Materials (Theft)

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 3 November, *Official Report*, column 173, what information he has about the original source of the stolen nuclear material that has recently been seized in Italy and Germany; what discussions he has had with his European and NATO counterparts on this matter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Release of information on the source of the material recovered in these incidents is a matter for the Italian and German authorities. We discuss the general isue of illicit trade in nuclear materials with other European and NATO counterparts as appropriate, most recently at NATO's ad hoc group on nuclear weapons on 16 November.

Civil Servants

92. **Mr. Raymond S. Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many civil servants from each wing of his Department have been relocated from London to other parts of the United Kingdom *(a)* in the last five years and *(b)* in the last 10 years; and to where they were relocated.

Mr. Goodlad: Since 1988, 97 diplomatic wing posts have been relocated to Hanslope park, near Milton Keynes. In the same period the aid wing has relocated 53 jobs to East Kilbride and 321 to Chatham. No relocations took place in the previous five years; 427 posts from the aid wing had already, however, been moved from London to East Kilbride in 1981.

Nuclear Suppliers Group

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 3 November, *Official Report*, column 169, on the Nuclear Suppliers Group, what consideration the working group on institutional questions established by the Nuclear Suppliers Group has given to the inclusion of China as a member of the group; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave on 3 November at col. *169*. The proceedings of the working group on institutional questions like all meetings of the Nuclear Suppliers Group are confidential. If China were to seek membership of the group, their application would be carefully considered.

Nuclear Tests (South Asia)

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what communications he has had with NATO, Indian, Pakistani and Chinese counterparts relating to the conduct of nuclear tests in the south Asia region; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Garel-Jones: We are not aware of any nuclear explosion in South Asia since India exploded a nuclear device in 1974, and we have not recently discussed nuclear testing in this region.

US National Security Agency

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the locations from which the United States National Security Agency is permitted to operate in Britain.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: It remains the policy of Her Majesty's Government not to answer questions of this nature.

EC Council of Ministers

Mr. Hawkins: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish in the *Official Report* a statement of forthcoming business in the European Community's Council of Ministers.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The following is the information.

Council of ministers business for December 1992

1. The following meetings are planned:

3 December	:	Labour and Social Affairs Council
7/8 December	:	Transport Council
7 December	:	Foreign Affairs Council
9 December	:	Research Council
14 December	:	Economic and Finance Council
14/15/16 December	:	Agriculture Council
15/16 December	:	Environment Council
17/18 December	:	Internal Market Council
19/20 December	:	Fisheries Council
21 December	:	Foreign Affairs Council

2. The following subjects are likely to be discussed:

(a) *Labour and Social Affairs Council—3 December*

Proposal for a directive on Health and Safety in the Extractive Industries (Mines and Quarries) (7162/92)
Progress report by the Presidency on Biological Agents (8925/92)
Draft Presidency resolution on Transparency of vocational qualifications (9964/92)
Proposal for a Presidency resolution on tackling unemployment
Proposal for a regulation on a European agency for safety and health at work (9937/92)
Proposal for a regulation and directive on free movement of workers (10239/92)
Progress report by the Presidency on Helios II (8315/92)
Draft Presidency resolution on occupational pensions (9961/92)
Proposal for a directive on posting of workers (8255/92)
Draft Presidency conclusions on Implementation and Enforcement of Community Social Legislation (9963/92)
Proposal for a directive on organisation of working time (possible)

(b) *Transport Council—7/8 December*

AVIATION AND LAND TRANSPORT ISSUES
Aviation and slot allocation regulation (4496/91; 7810/92)
Aviation external relations
ATM equipment (8420/92)
EUROCONTROL
Commission report on ATC research
Resolution on state aids
Road freight fiscal issues
Road haulage cabotage (10083/91; 4943/92; 5334/92; 7187/92; 7662/92)
Mandate frorinland waterways negotiations (7341/91; 6724/92; 7261/92)
Infrastructure (8065/92) (possible)
Transit agreement with Slovenia
Road safety communication (possible)
Commission report on transport White Paper (possible)

MARITIME ISSUES
Dangerous goods at sea (7074/89; 9793/90)
Shipping (positive measures) (8368/89; 5052/91; 4035/92)
External relations
Terremolinos Convention (7330/92; 9778/92) (possible)
Maritime cabotage (possible)
Commission report on maritime safety (possible)
Commission report on implementation of 1986 maritime package (possible)

(c) *Foreign Affairs Council—7 December*

Immigration
Enlargement
Nuclear safety in Eastern Europe and Former Soviet Union
Delors II
GATT
Internal frontier controls on people
Former Yugoslavia
Revision of EC defence instruments (anti-dumping etc.)

(d) *Research Council—9 December*

Supplementary Financing of the Third Framework Programme (1990-1994) (8366/92)
Fourth Framework Programme (1994-1998) (9302/92)
The European Communitty and Space (9599/92)
Paper on EC Framework Programme Management (possible)
International Association for promoting co-operation in the Independent States of the Former Soviet Union (8174/92) (possible)

(e) *Economic and Finance Council—14 December*

Follow-up to the European Council (possible)
CO_2/Energy tax-progress report
Third countries traveller's allowance
Road transport tax
Special VAT arrangements applicable to second-hand goods, works of art, collector's items and antiques
Directive on deposit guarantees (possible)

(f) *Agriculture Council—14-15-16 December*

Bananas (8372/92; 9023/92; 9421/92; 9432/92; 9953/92)
Milk quota consolidation (8950/1/91; 9280/92; 9994/92)
Italian milk quota (8067/92; 9269/92)
Suckler cow and deseasonalisation premiumk (8846/92; 9972/92)
Potatoes
Sheep meat voluntary restraint agreements
New Zealand butter
Transitional arrangements: Spain Portugal (10181/92)
Agrimonetary regime (7907/92; 9361/92; 9951/92)
Maize and sorghum imports
Fruit and vegetables—amendments to basic regime (9840/92; 10248/92)
GATT beef balance sheets (possible)
GATT—agriculture (oilseeds dispute)
Poultry meat
Zoonoses
Balai (animal products)
Animal welfare
Plant breeder's rights (possible)
Derogations from Directive 92/5 (meat products) (possible)

(g) *Environment Council—15/16 December*

Van emissions (5777/92)
Fifth Environmental Action Programme (6132/92)
CFCs Regulation/Ozone layer (5762/92)
ECO-audit regulation (5218/92)

Community ratification of Basel Convention (8304/90) (possible)
Packaging (8426/92)
CITES regulation (10500/91) (possible)
Climate change (7569/92)
Implementation and enforcement
European Environment Agency (possible)

(h) Internal Market Council—17/18 December
Proposal for a fund for Customs Agents (8321/92)

(i) Fisheries Council—19/20 December
Fishing opportunities for 1993 including Total Allowable Catches (TACs) and quotas
Fishing in Spanish and Portuguese waters
Fisheries agreements with Norway, Sweden, and Greenland
NAFO TACs and quotas
Third country agreement with French Guyana
Community system for fisheries and aquaculture
Accession agreements for Spain and Portugal

(j) Foreign Affairs Council—21 December
Follow-up to European Council
GATT: Uruguay Round and oilseeds (possible)
EC/Morocco
EC/Cyprus Association Council: Approval of Community position
Former Yugoslavia
Other EPC items
EC/Cyprus Association Council (in margins)

3. The *Labour and Social Affairs Council* will meet on 3 December and will discuss Health and Safety in the Extractive Industries (Mines and Quarries); Biological Agents; Presidency resolution on Transparency of vocational qualifications; Presidency resolution on tackling unemployment; the proposal for a regulation on a European agency for safety and health at work; free movement of workers; Helios II; occupational pensions; posting of workers and implementation and enforcement of Community social legislation. They may also discuss the proposal for a directive on organisation of working time.

4. The *Transport Council* will meet on 7-8 December and will discuss transport liberalisation issues that have been prominent during the presidency. Ministers will focus on aviation slot allocation; aviation external relations; air traffic control issues; discussions on state aids; road freight fiscal harmonisation; road haulage cabotage; the inland waterways mandate; the mandate for transit negotiations with Slovenia; dangerous goods at sea; positive shipping measures and maritime external relations. They may also discuss post-1992 infrastructure funding and, the Torremolinos Convention. In addition the Commission will be presenting their reports on road safety; the Transport White Paper; maritime safety and the implementation of 1986 maritime package.

5. The *Foreign Affairs Council* will meet on 7 December. Ministers will discuss immigration; the progress on preparations for enlargement negotiations; nuclear safety in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union; Delors II; recent developments in the GATT negotiations; internal frontier controls on people; the former Yugoslavia, and the revision of EC defence instruments. A conclave of Foreign Ministers will meet on 8 December to discuss ratification of the Maastricht treaty, subsidiarity and openness, in preparation for the European Council.

6. The *Research Council* will meet on 9 December and will discuss supplementary financing of the third framework programme (1990-94); the Commission's working document for the fourth framework programme (1994-98) and the European Community and space. Programme management and the International Association for promoting co-operation in the Independent States of the former Soviet Union may also be discussed.

7. The *Economic and Finance Council* will meet on 14 December to discuss matters arising from the European Council on 11 December. The directive on deposit guarantees may also be discussed. This draft directive is a priority under the United Kingdom Presidency and we hope that a political agreement can be reached by the end of the year. The Council will also discuss the Commission's proposal for a CO2/Energy tax; Third Countries Travellers Allowance; VAT arrangements for second-hand goods and Road Transport taxation.

8. The *Agriculture Council* will meet on 14, 15 and 16 December. Ministers will discuss bananas; the agrimonetary system; the agricultural aspects of the GATT negotiations; milk quota consolidation; Italian milk quotas; suckler cow premium; potatoes; sheep meat voluntary restraint agreements; New Zealand butter; transitional arrangements for Spain and Portugal; amendments to the fruit and vegetables regime; poultry meat; zoonoses; Balai (animal products); and animal welfare and exotic diseases. They may also discuss beef tariff quotas; plant breeders' rights and meat products.

9. The *Environment Council* will meet on 15 and 16 December. It is hoped that agreement will be reached on a directive to tighten emission limits from vans; a Council resolution on the Commission's fifth action programme on the environment; a regulation introducing a Community eco-auditing scheme and an amended regulation bringing forward the phase out dates for CFCs and other ozone depleting substances. The Council will also discuss the proposed directive on packaging and packaging waste; controls on trade in endangered species (CITES), and measures on climate change. A report on implementation and enforcement of Community environmental law will also be tabled by the Commission for discussion by Ministers at Council.

10. The *Internal Market Council* will meet on 17 and 18 December to discuss the proposal for a fund for Customs agents. The remainder of the agenda is not yet known.

11. The *Fisheries Council* is due to meet on 19 and 20 December. Fisheries Ministers may discuss fishing opportunities for 1993 including total allowable catches (TACs) and quotas; fishing arrangements for European Community vessels to fish Spanish and Portuguese waters; fisheries agreements with Norway, Sweden and Greenland; the NAFO TACs and quotas; the third country agreement with French Guyana; the European Community system for fisheries and aquaculture and accession arrangements for Spain and Portugal.

12. The *Foreign Affairs Council* will meet on 21 December to discuss the follow-up to the European Council; EC/Morocco; the former Yugoslavia and any other EPC items. The GATT: Uruguay round and oilseeds may also be discussed. The EC/Cyprus Association Council will be held in the margins.

Cameroon

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment his Department has made of the conduct of the presidential elections in Cameroon on 11 October.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Whilst we welcome the holding of multi-party elections as an important step in the process of democratisation, we noted with concern that the conduct of the recent election was flawed and that the primary responsibility for the shortcomings rests with the Government of Cameroon. In the light of the widespread dissatisfaction with the outcome inside Cameroon, we have urged the Government strongly to begin a process of national reconciliation among political parties.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Military Exports

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his oral statement of 23 November, *Official Report*, column 644, what is the value of export guarantees for the supply of defence-related goods, including machine tools, to Iraq that have had to be called in the past eight years.

Mr. Heseltine: I will write to the hon. Lady in due course.

Timber

Mr. Meacher: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what information he has about the extent of illegal trade in timber from the rain forest countries of South-Eash Asia.

Mr. Needham: Authoritative information about the extent of illegal harvesting and exports of timber from the rain forest countries of South East Asia is limited. I have, however, been sent a copy of a report on such matters by the TRAFFIC Network, which was published with the support of the World Wide Fund for Nature.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what international agreements supported by Britain relate to the international trade in timber;

(2) what steps are being taken by the United Kingdom Government to ensure that all United Kingdom imports of timber are derived from legally felled forests and are traded legally.

Mr. Needham: The Government's policy on timber is to encourage the sustainable management of forests. We support the International Tropical Timber Organisation's target for all internationally traded timber to originate from sustainably managed forests by 2000. Except as provided for under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species there are no restrictions on the import of tropical hardwoods into the United Kingdom; wider restrictions would be neither practicable nor desirable.

Mahogany (Brazil)

Mr. Meacher: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what requests the United Kingdom Government have received from the Government of Brazil for assistance in helping to control illegal harvesting of mahogany in the states of Rondonia and Para.

Mr. Needham: I am not aware of any requests from the Government of Brazil for assistance in controlling illegal harvesting of mahogany.

Trade Balance

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will set out in real terms the balance of trade between the United Kingdom and other members of the EC in each year since 1972.

Mr. Needham: Information on United Kingdom trade in real terms by trading partner is not available. Data in current prices are published in the "Monthly Review of External Trade Statistics, CSO", which is available in the Library of the House.

EC Investment

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will set out in real terms *(a)* United Kingdom investment in other EC countries and *(b)* investment in the United Kingdom from other EC countries in each year since 1972.

Mr. Salisbury: Information on United Kingdom inward and outward investment in real terms is not available. Statistics on investment in current prices are published in "Business Monitor MA4, Overseas Transactions", which is available in the Library of the House.

Inward Investment

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what is the total amount of inward investment the north west of England has received in the last 10 years, year by year;

(2) what measures are being taken to attract inward investment to the north west of England.

Mr. Salisbury: My Department's Invest in Britain Bureau promotes the whole of the United Kingdom as an attractive location for overseas inward investors. In 1992-93 it provided grant-in-aid of £1,112,000 to INWARD to undertake overseas inward investment promotional activities for the north-west region.

The table shows the number of inward investment projects and the associated jobs which the north-west has received in the last 10 years.

Year	*Project*	*New jobs*	*Total jobs*[1]
1982	14	1,291	1,291
1983	22	709	1,823
1984	40	1,135	3,046
1985	28	2,271	3,649
1986	34	1,400	2,789
1987	28	1,323	6,219
1988	30	1,763	5,607
1989	52	2,646	7,184
1990	53	1,810	10,507
1991	65	1,373	8,945
Total	366	15,721	51,060

[1] Total jobs includes jobs associated with acquisitions and with investments creating new jobs where existing jobs were considered to be safeguarded by the investment.

Note: The figures are based on information provided by the companies themselves as notified to DTI's Invest in Britain Bureau and reflect the companies' intentions at the time of the decision to invest and take no account of subsequent developments.

Coal Review

Mr. Tipping: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list those individuals and organisations which have made submissions to his review of the coal industry and identify those submissions which are confidential; and if he will place the remainder in the Library.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 3 December 1992]:* The individuals and organisations who have submitted evidence to the coal review, and whose evidence has been received by the review team at 5.30 pm on 3 December, are listed and total 277 submissions. Those whose submissions include confidential material are marked with an asterisk. Copies of the evidence which is not confidential are being placed in the Library.

Aberdeen Chamber of Commerce
Action Group on Northern Ireland Electricity Prices
Adams, J. M. S.
AEA Technology
Alliance Gas Limited
AMCO Corporation plc
Amerada Hess Limited

Amos, J.—Hoare Lea and Partners
Anglo United plc
Antrim Coal Company Limited*
Anyon, R. (Shop Steward at BNFL Springfields) and P. Logue.
Apparel, Knitting and Textiles Alliance
Applied Energy Services Electric Limited
Architects and Engineers for Social Responsibility
ARCO British Limited
ASEA Brown Boveri*
Associated Electricity Suppliers Ltd*
Associated Octel Company Limited*
Association for the Conservation of Energy
Association of British Mining Equipment Companies
Association of Independent Electricity Producers
Babcock Energy Limited
Ball, S.
Barking Power Limited
Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council
Bassetlaw District Council
Black, A.
Blue Circle Industries Ltd.
Botham Engineering Limited
BP BITOR Limited
BP Exploration Operating Company Limited
BRINDEX
British Alcan Aluminium plc
British Association of Colliery Management
Britsh Ceramic Confederation
British Coal Corporation
British Gas plc
British Nuclear Forum
British Nuclear Fuels plc*
British Wind Energy Association
Broadland District Council
Brunner Mond and Company Limited
Cairn Energy plc
Caledonian Mining Co. Ltd.
Carribine c—Low Valleyfield Residents' Association
Centre for Intermediate Mining Research Limited
Chamber of Coal Traders Limited
Chemical Industries Association
Chesterfield Borough Council
Chriswoll Jones, J.
Churches Energy Group
City of Nottingham Development Department
City of Wakefield Metropolitan District Council
Clackmannan District Council (Alloa)
Clay Colliery Company Ltd.
Clwyd County Council
Coal Advisory Service
Coalfield Communities Campaign
Cobex Limited
Combined Heat and Power Association
Communist Party of Great Britain
Confederation of British Industry
Confederation of British Industry (Northern Ireland)
Confederation of UK Coal Producers
Conoco (UK) Ltd.
Consortium of Opposing Local Authorities
Convention of Scottish Local Authorities
Co-operative Wholesale Society
Cory Environmental Ltd.
Council for the Protection of Rural England
Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland
Country Landowners Association
Countryside Council for Wales
County Planning Officers' Society
Cox, H.
Co-Steel Inc.
Currall Lewis & Martin Ltd.
Cytun Industrial & Economic Affairs Network (Welsh Clergy)
Day, A. C.
Derbyshire County Council
Digby Worthy, W.
Domestic Coal Consumers' Council
Durham County Council
E. Gas Limited
East Midlands Electricity Consumers' Committee
East Midlands Electricity plc.
Eastern Electricity plc.
Eastern Region Electricity Consumers' Association
Electricity Consumers' Committee, Merseyside and North Wales
Electricity Consumers' Committee for London
Electricity Consumers' Committee Southern Region
Electricity Pool of England and Wales
Electricity Supply Trade Union Council
Energy and Chemical Projects Ltd.
Energy Information Centre[1]
Energy Intensive Users Group/Major Energy Users Council
Energy Supply Company Ltd.[1]
Engineering Consultancy Services Ltd.
English Nature
Enron Europe Limited
Esso Exploration and Production UK Ltd.
Federation of Civil Engineering Contractors
Federation of Small Mines of GB
Fells, Professor—Newcastle University
Fenton Solid Fuels Ltd.
Fife Regional Council
Food and Drink Federation
Forest of Dean District Council
Foster Wheeler Energy Limited
Friends of the Earth
Galvanizers Association
Gas Consumers Council
Gas Strategies
GEC Alsthom Limited
General Consumer Council for Northern Ireland
Gilbert, F.
Glyn, A.
Godfrey, D. F.—Lerken & Co. Solicitors
Grampian Regional Council
Greenpeace
Gruber, P. A.
H. Leverton Limited*
Hamilton Oil Company Ltd.*
Harrison, K.
Harvey, R. E. A.
Hawkes, G.
Highland Regional Council
Hopkinson, D.
Horrocks, R.
I. & H. Brown Limited
ICI Chemicals and Polymers Ltd.
Institute of Civil Engineers
Institute of Economic Affairs
Institute of Energy
Institution of Mining Electrical and Mechanical Engineers
Institution of Mining Engineers
Institution of Professionals, Managers and Specialists
Ivo Energy Limited
Jervis, R. M.
Johnson Matthey plc
Kelt UK Ltd.
Kingsnorth Developments Ltd.
LASMO North Sea plc
LE Energy
Leicester City Council
Lester, Jim MP
Levack Civil Engineering
Liberal Democrats
Liebherr GB Ltd.
Lipman, Professor N. H.
Loadmaster Ltd.
London Electricity plc
Lynam, F.
Lytham St. Annes Methodist Circuit Social Responsibility Committee
Mansfield District Council
Manweb plc*
Marks and Spencer plc
Mason, J.
McAlpine, G.
Mechanical Handling Engineers' Association
MECO AFC Ltd.
Merz and McLellan Limited
Metropolitan Planning Officers' Society

Mid Glamorgan County Council
Midlands Consumers' Committee
Midlands Electricity plc
Midlands Electricity plc/Central Power
Miller Mining
Millington, Mrs. G.
Mining Association of the United Kingdom
Mobil Gas Marketing (UK) Ltd.
Monktonhall Mineworkers Ltd.
Monument Oil and Gas plc*
National Association of Colliery Overmen Deputies and Shotfirers
National Association of Licensed Opencast Operators
National Association of Local government Officers
National Consumer Council
National Engineering Construction Employers' Association
National Grid Company plc
National Network of Chaplains in the Electricity Supply Industry
National Network of Coal Industry Chaplains
National Power plc*
National Rivers Authority
National Society for Clean Air and Environmental Protection
National Union of Mineworkers
Newark and Sherwood District Council
Nicholson, K.
Non-Fossil Purchasing Agency Ltd.
North Derbyshire Health Authority
North Eastern Region Electricity Consumers' Committee
Northern Ireland Electricity plc
NORWEB*
Nottinghamshire Chamber of Commerce and Industry
Nottinghamshire County Council
Nottinghamshire Rural Community Council
NSM plc
Nuclear Electric plc*
Nykomb Synergetics
O & K Orenstein and Koppel Ltd.
Offshore Contractors Council
Offshore Manufacturers and Constructors Association
Oil and Chemcial Plant Constructors Association
Open University Energy and Environment Research Unit
Oxford Institute for Energy Studies
Parkhill Estates Limited
Pearce, A. J.
Phillips Petroleum Company United Kingdom Limited
Point of Ayr Colliery Survival Committee
Pontefract Graders Ltd.
Powergen plc*
Powys County Council
R. J. B. Mining Ltd.
Rackwood Colliery Co. Ltd.
Regional Studies Association
Reynolds, J.—Merrill Lynch
Robinson, D.
Rolls Royce plc
Rotherham and District Trades Union Council
Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council*
Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors
Royal Institution of International Affairs
Royal Town Planning Institute
Safecom UEP Ltd.
Save the Moors From Opencast (SHAMROC)
Scottish Hydro Electric plc*
Scottish Natural Heritage
Scottish Northern Region Electricity Users' Sub-Committee
Scottish Nuclear Limited*
Scottish Power
Scottish Trades Union Congress
Seabridge, A. T.*
Seeboard plc
Severn Tidal Power Group
Shawater Ltd.
Sheerness Steel Company plc
Shell UK Ltd.
Shepway Friends of the Earth
Shirebrook Traders Association
Skegness 2000
Slough Trading Estates Ltd.
Smith, E.
South Eastern Regional Electricity Consumers' Committee
South Wales Electricity plc*
South Wales Region Consumers' Committee
South Western Electricity plc
South Western Regional Electricity Consumers' Committee
Southern Electric plc*
Southern Scotland Electricity Consumers' Committee
Staffordshire County Council
Standing Conference on Regional Policy in South Wales
Statoil UK Ltd.
Taylor Woodrow Mining Division
Texaco
Trades Union Congress
Trainload Freight
Transport and General Workers Union
Tyne and Wear Chamber of Commerce, Trade and Industry
UK Offshore Operators Association Ltd.
UK Onshore Operators Group
Union of Democratic Mineworkers
United Gas Company Limited
Viscosuisse Textured Yarns
Walker, J. F.
Ward Brothers Mining Division Ltd.
Watt Committee on Energy
Watt, J.
WEFA Energy Group*
West Midlands Regional Forum of Local Authorities
Westoe Colliery Campaign Group
World Solar Power Foundation
Yorkshire Electricity Group plc*
Yorkshire Opencast Objectors
Yorkshire Water Services Limited*
Young Group plc*

Mr. Carrington: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the coal contract negotiations between British Coal and the electricity supply industry following the coal review he announced on 21 October.

Mr. Heseltine: I wrote to the chairman of British Coal yesterday in the following terms:

You asked for my views on British Coal's contract negotiations with the electricity supply industry following the Review I announced on 21 October.

As you know, in my statement to the House on 21 October, I announced a wide-ranging Review of the prospects of the 21 pits proposed for closure but not subject to statutory consultation. The Review will decide whether the case for closure of each of the 21 pits has been fully made and whether it is sensible to mothball any of these pits. I also made it clear that the Review would consider whether the market prospects for coal had been correctly assessed, and that it would look at the level of coal stocks, both at the pithead and at the power stations, and whether plans to run them down were sensibly phased.

The Review will consider views and evidence on the future of each of the pits in question, in the context of the Government's energy policy, including the consequences of that policy for British Coal and employment prospects for the industry. The Review will decide whether the case for closure at each of the pits in question had been fully made and whether the market prospects for coal have been correctly assessed.

The future of the British coal industry depends crucially on the level of its sales to the power generators. The Corporation's current coal supply contracts with National Power and PowerGen for 65 million tonnes expire on 31 March 1993. British Coal's proposals to close 31 pits reflected the assessment that you were unlikely to sell the power generators more than 40 million tonnes of coal in 1993-94. The Government's decision to launch the Review was taken against the background, among other factors, of widespread concern and representations that there could be a market for substantially higher tonnages.

Negotiations on future contracts are of course a matter for the coal and electricity industries. However, against the

background to the Review, and the deep Parliamentary and public concern about its outcome, I hope that British Coal and the other parties to the contract negotiations will find it possible to agree arrangements which will ensure a sound and stable basis for the British coal industry and the electricity supply industry to plan their business at least for 1993-94, and pending implementation of options identified in the light of the Review of the prospects of the 21 pits.

I am looking to all the parties concerned to ensure that any contracts which may be agreed do not prejudice the outcome of the Review.

I am therefore copying this letter to National Power and PowerGen and the twelve regional electricity companies so that they are aware of the Government's views. I am also sending a copy to the Chairman of the Select Committee on Trade and Industry and proposing to make it available to MPs through a written statement and to issue a press notice.

British Steel

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what evidence he has provided to the United States Government about subsidies paid to British Steel; and by what sums British Steel is currently subsidised.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Government and United Kingdom companies complied with the United States authorities' requests for information on subsidies to the British Steel Corporation as part of a recent investigation under United States countervailing duty legislation. No Government subsidies have been granted to British Steel since the company was privatised in 1988.

Electricity Imports

Mr. Churchill: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish the price paid to date to Electricité de France in respect of electricity imports in each month for the term of the present contract, together with the prevailing pool price in each of those months.

Mr. Eggar: This is a commercial matter for those electricity companies that have contracts with EdF.

Mr. Churchill: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his estimate of the proportion of energy supplies for electricity generation that are likely to be imported by 2020 based on the forecast contained in the DTI Energy Paper 59, October 1992, entitled "Electricity Generated by Type of Plant" (per cent), *(a)* overall, *(b)* coal, *(c)* gas, *(d)* oil, *(e)* nuclear and *(f)* other.

Mr. Eggar: Energy Paper 59 is primarily intended to offer a range of energy-related carbon emissions scenarios as a basis for discussion of environmental issues. Because the carbon contents of domestic and imported fuels are similar the scenarios do not distinguish between them.

Imported Coal

Mr. Churchill: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish the tonnages of imported coal *(a)* for power generation, *(b)* for industrial applications and *(c)* for domestic use, in each of the past five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Eggar: The figures requested are:

Thousand tonnes

Year	[1] *Power generation*	[2] [3] *Industry applications*	[3] *Domestic use*
1987	1,358	6,945	1,478
1988	1,973	7,709	2,003
1989	1,963	8,497	1,677
1990	4,721	8,964	1,098
1991	7,251	9,863	2,376

[1] Major electricity generating companies as defined in Energy Trends.
[2] Including coke ovens and manufactured solid fuel plants.
[3] These are estimated figures based on data supplied by Customs and Excise. The use of which the coal is to be put is not recorded at the time the coal is imported, but assumptions on who uses particular types of coal have been used to allocate imports to the industrial and domestic sectors.

Public Interest Immunity

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade for how many documents Her Majesty's Government have claimed public interest immunity in respect of the application in the High Court by the NUM on pit closures; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 30 November 1992]:* None. On 26 November 1992 counsel acting on my right hon. Friend's behalf in these proceedings properly drew attention of the court to the fact that two documents which had recently been submitted in evidence by the National Union of Mineworkers and which were already in the public domain fell within an established class of document capable of attracting public interest immunity. The question of whether the documents should attract such immunity was left entirely to the court which subsequently decided that they should be allowed as evidence.

Manufacturing

Mr. Turner: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will give greater priority to manufacturing companies in the distribution of grant-assisted aid for development and expansion purposes.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 2 December 1992]:* Around three quarters of my Department's programme spend goes to manufacturing companies.

Trade Deficit

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the current United Kingdom trade deficit with *(a)* France, *(b)* Italy, *(c)* the Netherlands, *(d)* Germany and *(e)* Belgium respectively; and what is the total deficit in trade between the United Kingdom and all other EC countries.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 2 December 1992]:* Information on United Kingdom visible trade with members of the EC is regularly published in the "Monthly Review of External Trade Statistics, CSO", which is available in the Library of the House.

Market Share

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the European Community share in the United Kingdom market for the financial year 1990-91; and what is the estimated share for 1991-92.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 2 December 1992]:* Information on the EC shares of the United Kingdom domestic market cannot be provided without disproportionate cost. The EC accounted for 52 per cent. of visible

imports into the United Kingdom in 1990-91 and in 1991-92. The EC share of United Kingdom imports of manufactures was 55 per cent. in 1990-91 and 54 per cent. in 1991-92.

Libyan Sanctions

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what estimate has been made of the effect on the United Kingdom balance of payments of Libyan sanctions.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 2 December 1992]:* It is impossible to say what additional trade might have occurred or the effect on the United Kingdom balance of payments—if sanctions against Libya had not been adopted by the United Nations Security Council.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 7 December 1992

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Equal Opportunities

Ms. Eagle: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what steps he is taking to ensure an equal representation of women on the Bench.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor's policy is to appoint to judicial office those best qualified, regardless of sex, ethnic origin, political affiliation or religion. Without prejudice to this overriding principle, the Lord Chancellor has stressed publicly, and will continue to do so, that he would like to see more female legal practitioners who are suitably qualified appointed to the judiciary. The composition of the judiciary at any one time must inevitably reflect the composition of the legal profession within the relevant categories of age and seniority, but, as the proportion of women at these levels in the profession increases, so this is likely to be reflected on the Bench. Two women have been appointed to the High Court Bench this year and women are being appointed in greater numbers at other levels of the judiciary. The Lord Chancellor has ensured appropriate flexibility, for example related to women who have taken career breaks. He has asked that women candidates be included, wherever possible, in the list of those under consideration for appointment. He has co-operated with the Bar in research into sex equality at the Bar and in the judiciary, and will be studying the resultant findings and recommendations. Women represent 45 per cent. of the lay magistracy and the Lord Chancellor's aim is to achieve equality of sittings between male and female magistrates.

Contract Law

Mr. Higgins: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what proposals he has to implement the recommendation of Law Commission report No. 174 on privity of contract law and estates; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor is actively considering the recommendations of the Law Commission on this subject and hopes to be able to make an announcement about this report in the near future.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Extradition (Ireland)

31. **Mr. Peter Atkinson:** To ask the Attorney-General when he last met his Irish counterpart; and what matters were discussed concerning extradition.

The Attorney-General: The last meeting on this subject took place in Dublin on 21 and 22 July this year. It is not the practice to comment on the detail of our discussions.

Ministerial Responsibilities

32. **Mr. Macklaay:** To ask the Attorney-General if he will make a statement on the division of his work between his role as Law Officer and his other governmental responsibilities.

The Attorney-General: As Attorney-General I am the principal legal adviser to the Government. I also act, wholly independently of the Government, to enforce the law on behalf of the general community in the public interest.

Sunday Trading

33. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Attorney-General what is his current advice to local authorities on the enforcement of the legislation governing Sunday trading.

The Attorney-General: I informed the House on 11 May in answering questions from the hon. Member for Cardiff, Central (Mr. Jones), at columns 367-68, that local authorities can still issue summonses or seek injunctions. It is for them to consider what action to take in a particular case.

Serious Fraud Office (Staff)

34. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Attorney-General what is the current number of staff in the Serious Fraud Office; and what productivity targets have been set.

The Solicitor-General: The Serious Fraud Office presently employs 132 permanent staff as well as additional temporary staff to meet the varying demands of its caseload. Ninety-one police officers are on attachment.

The main performance target is that the period between the acceptance of a case and its transfer or committal to the Crown court should not exceed 12 months.

Crown Prosecution Service (Vacancies)

35. **Mr. Fabricant:** To ask the Attorney-General how many vacancies there are in the Crown prosecution service for solicitors.

The Solicitor General: The Crown prosecution service currently has 159 vacancies for lawyers out of a total requirement of 2,256

Chancellor's Tenant

Mr. John Morris: To ask the Attorney-General if he will make a statement on the application of paragraph 25 of "Questions of Procedure for Ministers" to the civil case involving the Chancellor of the Exchequer; and when Law Officers were informed of the case.

The Attorney-General: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has already informed the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) in a letter of 30 November which has been placed in the Library, of his approach to my predecessor.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

BBC (Restructuring)

10. **Mr. Fabricant:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what assessment he has made of the effect of his proposals to restructure the BBC outlined in the Green Paper on the programme output of the corporation.

Mr. Brooke: Our discussion document set out options, but we cannot reach decisions about the BBC's future structure until we are clearer about the services it is to provide.

Football Stadiums

11. **Mr. John Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what representations he has received regarding the implementation of the Taylor report; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: My predecessor announced the outcome of the Government's review of its all-seater policy in July. Since then, I have received several letters from hon. Members and from members of the public, and on 26 November my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State met bodies representing football supporters to hear their views. I have no plans to relax the all-seater requirement further.

Sports Clubs (Rating)

12. **Mr. Rooney:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make it his policy to introduce mandatory rate relief for non-profit-making sports clubs.

Mr. Key: No. The present arrangement providing for local authority discretion means that each case can be considered on its merits.

Wootton Creek

13. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make a statement on the discoveries made in Wootton Creek as a result of funding by his Department.

Mr. Key: The Wootton survey project is still in its early stages, but it is already demonstrating the existence of important prehistoric and later remains in the inter-tidal zone, relating to the use of the coast by maritime trading communities of the Norman, Saxon and medieval periods.

National Lottery

Mr. O'Hara: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what estimate he has made of the effect of a national lottery on the revenue raised by the Treasury on the football pools industry.

Mr. Brooke: Matters pertaining to Government revenues are properly a matter for the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Estimates of the effects of the national lottery on the level of pools' turnover are subject to a series of hypotheses. I am aware of the understandable concerns on Merseyside and am looking forward to a meeting next week with the Pools Promoters Association.

Mr. John Carlisle: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what discussions have taken place between himself and the Sports Council on the funds available for sport from a national lottery.

Mr. Brooke: I have not discussed this subject specifically with the Sports Council, although officials have discussed with the council funds likely to be available for sport.

Mr. Hall: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what is his estimate of the revenue that will be raised for the Exchequer through the introduction of a national lottery.

Mr. Brooke: That will depend upon the size of the national lottery's turnover, and on taxation. The prime purpose of the national lottery is to raise additional funds for the arts, sport, the heritage and charities.

Arts Funding

Mr. Spring: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what value he attaches to the arm's-length principle of arts funding; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: The "arms-length" principle, under which Governments distance themselves from decisions on the funding of individual arts organisations, has been a central part of arts funding since the creation of the Arts Council. I expect to see it continued.

Public Libraries

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many books were borrowed from public libraries in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Key: The total number of books borrowed from public libraries in 1990-91—the last year for which figures are available—was 563 million, of which 475 million of these were lent from public libraries in England, for which I am responsible.

Overseas Visitors

18. **Mr. Sproat:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many overseas visitors came to the United Kingdom in 1991.

Mr. Key: There were an estimated 16·7 million visits to the United Kingdom by overseas residents in 1991. Inward tourism was badly affected by the Gulf war and the recession in the USA. The number of visitors so far this year is well up on 1991, though not quite back to the record levels achieved in 1990.

Rugby League Football

19. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make a statement on his policy towards rugby league football.

Mr. Brooke: The Government's role is to support and encourage the development of and participation in all sports including rugby league football, with most funding channelled through the Sports Council. In 1991-92, the council provided £160,000 to the British Amateur Rugby League Association—BARLA—and £12,000 to the

English Schools Rugby League for the development of the game. In addition, over the past year, the Foundation for Sport and the Arts has provided over £750,000 in grant aid to rugby league clubs for various projects.

The Sports Council is also involved in promoting discussions between BARLA and the Rugby Football League about the creation of a unified governing body for rugby league.

Regional Orchestras

20. **Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make a statement concerning support for regional orchestras.

Mr. Brooke: Detailed funding decisions are, of course, the responsibility of the Arts Council and regional arts boards. Support for regional orchestras ranges widely, from the more than £6 million the Arts Council gives the major orchestras to smaller-scale grants to local amateur orchestras.

Broadcasting Green Paper

21. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what representations he has received on his Green Paper on broadcasting.

Mr. Brooke: I would refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave earlier today to the question from my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham).

Libraries and Theatres (Greater Manchester)

22. **Mr. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will visit libraries and theatres in Greater Manchester to discuss resources.

Mr. Key: I am always delighted to visit local authorities in connection with my ministerial responsibilities. I have already visited Manchester to see one of its theatres and Chetham's library but would welcome further invitations to libraries and theatres in Greater Manchester. My Department has no direct responsibility for the resources provided for these services, although it must ensure that a comprehensive and efficient library service is provided.

Minority Languages and Cultures

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when he last met his ministerial colleagues representing other member states of the European Community to discuss matters relating to the protection and development of minority and indigenous languages and cultures; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: Neither my right hon. Friend nor I have met European Community Culture Ministers specifically to discuss the position of lesser-used languages and minority cultures. I last met my EC ministerial colleagues in Brussels when I chaired the Culture Council on 12 November. Lesser-used languages were not on the agenda of that meeting, although mention of minority cultures was made during discussion of a Community-wide campaign to raise public awareness of books and reading which the Danish presidency intends to launch next year. Lesser-used languages and minority cultures were also mentioned, during wider discussions, when I attended a meeting of Culture Ministers under the aegis of the Council of Europe in Paris on 15 and 16 October.

Fine Arts Heritage

Mr. Carrington: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what proposals he has to strengthen the ability of national institutions to retain the fine arts heritage in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Brooke: My hon. Friend is familiar with the Government's existing policies to encourage the retention of the nation's important works of art. These include the Waverley system of export controls, important tax concessions, and grants to national museums and galleries and to the National Heritage Memorial Fund. These policies continue to assist national museums and galleries to acquire major works by important artists.

Tourist Boards (Finance)

Mr. David Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what is the percentage of finance in local tourist boards provided by *(a)* the English tourist board, *(b)* local government and *(c)* the private sector.

Mr. Key: Funding for the regional tourist boards for the 1991-92 financial year was:

	Per cent.
(a) English Tourist Board	30·5
(b) Local Authorities	8·5
(c) Private Sector	61·0

Windsor Castle (Fire)

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make a statement on the cost of repairs at Windsor castle.

Mr. Brooke: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave earlier today to the question from the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner).

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what representations the Government received from the Fire Prevention Association concerning the protection of the national heritage from fire; and what subsequent action was taken in respect of Windsor castle.

Mr. Brooke *[holding answer 3 December 1992]:* In October 1991 the Fire Protection Association published a report, "Heritage under Fire", on fire safety in historic buildings. The report was published on behalf of the United Kingdom working party on fire safety in historic buildings, on which the Government and English Heritage were represented. No specific subsequent action was taken in respect of Windsor castle, as a comprehensive programme of fire prevention measures had already been set in hand at the castle.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what contributions he estimates will be forthcoming for the restoration of Windsor castle from *(a)* the private sector, *(b)* insurance companies and *(c)* sources other than public funds.

Mr. Brooke *[holding answer 27 November 1992]:* It is not possible to make any such estimates at the present time.

Royal Palaces

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what action the Historic Royal Palaces Agency takes to train and retain craftsmen with skills necessary for the restoration of royal palaces.

Mr. Key: The Historic Royal Palaces Agency does not employ its own craftsmen. The agency's experience is that craftsmen of the highest quality continue to be available in private firms.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list those royal palaces that have sprinkler systems installed as a fire precaution.

Mr. Brooke *[holding answer 3 December 1992]:* Sprinkler systems have not been installed as a fire precaution at any of the royal palaces.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will arrange for full fire safety inspections at all royal residences in receipt of public funds.

Mr. Brooke *[holding answer 27 November 1992]:* Fire safety inspections are made regularly at each of the occupied royal palaces.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what has been the total cost to public funds arising from the upkeep of each of the royal residences in each of the last three financial years.

Mr. Brooke *[holding answer 27 November 1992]:* The resources provided for the maintenance of each of the royal residences over the last three years is as follows:

£ million

	1989-90	*1990-91*	*1991-92*
Windsor Castle	7·1	9·8	9·3
Buckingham Palace	3·0	1·5	5·2
St. James's Palace	0·8	1·3	2·5
Kensington Palace	1·1	0·3	0·7

Tourism

Mr. Waterson: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what was the total expenditure in England on section 4 grants for tourism-related projects in the last full year for which figures are available.

Mr. Key: The expenditure on section 4 grants in England in the 1991-92 financial year was £600,000.

BBC Archives

Mr. Gorst: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will review the restrictive covenants covering all BBC archives when he is considering the terms under which the BBC's charter will be renewed; and if he will consider whether amending legislation is necessary to ensure that the provisions of European Community restraint of trade legislation are observed by any interests seeking to impose restraints on the use of BBC archives.

Mr. Brooke: The BBC's contractual agreements are a matter for the corporation. The use of the BBC's programme archives and other assets, including the relevance of any EC legislation, is an issue for the debate about the corporation's future.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

UNESCO

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to which programme activities of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation he intends to contribute in the coming year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There are no plans at present to contribute in the coming year to any programme activities of UNESCO through its regular budget. However, the United Kingdom retains its membership of certain inter-governmental bodies which come under UNESCO auspices. We expect to contribute to the World Heritage Fund, the inter-governmental Oceanographic Commission, and the universal copyright convention in the forthcoming year.

Colombia

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Colombian Government about the use of children in coal mines in the Boyaca region.

Mr. Garel-Jones: None. We understand that the Colombian authorities, who are well aware of the concern felt in this country, wish to close illegal mines using child labour.

Hong Kong

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps were taken, since April 1992, to discuss the extension of democracy in Hong Kong before 1997 with the Chinese Government in advance of the Governor's published statement.

Mr. Goodlad: We have repeatedly told the Chinese side of our wish to see a faster pace of democratisation in Hong Kong by increasing the number of seats in the Legislative Council beyond that envisaged in the Basic Law. But the Chinese position has been that the Basic Law cannot be changed. We and the Governor therefore developed a parallel approach, consistent with the Basic Law. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs briefed the Chinese Foreign Minister on this approach in New York on 25 September, two weeks before the Governor's speech. The Governor sent a message in parallel to senior Chinese officials in Peking.

Visitors' Visas

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the number of appeals in the last 12 months against refusal of visitors' visas to people visiting in order to visit relatives or friends in Birmingham.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The information requested is not centrally recorded and could not be provided except at disproportionate expense.

Kashmir

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are his foreign policy objectives with regard to Kashmir; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Our policy is to encourage the Governments of India and Pakistan to agree a means of settling their dispute over Kashmir as provided for in the 1972 Simla agreement; to emphasise the importance of a genuine political process in Kashmir in which the aspirations of the population in Kashmir can be accommodated, an improvement on human rights there; and to call for a clear cessation of any support from outside for violence within Kashmir.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make further representations regarding the Kashmiri people to the Indian Government.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We take every opportunity to discuss the situation in Kashmir with the Indian Government. They are fully aware of our concerns about human rights abuses by security forces there and the need for a genuine political process within Kashmir.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the extent of the freedom of the press in Kashmir.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We are not aware of any restrictions on access to Kashmir by Indian or foreign journalists, or on their reporting on the situation there.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to use opportunities within the United Nations to progress a positive and peaceful solution to the problems of Kashmir.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We do not expect that, given the known positions of India and Pakistan, such opportunities are likely to arise.

Chemical Weapons Convention

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much notice must be provided by states parties before access must be granted *(a)* to declared facilities and *(b)* undeclared facilities under the challenge inspection provisions of article IX of the chemical weapons convention.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Under the challenge inspection provisions of article IX of the chemical weapons convention, access must be permitted no later than 120 hours for undeclared facilities, and 100 hours for declared facilities, after notice of inspection has been provided by states parties.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what allowances have been made for the retention of disabling agents for riot control purposes under the terms of the chemical weapons convention.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Under the terms of the convention, states parties will be entitled to use toxic chemicals for law enforcement, including domestic riot control purposes, provided that such chemicals are limited to those not listed in the schedules to the convention and which can produce rapidly in humans sensory irritation or disabling physical effects which disappear within a short time following termination of exposure. States parties will undertake not to use riot control agents as a method of warfare.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what financial and personnel resources will be made available to ensure commercial compliance with the terms of the chemical weapons convention in the United Kingdom; and if custodial sentences may be applied to any individuals in the commercial chemical industry found to be in serious breach of the terms of the chemical weapons convention in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Her Majesty's Government will give detailed consideration to issues relating to the implementation of the convention after its signature. The convention will not enter into force before 1995.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the transparency of the operation of the chemical weapons convention preparatory commission; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The rules of procedure of the preparatory commission have yet to be drawn up. Her Majesty's Government are therefore not yet in a position to make a firm decision on its policy towards the transparency of the operation of the commission.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if his Department will publish the draft rules of procedure for the preparatory commission before states-signatories to the chemical weapons convention formally adopt them following the signing of the convention; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The rules of procedure for the preparatory commission have yet to be drawn up. Any decision on whether such rules should be made public before being formally adopted will be for all states involved in drawing them up.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what resources will be made available to the Scientific Advisory Board of Independent Experts to review the scientific and technological developments that could affect the operation of the chemical weapons convention.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: It will be for the conference of states parties of the chemical weapons convention to decide what resources will be made available to the scientific advisory board.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consultations will take place between the chemical weapons convention preparatory commission and representatives of the scientific community and chemical industry regarding the establishment of the organisation for the prohibition of chemical weapons.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: It will be for the preparatory commission of the chemical weapons convention to decide what consultations it may have with representatives of the scientific community and the chemical industry.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 16 November, *Official Report*, column *47*, if the United Kingdom will be an original signatory of the chemical weapons convention.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The United Kingdom fully intends to be an original signatory of the chemical weapons convention.

Iraq

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) on what date Her Majesty's Government last made representations to the United Nations special commission of inspection on Iraq;

(2) on what dates Her Majesty's Government have received requests for information and assistance from the United Nations special commission of inspection on Iraq; and on what dates the Government responded to those requests.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Government have worked closely with the United Nations special commission on Iraq—UNSCOM—since it was set up in April 1991. The United Kingdom mission to the United Nations is in almost daily contact with UNSCOM.

COCOM

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's present policy towards the co-ordinating committee on multilateral strategic export controls (COCOM), indicating if any changes are in prospect.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: As indicated in the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Minister of State to the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) on 5 June at column *673*, the present policy of all countries participating in the co-ordinating committee on multilateral export controls is to provide those proscribed destinations that have embarked on political reform with progressively wider access to COCOM-controlled goods and technology, as they establish effective export controls. To this end, an informal co-operation forum on export controls has been established: its first meeting was held in Paris on 23 and 24 November.

Coffins

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action he proposes to ensure that coffins used to repatriate, for cremation, the remains of British nationals from Spain, comply with EEC directive 84/360.

Mr. Maclean: I have been asked to reply. There are no requirements in EEC directive 84/360 as to the type or composition of coffins for cremation.

TRANSPORT

King's Cross Fire

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made by London Transport in implementing the recommendations of the Fennel report into the King's Cross underground fire.

Mr. Norris: London Transport has fully implemented 106 out of 127 recommendations addressed to it and has partially completed a further 12. One recommendation was not accepted by LT, but its objective has been achieved through other means. Work on implementing the remainder is progressing well. A copy of London Transport's detailed report on progress up to the end of August has been placed in the Library.

Nuclear Material (Transport)

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport by what modes of transport *(a)* plutonium, *(b)* enriched uranium and *(c)* natural uranium are transported (i) within, (ii) into and (iii) from the United Kingdom; and if he will name in each case the ports used.

Mr. Norris: By land, sea and air. The consignors choose the mode, and port when needed.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will provide details of the nature and quantity of irradiated nuclear fuel, plutonium and high-level radioactive waste transported by sea to and from, or by, the United Kingdom in each of the last five years.

Mr. Norris: This information is not held by the Department.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received regarding the air freighting of fresh plutonium-bearing nuclear fuel pins from Germany to Dounreay in Scotland.

Mr. Norris: None.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, (1) pursuant to his answer of 24 November, *Official Report*, column *561*, if he will set out the names of the persons with details of their expertise, who will represent Her Majesty's Government at the International Atomic Energy Agency-International Maritime Organisation-United Nations Environment Programme working group on the transport of irradiated nuclear fuel;

(2) pursuant to his answer of 24 November, *Official Report*, column *561*, if he will name the specialists in the transport of irradiated nuclear fuel who will be representing him at the forthcoming joint International Atomic Energy Authority-International Maritime Organisation-United Nations Environment Programme working group meeting.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The Department will be represented by: Mr. K. James, a chartered engineer with 28 years' experience in the transport of hazardous material by sea, chairman of the IMO's sub-committee on the carriage of dangerous goods—CDG; Mr. C. K. Wilson, a physicist specialising in criticality safety and radiological protection with 10 years' experience regulating the transport of radioactive materials; Mr. C. N. Young, a chartered engineer with 14 years' experience in the regulation of radioactive material transport, chairman of the IMO's CDG working group on class 7 dangerous goods—radioactive materials.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information his Department routinely collects and stores centrally on the import and export of nuclear materials by different transport modes to and from the United Kingdom.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The Department routinely collects that information which is required by the International Atomic Energy Agency publication "Safety Series No. 6: Regulations for the Safe Transport of Radioactive Material", a copy of which is held in the Library of the House.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what evaluation his Department has made of any of the safety standards set by the International Atomic Energy Agency for the international transport of *(a)* plutonium, *(b)* enriched uranium, *(c)* natural uranium and *(d)* radioactive waste.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The Department is involved in the evaluation of the safety standards for the transport of all radioactive materials on an ongoing basis and is a major contributor to the International Atomic Energy Agency's programme of review and revision of its international regulations.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met the advisory committee on the safe transport of radioactive materials; and what matters were discussed and decided.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: This committee was disbanded on 31 January 1989.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his Department's policy in regard to evaluation of independent reports published on the transport of nuclear materials.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: To consider them on their merits.

Railway Equipment Manufacturers

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received from railway equipment manufacturers about investment decisions for work during the next six years.

Mr. Freeman: The Railway Industry Association has submitted a copy of its evidence to the Transport Select Committee on the Government's White Paper on BR privatisation. The Steer Davies Gleave report "Rail Privatisation: Attractive Investment or Wishful Thinking" has also been submitted on behalf of the Railway Industry Association, Eurotunnel and Transport 2000. Representations have been received from several individual railway manufacturers and I am meeting the Railway Industry Association on 8 December to discuss prospects for the industry.

General Register and Record Office of Shipping

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to contract out or divide up the General Register and Record Office of Shipping.

Mr. Norris: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) on 25 November, at column 659.

School Buses

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what account he has taken of *(a)* parental and school governors' wishes, *(b)* the particular road conditions of rural areas and *(c)* road safety in his policy on carrying three children on a double school bus seat; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The regulations governing the carrying capacity of public service vehicles permit three seated children under 14, sharing a double seat to count as two passengers. This is a concession and they do not have to be seated in this manner. These regulations apply throughout the country and it would not be practicable to have regional variations to take account of particular road conditions. Buses and coaches are the safest form of road passenger transport in this country, even where children are seated three to a double seat.

We are continuing to review these regulations and will take account of the wishes of parents and others. For the present, I have no plans to amend them.

Disabled Passengers

Sir John Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what will be the expected annual saving to the Exchequer arising from the repeal of the vehicle excise duty exemption under the disabled passengers scheme.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I understand the saving will be in the region of £440,000, in the first year, based on the approximate annual number of new applications.

Current beneficiaries under this scheme will not lose their entitlement to exemption from vehicle excise duty as a result of the repeal.

Traffic Commissioners (North Staffordshire)

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give details of the staffing resources available to the traffic commissioners responsible for north Staffordshire.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: There are 46·5 permanent staff based at the West Midland traffic area office who provide support for the West Midland traffic commissioner whose geographical area includes north Staffordshire. The staff includes one grade 7 clerk, who is also the clerk of the South Wales traffic area office, two higher executive officers, five executive officers and 38·5 administrative and support staff.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Science and Technology

Sir Giles Shaw: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he now intends to publish the White Paper on science and technology.

Mr. Waldegrave: I intend to publish the White Paper in the early part of next year.

Sir Giles Shaw: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what proposals he has for opportunities for further consultation after the publication of the White Paper on science and technology.

Mr. Waldegrave: The White Paper will itself need to address any questions of further consultation. But I would welcome any views which my hon. Friend, who I know is the Chairman of the Select Committee on Science and Technology, may have.

Citizens Charter

Mr. Adley: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make it his policy that requirements imposed under the citizens charter will continue to be applied to services sold to the private sector.

Mr. Waldegrave: The citizens charter applies to all public services, and, in the private sector, to the main utilities where the regulatory bodies play a key role in protecting customers' interests in accordance with citizens' charter principles and in helping to develop competition. We will continue to appoint regulatory bodies following privatisation where it is in the public interest to do so.

Civil Servants

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many civil servants are currently employed by his Department *(a)* in London and *(b* elsewhere.

Mr. Waldegrave: Excluding its executive agencies, the Office of Public Service and Science employs 1,430 civil servants, 711 in London and 719 elsewhere, including those who work on a part-time basis.

PRIME MINISTER

Radiation

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister if he will set out the division of responsibilities between each Government Department in investigating the risks posed by exposure to radiation.

The Prime Minister: The Department of Health is responsible in general terms for the protection of public health against radiological hazards. The Department's specific responsibilities relate to obtaining expert advice; initiating relevant research; and ensuring an effective health response in the event of a radiological emergency.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food's responsibilities are to protect the population from exposure to unacceptable levels of radioactivity through food chain pathways; and to minimise the impact of radioactive waste on the food, farming and fishing industries and the marine environment.

The Department of Trade and Industry is responsible for civil nuclear safety in relation to the generation of electricity.

The Department of Employment is responsible for the Ionising Radiation Regulations 1985, which concern the protection of workers and the public from radiation doses received as a result of any work involving ionising radiations. On this the Department is advised by the Health and Safety Commission and the regulations are enforced by the Health and Safety Executive.

The Department of the Environment is responsible for establishing a radioactive waste management policy and for monitoring the environment for radioactivity. Within the Department, the regulators—Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution—have the statutory responsibility in England and Wales for authorising uses and disposals of radioactive substances.

The Ministry of Defence is responsible for defence nuclear and radiological safety.

The Department of Transport is responsible for the safety aspects of the transportation of radioactive material.

The Scottish Office, the Welsh Office and the Northern Ireland Office are responsible for all civil aspects of radiological safety in relation to their respective parts of the United Kingdom.

The National Radiological Protection Board is responsible under the Radiological Protection Act 1970 for advancing knowledge of radiological protection and for informing and advising Government Departments and others on protection from radiation hazards.

Animal Welfare

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list the Government Departments concerned with the main areas of animal welfare, indicating their respective responsibilities.

The Prime Minister: A number of Government Departments have responsibility for the welfare and conservation of animals and related matters.

The Department of the Environment is responsible for policy on stray dogs; the protection of birds; wildlife and endangered species.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food is responsible for the welfare of livestock kept on agricultural land; the welfare of livestock at market and the welfare of horses, cattle, sheep, swine, goats and poultry in slaughterhouses and knackers yards. The Ministry is also involved in the campaign against illegal poisoning of wildlife and in the International Whaling Commission, and has responsibility for the impact of fishing practices on cetaceans.

The Home Office is responsible for ensuring the adequacy of the law on cruelty to animals in general and in some specific areas, and for the law on the use of living animals in scientific procedures.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office works to raise the profile of animal welfare issues abroad, both bilaterally and with international organisations concerned.

Maastricht Treaty

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister how many representations his office has received on the Maastricht treaty from 1 January to 1 December giving a disaggregated breakdown between those originating in the United Kingdom and those from abroad.

The Prime Minister: I have received a substantial number of representations on the Maastricht treaty covering a wide range of issues.

Legal Expenses Insurance Policies

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Prime Minister if he will require Ministers to take out legal expenses insurance policies.

The Prime Minister: I have no plans to do so.

Freight Traffic

Mr. Adley: To ask the Prime Minister if it remains his Government's policy to seek the transfer of freight traffic from road to rail; and if he will report on the extent to which freight has been transferred to rail since April 1992.

The Prime Minister: The Government believe that freight should be transported by rail whenever that makes commercial sense to customers and rail operators alike. The best way to facilitate this is to end British Rail's monopoly of rail services, as proposed in the White Paper "New Opportunities for the Railways", Cm 2012. Detailed information about rail freight carryings since April 1992 is a matter for British Rail.

Mr. Adley: To ask the Prime Minister if he will order an immediate inquiry into the reasons for and effect of the fall in the volume of rail freight traffic.

The Prime Minister: Rail freight has been in decline for many years. The Government's proposals for the privatisation of British Rail's freight operations, and the opening up of the rail network to new entrants, are aimed at improving rail's prospects for the future.

Tropical Timber

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on the United Kingdom Government's position in respect of the preparatory committee for renegotiation of the international tropical timber agreement to be convened in Quito, Ecuador, in January 1993.

The Prime Minister: The United Kingdom had hoped that a second preparatory committee in Quito, Ecuador would be unnecessary; however, the tropical timber-producing countries require more time to develop their positions before discussing them with the consuming countries. The Quito meeting will provide a valuable opportunity for the producing and consuming countries to identify the issues they wish to renegotiate. The United Kingdom intends to participate in the second preparatory meeting and will work with its European neighbours for a speedy renegotiation of the 1983 agreement.

Iraq

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Prime Minister what steps Her Majesty's Government took during 1990 and prior to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, to halt the export to Iraq of furnaces constructed by Consarc Engineering of Bellshill, near Glasgow.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 2 December 1992]:* It is not normal practice to discuss the affairs of individual companies.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Prime Minister (1) what requests Her Majesty's Government received from the United States Administration to stop the export to Iraq of two furnaces constructed by Consarc Engineering at Bellshill, near Glasgow, during 1990;

(2) what communications Her Majesty's Government received from the United States Administration during 1990 and prior to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, concerning involvement by British companies in equipping a missile factory called Badr General Establishment.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 2 December 1992]:* Communications between Governments are confidential.

Civil List

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Prime Minister what items or headings of expenditure have been transferred from the royal family's expenditure funded from the civil list to the Government since 1972; on what dates; what is the current cost to the Exchequer of each such item or heading; and what was their cost at the time of their transfer.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 2 December 1992]:* So far as I am aware, no items or headings of direct expenditure have been transferred from the civil list to the Government since 1972. However, following advice taken in 1987, consistent with government fees and charges policy, the royal household took on board the feasibility of charging full costs for certain administrative services. These included, for example, charging for the accommodation and support services provided to staff based in the royal household but who are employed by Government Departments. Similar charges are made on behalf of the civil list to the household's royal collection department and to the Prince of Wales's office. The cost to Government Departments in the years 1987-90, which should be seen in the context of the "1990 Royal Trustees Report"—HC 629—are as follows:

	£
1987	83,372
1988	138,310
1989	132,809
1990	162,810

The separate identification of full costs for administrative services is in line with the Government's policy of identifying costs across the public sector.

Furniture and Furnishings (Regulations)

Mr. Michael: To ask the Prime Minister which Government Department is responsible for drafting the Furniture and Furnishings Fire Safety Regulations; and what consultations are being undertaken on the terms of the regulations.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 3 December 1992]:* The Furniture and Furnishings (Fire Safety) Regulations were made by the Department of Trade and Industry in July 1988. The DTI has recently consulted public on draft amendment regulations proposing to postpone, from 1 March 1993 to 1 March 1994, the date by which furniture included in the letting of accommodation must meet the fire resistance requirements of the 1988 regulations. The purpose of the proposed amendment is to allow businesses providing furnished accommodation more time to prepare for the fire resistance requirements and to complete the upgrading or replacement of their existing stock of furniture. It will remain a requirement that any additional replacement or additional furniture which they supply from 1 March 1993 must meet the fire resistance requirements.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Civil Servants

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many civil servants from his departments have been relocated from London to other parts of the United Kingdom *(a)* in the last five years and *(b)* in the last 10 years; and to where they were relocated.

Mr. Dorrell: A total of 3,114 posts from the Chancellor's departments have been relocated from London in the last five years under the current delegated approach. The table lists the moves by department and destination.

Department and Location	Number of posts
Inland Revenue	
Nottingham	700
Washington	20
Cardiff	300
Wrexham	20
Sunderland	199
Bootle	204
Livingstone	20
Salford	269
Glasgow	34
East Kilbride	220
Middlesbrough	199
Edinburgh	60
Customs and Excise	
Manchester	262
Liverpool	360
Southend	198
CSO	
Newport, Wales	41
Treasury	
Basingstoke	8

During the previous five years, 278 posts from the Chancellor's departments were relocated from London. They were all moved by the Inland Revenue on their own initiative and the locations and number of posts involved were as follows:

Location	Number of posts
Bristol	38
Solihull	67
Leeds	67
Birkenhead	24
Manchester	65
Glasgow	17

Economy

Mr. David Young: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what discussions he has had with industry on the current state of the economy.

Mr. Portillo: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer and I have frequent contact with representatives of industry, and pay close attention to their views on the economy. I have taken careful note of their concerns and proposals, and the broad welcome given to the autumn statement.

Third World Debt

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much has been granted in tax relief to United Kingdom banks against possible default on third world debts in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Dorrell: Provisions for doubtful sovereign debt by banks operating in the United Kingdom are estimated to have reduced corporation tax receipts in the last six years by the following amounts:

	£ million
1986-87	70
1987-88	240
1988-89	550
1989-90	480
1990-91	720
[1]1991-92	190

[1] provisional

Estimates for earlier years are zero or small.

Public expenditure

Mr. Jenkin: To ask the Chancellor of the exchequer if he will make a statement on the reasons underlying the policy of seeking to reduce United Kingdom public expenditure as a proportion of national income.

Mr. Portillo: It is important, as the economy recovers, to reduce public expenditure as a share of national income so as to ensure that the benefits of recovery are not pre-empted by the state. A constantly increasing proportion would impose an intolerable burden on the wealth-creating sector and choke off growth. We need to reduce over time the ratio of public spending to gross domestic product so as to achieve our aim of returning the budget to balance as the economy recovers.

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what weight is given to service-specific costs such as health care and medical inflation, education inflation and social service provision inflation in calculating public spending by Departments; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: The Government do not plan public expenditure in volume terms. However, service-specific costs are one of the many factors taken into account when determining the allocation of the public expenditure total between programmes.

Share Ownership

Ms. Harman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will provide a breakdown of share ownership by occupational status for the most recent date available.

Mr. Dorrell: The 1992 Treasury-ProShare share ownership survey showed that 22 per cent. of the adult population in Great Britain owned shares. Of these shareholders, 45 per cent. were in full-time employment; 10 per cent. were in part-time employment; 2 per cent. were students; 5 per cent. were retired; and 37 per cent. were inactive or unemployed.

Sellafield

Mr. Gale: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what meetings he and his Ministers and officials have had during the past 12 months with *(a)* Greenpeace and *(b)* other anti-nuclear groups to discuss the future of the thermal oxide reprocessing plant at Sellafield.

Sir John Cope: Following a request from Greenpeace for a meeting to discuss the economics of nuclear fuel reprocessing, Treasury officials met representatives from Greenpeace in September 1992. There have been no meetings with other anti-nuclear groups in the last 12 months.

Pensions (Tax Relief)

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the cost in 1993-94 of removing tax relief at the higher rate from *(a)* personal pensions, *(b)* all forms of occupational pensions and *(c)* all pensions to which higher rate tax exemption applies.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 4 December 1992]:* The latest estimates of the direct revenue yields for 1993-94, assuming statutory indexation of 3·25 per cent. on 1992-93 levels of allowances and thresholds, are as follows:

	£ million
Withdrawal of higher rate relief:—	
on contributions to personal pensions[1]	180
on contributions to occupational pensions	300
on all pensions	480

[1] Including relief for retirement annuity premia and free standing additional voluntary contributions.

No account has been taken of possible behavioural changes resulting from restricting availability of relief at the higher rate in these ways.

Appointments

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he plans to announce the appointment of a team of independent forecasters to assist the Treasury; and if he will name the individuals he has approached to date.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 1 December 1992]:* Pursuant to my reply of 3 December 1992, *Official Report*, column *306*, I have now invited the following to become members of the panel:

Andrew Britton, Esq., National Institute of Economic and Social Research.
Professor Tim Congdon, Lombard Street Research.
Professor David Currie, London Business School.
Gavyn Davies, Esq., Goldman Sachs International Ltd.
Professor Wynne Godley, Cambridge University.
Professor Patrick Minford, Liverpool University.
Andrew Sentance, Esq., Confederation of British Industry.

ENVIRONMENT

Common Land

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will seek to introduce new legislation on common land in England and Wales.

Mr. Maclean: Our policy on common land in England and Wales was set out in the statement made by the then Minister for the Environment and Countryside on 26 July 1990, at columns *391-92*, but I cannot say when Commons legislation will be promoted to implement that policy.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much investment he is making in programmes for energy efficiency, energy conservation and combined heat and power programmes in the current year.

Mr. MacLean: The Energy Efficiency Office encourages energy efficiency through a range of initiatives, for which the budget for 1992-93 is £63 million. The promotion of combined heat and power is an integral part of the best practice programme which is one of these initiatives.

Civil Servants

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many civil servants from his Department have been relocated from London to other parts of the United Kingdom *(a)* in the last five years and *(b)* in the last 10 years; and to where they were relocated.

Mr. Howard: Over the past five years my Department has relocated 174 posts from London to Bedford, Bristol, Leeds and Manchester. Although records are not available for earlier years, it would appear that no posts were relocated during the five years prior to 1988.

Overall some 45 per cent. of my Department's staff now work outside London. The need to retain posts in London is kept under review and we shall continue to look for opportunities to move posts to other parts of the country in accordance with Government policy.

Homelessness

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will meet the Churches National Housing Coalition to discuss its petition on the growth and persistence of homelessness.

Mr. Baldry: I addressed a meeting organised by the Churches National Housing Coalition as part of its lobby of Parliament on 1 December 1992, and I listened with interest to the concerns expressed.

Council Tax

Ms. Janet Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate the income to be raised from the council tax in respect of *(a)* hospices and *(b)* other residential care homes, nationally and broken down by county authority area; and what representations he has received upon the council tax liability of (i) hospices and (ii) other residential care homes.

Mr. Robin Squire: There are about 16,000 residential care homes in England, and some 3,500 nursing homes, including hospices. My Department does not hold information on the bands to which each home will be allocated. Nor do we know the levels of discounts, reductions for disabilities and transitional relief to which each will be entitled. Furthermore, as local authorities will not be setting their council taxes until the spring, it is impossible to estimate the amount of tax which will be payable.

My Department has received a number of representations about the council tax from individual care and nursing homes, and from associations representing such homes.

Local Government Superannuation Scheme

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will postpone the implementation of the local government superannuation scheme until after the results of the Goode inquiry have been made public; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: The recommendations of the Pension Law Review Committee will be considered carefully when

they are published. If changes to the regulations governing the local government superannuation scheme become necessary, statutory consultations with the interested parties will take place. Meantime, amendments to the scheme will continue.

Council Reallocation Grants

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many council reallocation grants were paid to people in *(a)* London and *(b)* England, wishing to move to Wales, in each year since 1989; and what was the cost to his Department in each of these years.

Mr. Baldry: Section 129 of the Housing Act 1988 empowers local authorities to give grants to their tenants to help them obtain other accommodation by buying or leasing a home or by extending an existing property.

Reports on the operation of cash incentive schemes in 1989-90 and 1990-91, based on returns from local authorities, have already been placed in the Library and include the information requested.

In 1991-92, a total of 22 grants were paid to tenants in London who wished to move to Wales and 12 to tenants in the rest of England who also wished to move to Wales. Information on the actual cost of the 34 grants in question is not readily available, but the average grant paid nationally in 1991-92 was £16,496.

Sellafield

Mr. Gale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what work has been undertaken by his Department to assess the economic implications of a delay in commissioning the thermal oxide reprocessing plant at Sellafield.

Mr. Maclean: None. Consultation has already begun on the necessary draft authorisation for the Sellafield site to cover THORP operation.

Mr. Gale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what meetings he and his Ministers and officials have had during the last 12 months with *(a)* Greenpeace and *(b)* other anti-nuclear groups to discuss the commissioning of the thermal oxide reprocessing plant at Sellafield.

Mr. Maclean: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State met members of Greenpeace on 21 September and discussed a number of issues including the commissioning of the thermal oxide reprocessing plant at Sellafield.

Derelict Land Grant

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much derelict land grant expenditure there has been in the metropolitan borough of Wirral council district in each year since 1984 *(a)* at current prices and *(b)* at 1984 prices.

Mr. Robin Squire *[holding answer 4 December 1992]:* The information requested is as follows:

Metropolitan Borough of Wirral: Derelict Land Grant Expenditure

	Expenditure £	*1992 Prices* £	*1984 Prices* £
1984-85	191,533	290,307	191,533
1985-86	213,122	319,329	202,091
1986-87	303,962	441,240	279,244
1987-88	187,922	258,580	163,646
1988-89	559,000	716,985	453,751
1989-90	175,000	210,613	133,289
1990-91	371,841	414,428	262,278
1991-92	351,419	366,354	231,852
[1]1992-93	400,000	400,000	253,144
Total	2,753,799	3,417,836	2,170,828

[1] Forecast

A further £102,000 derelict land grant was paid in this period towards reclamation schemes carried out by non-local authority applicants in the metropolitan borough of Wirral.

Empty Properties

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will break down into local authority areas the distribution of the £750 million budget announced in the autumn statement for the purchase of empty houses.

Sir George Young *[holding answer 4 December 1992]:* Of the £750 million package, £627 million is being spent in England. A total of £577 million has been allocated to the Housing Corporation for the purchase of empty, new and repossessed properties and £20 million for additional grants under the tenants incentive schemes—TIS. A total of £30 million is being allocated to local authorities for additional grants under the cash incentive scheme—CIS.

The resources for the purchase of empty properties are being allocated by the corporation to housing associations operating in a number of local authority areas. Around 75 per cent. of the money has now been allocated; the remainder will be allocated by early January. The distribution of the resources allocated so far is as follows:

	£ million
London and Home Counties (North East)	68·60
London and Home Counties (North West)	62·60
London and Home Counties (South)	84·33
West	59·20
East Midlands	42·10
West Midlands	34·20
North East	37·40
North West	31·40
Merseyside	6·80

The £20 million for additional TIS grants has been allocated by the corporation to its regions as follows:

	£ million
London and Home Counties (North East)	2·914
London and Home Counties (North West)	3·735
London and Home Counties (South)	4·161
West	2·434
East Midlands	1·466
West Midlands	2·072
North East	1·326
North West	1·506
Merseyside	0·376

The £30 million for additional CIS grants will be spent in London and the south-east. Allocations to individual local authorities will be announced shortly.

Tarmac

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the amount of the claim for liquidated damages made by the Property Services Agency Projects board against Tarmac in respect of the contract on the Hewell Grange prison in Leeds.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 4 December 1992]:* The amount of any such claim is commercially confidential. The contract on Hewell Grange prison was excluded from the sale of PSA Projects to Tarmac. Any claims are the responsibility of the Home Office, as the client.

EDUCATION

Higher Education

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will publish an updated version of the table in annex 2 of "Higher Education: A New Framework", Cm 1541, setting out projections of home student numbers in higher education in Great Britain.

Mr. Forman: The public expenditure proposals announced in the autumn statement provide for a 13 per cent. increase in the number of full-time equivalent home and EC students in higher education in England over the next three years. The figures are:

	Number
1992-93	776,000
1993-94	842,000
1994-95	877,000
1995-96	880,000

The figures assume that the proportion of young people entering higher education—currently well over one in four—will remain broadly steady over the next three years, and that it will increase to one in three by the end of the decade—the level projected in the 1991 White Paper.

Mandatory Awards

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many investigations have been made by his Department into reports of delays in payment of mandatory awards; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forman: The Department has investigated complaints of delays made against seven local education authorities in the current academic year.

Students (Sponsorship)

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will call for a report on how institutions of higher and further education are reacting to the withdrawing of financial sponsorship from students by industrial and commercial sponsors.

Mr. Forman: Industry and commerce will decide questions of student sponsorship in the context of their overall recruitment policies. It is for individual higher and further education institutions themselves to consider whether changes in the financial sponsorship of students have any implications for the particular mix and type of courses they provide. Any withdrawing of sponsorship by industry and commerce will not however affect a student's entitlement to a mandatory award or student loan.

Discipline

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what role his Department has in any disciplinary proceedings in locally or directly managed schools.

Mr. Forth: Disciplinary procedures applying to staff in local education authority-maintained schools without delegated budgets are the responsibility of the local education authority; in schools with delegated budgets and grant-maintained schools, they are under the control of the governing body.

Open University

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement outlining what action he has taken in respect of the final report of the visiting committee of the Open university.

Mr. Forman: My right hon. Friend decided, on the advice of the chairman of the Open university visiting committee, that the report should be passed to the Higher Education Funding Council for England, since that body would be responsible for the Open university's funding from April 1993. A copy of the report was sent to the chairman of the funding council on 21 August.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how much financial provision he has made available in the current year to the Open university to assist students in financial hardship.

Mr. Forman: The practice of earmarking a portion of the Open university's recurrent grant for the provision of financial support for unemployed students was discontinued in 1991 at the university's request. The university is now free to determine how much of its grant it spends on assistance for students suffering financial hardship.

EC Education Council

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the outcome of the recent meeting of the Council of EC Ministers of Education.

Mr. Patten: I chaired the meeting on Friday 27 November of the Council of EC Education Ministers. The Under-Secretary of State for Further and Higher Education and the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland represented the United Kingdom.

After two and a half years of negotiation, the Ministers reached agreement on the terms of the new statute of the European schools. The effect of this will be to improve the efficiency of operation of the board of governors of these nine schools, which were established for the children of the staff of the EC institutions.

The Ministers also agreed that there should be a second four-year phase of the TEMPUS programme and exchanged views on its key features. TEMPUS is a programme of EC assistance to the countries of central and eastern Europe through co-operation in higher education. The first phase expires after the academic year 1993-94 and it should now be possible for the Council formally to adopt the second phase early next year.

The Ministers adopted conclusions on and discussed the future directions of co-operation at Community level in higher education and in open and distance learning. They adopted conclusions on EC-United States co-operation in education and training, health education in schools and the Eurydice network of information exchange in education.

School Closures

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will outline the criteria for the closure of rural schools.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend would expect any closure proposal to take account of considerations such as the number of pupils on roll, the quality of alternative provision, parental choice, local geography, the distance to be travelled to alternative schools, and the age of children making those journeys. That said, very small schools are expensive to run and where alternative schools are readily accessible closures can make sense.

Surplus School Places (Thamesmead)

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what estimate he has made of the number of surplus school places at both primary and secondary level in the Thamesmead area in both Greenwich and Bexley; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: On the basis of the Department's survey of school capacity we estimate that in 1991 the London borough of Greenwich had 3,026 surplus places in the primary sector and 3,756 surplus places in the secondary sector, representing 15 and 22 per cent. of total capacity respectively. The authority has suggested that these figures should be revised to 2,689 primary and 3,796 secondary. It is not possible to say how many of these were located in the Thamesmead area.

A-levels

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the current percentage of those students taking GCSEs who go on to take A-levels.

Mr. Forman: About 40 per cent. of pupils who take GCSEs at 16 go on to study for A-levels at schools and publicly funded further education establishments.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Public Interest Immunity Certificates

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce legislation to amend the law regarding public interest immunity certificates.

Mr. Jack: There are no current plans for legislation. However, the issue is within the scope of both Lord Justice Scott's inquiry and the Royal Commission on criminal justice; and we shall study carefully any recommendations that are made.

Police Pension Scheme

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will take the necessary legislative and other steps to provide that the police pension scheme shall provide a pension for the widow of a policeman who married after retirement from the police force but before 6 April 1978 as if the requirements of the Social Security Act 1975 applied prior to that date.

Mr. Charles Wardle: No. The police pension scheme is consistent with other main public service pension schemes on this matter. There is no justification for making an exception.

Teenage Prisoners

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* 16-year-olds, *(b)* 15-year-olds and *(c)* 14-year-olds have been held in an adult prison on remand for any period of time during each of the last five years.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The readily available information is given in the table. Separate figures for adult prisons are not readily available.

Receptions of untried and convicted unsentenced juveniles into local prisons and remand centres in England and Wales: by type of initial reception and age, 1987-91

Type of reception and age	*Number of persons*				
	1987	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*[1]
Untried					
14	2	1	—	3	10
15	545	510	443	359	401
16	1,162	994	935	800	673
Convicted unsentenced					
14	1	—	—	—	1
15	38	25	25	22	29
16	117	91	63	84	55

[1] Provisional figures.

Prison Service (Director General)

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement regarding the appointment of a new director general of the prison service.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I hope to be able to make an announcement shortly.

Devon and Cornwall Police Authority

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what increases in uniformed officers have been approved for the Devon and Cornwall police authority for 1991-92, 1992-93 and 1993-94; what were the requests of the authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information is given in the table.

Year	*Applications (Number of posts)*	*Posts approved*
1991-92	31	15
1992-93	70	48
1993-94	49	Nil

In the light of the Government's decision that constraints must be placed upon public expenditure, my

right hon. and learned Friend has concluded that the costs of additional police officers cannot at present be justified. He has therefore decided not to approve any increases in police establishments for 1993-94.

Immigration Ministers' Meeting

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about the meeting of European Community Immigration and Trevi Ministers which he chaired in London on 30 November and 1 December.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The meeting of Ministers concerned with immigration was the 13th in the series of meetings held towards the end of each presidency since 1986.

Ministers approved a number of texts forming part of the immigration and asylum work programme endorsed by the Maastricht European Council a year ago. These consisted of

(i) A resolution on manifestly unfounded applications for asylum, which defines the cases to which it is appropriate to apply accelerated procedures;

(ii) A resolution on "host third countries", which sets out objective criteria defining the circumstances in which it is appropriate to return an asylum applicant to a safe third country for substantive consideration of the application;

(iii) Conclusions on countries in which there is generally no serious risk of persecution, which create a presumption against the claim of an asylum applicant from a country which is generally regarded as safe;

(iv) A recommendation regarding practices followed by member states on expulsion, designed to encourage best practice both in the effective removal of persons unlawfully in the territory of the member states and in the application of safeguards against unjustified or arbitrary expulsion;

(v) A recommendation regarding transit for the purposes of expulsion, which lays down procedures to be followed where it is necessary for a person being expelled to transit to another member state.

Ministers also considered a draft resolution on harmonisation of national policies on family reunification. They agreed the bulk of the text, but remitted one issue for further consideration by officials.

Ministers also approved conclusions on people displaced from former Yugoslavia and in particular the need for a more co-ordinated approach to the problem.

I am placing in the Library of the House copies of all the documents that were approved by Immigration Ministers, together with the press communiqué.

Ministers discussed developments on the free movement of persons in 1993 and exchanged views on their plans and intentions in respect of internal frontiers.

Discussion at the meeting of Trevi Ministers on 1 December focused on the establishment of Europol and in particular its first stage, the Europol drugs unit. The Ministers agreed that they wished to establish Europol, and in particular the Europol drugs unit, as quickly as possible. The meeting was unable to decide upon a location for the unit and this decision will now rest with the European Council.

Trevi Ministers also approved a number of reports from individual Trevi working groups on police co-operation against terrorism, police training and the co-ordination of intergovernmental police co-operation.

Discretionary Life Sentences

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) on how many occasions the new discretionary life sentence tribunals have recommended that prisoners be moved to a lower security category; and on how many occasions that recommendation has been acted upon;

(2) how many discretionary life sentence prisoners have appeared before the new lifer tribunals; and how many of them have been recommended for immediate release.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Thirty-three discretionary life prisoners have so far appeared before a discretionary lifer panel of the parole board. Four prisoners have been released on life licence following a direction from the board. Of the remaining prisoners, the board has recommended that one should be released for deportation, 15 should be moved to conditions of lower security and that six should be considered for specialist treatment. These recommendations are being carefully considered.

Young Offenders

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many section 53 offenders, aged 16 years and under, are at present placed in adult prisons in England and Wales.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: According to the records held centrally, which are approximate, no offenders under 17 detained under section 53 of the Children and Young People Act 1933 were held in adult prisons in England and Wales on 31 August 1992, the latest date for which information is available. However, six such detainees were being held in remand centres.

Terrorists

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons from Northern Ireland are presently serving prison sentences in Great Britain for terrorist offences; how many of these are serving life sentences; and to which terrorist organisations they belong.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: On 1 December 1992, 16 prisoners who have given Northern Ireland as their place of birth were serving sentences in England and Wales for serious offences related to terrorism. Of these, nine are serving life sentences. It is not the practice to discuss claimed or suspected affiliation to particular organisations.

Drugs

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of the Welsh prison population is made up of prisoners serving sentences for drug-related offences.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: On 30 June 1992, the latest date for which information is readily available, prisoners serving sentences for drugs offences accounted for approximately 3·5 per cent. of the total sentenced population and 2 per cent. of the total population, including remand and non-criminal prisoners, in prison service establishments in Wales.

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what measures are being taken to prevent the flow of drugs into prisons.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We have a range of measures to deter and detect attempts to bring drugs into prisons. These include searching prisoners on reception and on return from home leave or other absences; searching or storing away visitors' hand luggage; and searching visitors themselves where there is reason to believe that they intend to smuggle drugs in.

We search prisoners, their cells and other areas for those drugs that do find their way into prison. We have increased the number of prison dogs trained to detect drugs and each prison has received a training package to help staff detect and identify drugs.

The best way to prevent drugs entering prisons is to tackle the root cause by reducing the demand. We have published detailed guidelines on the through care of drug misusers. These require all prisons to have in place effective arrangements for identifying drug users and providing clinical care and detoxification programmes where necessary. We encourage prisons to make full use of community drug agencies to provide counselling and preventive training.

Life Licence Prisoners

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many life licence prisoners are currently in gaols in England and Wales.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: These figures are published annually in "Prison Statistics, England and Wales", chapter 8 of the volume for 1990, Cm 1800.

The provisonal figure for the number of life sentenced prisoners in prison service establishments on 30 June 1991 who had been recalled from licence is 122. This compares with a total population of life sentence prisoners of 2,896 for the same date.

Public Interest Immunity Certificates

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) pursuant to his answer of 25 November, *Official Report*, column *654*, what is the nature of the national interest which led him to sign a public interest immunity certificate on 27 July;

(2) pursuant to his answer of 25 November, *Official Report*, column *654*, if he will list the police forces, prosecuting authorities and others involved in the communications regarding which he signed a public interest immunity certificate on 27 July, whether in the United Kingdom or abroad;

(3) pursuant to his answer of 25 November, *Official Report*, column *654*, how many communications, and over what period of time, were covered by the public interest immunity certificate he signed on 27 July; and between what dates those communications took place;

(4) pursuant to his answer of 25 November, *Official Report*, column *654*, what matters or issues were dealt with in the communications covered by the public interest immunity certificates he signed on 27 July;

(5) pursuant to his answer of 25 November, *Official Report*, column *654*, whether, in regard to the public interest immunity certificate he signed on 27 July, the communications covered involved matters of national security interest.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke *[holding answer 1 to 4 December 1992]:* The certificate asserted the public interest in protecting the confidentially of exchange of information in order to prevent or detect crime. I do not believe that it would be in the public interest for exchanges between police authorities investigating crime to be put into the public domain. It would not be sensible to give further details in this case.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Peru

40. Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many bilateral aid agreements are in force between the United Kingdom and Peru.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: There are 17 agreements, two of which concern specific projects.

Voluntary Agencies (British Workers)

41. Mr. Brandreth: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many British citizens are working for voluntary aid agencies overseas.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have no information on the total number of British citizens working for voluntary agencies overseas. However, the four volunteer sending agencies funded by the Overseas Development Administration have around 2,000 volunteers working in developing countries.

Good Governance Policy

42. Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when Her Majesty's Government next intend to review the restrictions on development aid imposed in pursuit of the good governance policy.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We keep aid allocations to individual recipient countries under regular review. This takes into account the standards of government in the countries concerned.

Somalia

43. Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his estimate of the amount of aid to Somalia that has not been used for the purposes for which it was intended.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: It is impossible to estimate accurately the extent of misappropriation. There are conflicting reports. They vary according to the security of the region where aid is to be delivered and the type of assistance provided. Food aid for the centre and south of the country is most vulnerable. We hope the new UN/US operation will provide a more secure environment, which will enable more aid to be delivered to those in need. On 4 December, Baroness Chalker, the Minister for Overseas Development, announced a further contribution of £4·5 million for humanitarian assistance to Somalia. This brings Britain's contribution to Somalia's relief effort to £31·5 million in 1992.

Aid Payments

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much aid was paid for in *(a)* pound sterling and *(b)* other currencies, specifying which currencies, in each of the last 10 years; and what were the percentages for each currency.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The information requested is available for only part of the last 10 years, and could be extracted from departmental records only at disproportionate cost.

World Bank

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many structured adjustment loans the World bank made in each year since 1983; and if he will list them by country and amount.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The number of structural adjustment loans provided by the World bank between 1983 and 1992 were:

	Number
1983	15
1984	15
1985	16
1986	25
1987	31
1988	28
1989	33
1990	32
1991	33
[1]1992	16

[1] To April.

The table provides information on the loans by country, title and amount:

Country	*Loan*	*Amount $ millions*
Algeria	Economic Reform Loan	300·0
Algeria	Enterprise and Financial Sector Restruction	350·0
Argentina	Agricultural Sector Loan	350·0
Argentina	Trade Policy Loan	500·0
Argentina	Banking Sector Loan	400·0
Argentina	2nd Trade Policy Loan	300·0
Argentina	Public Enterprise Reform Adjustment	300·0
Argentina	Public Sector Reform	325·0
Bangladesh	Industrial Sector Loan	190·0
Bangladesh	Energy Sector Loan	175·0
Bangladesh	Financial Sector Credit	181·4
Benin	SAL I	45·0
Benin	SAL II	55·0
Bolivia	Import Reconstruction Loan	55·0
Bolivia	2nd Import Reconstruction Loan	47·1
Bolivia	Financial Sector Loan	70·0
Bolivia	SAC (SAL)	50·4
Brazil	Export Development Loan	352·0
Brazil	Agriculture and Trade Development Loan	303·0
Brazil	Agriculture Market Reform Loan	500·0
Bulgaria	SAL I	250·0
Burkina Faso	Fertilizer Loan	13·7
Burkina Faso	SAL I	80·0
Burundi	SAL I	31·2
Burundi	SAL II	90·0
Burundi	Agricultural Services Sector Loan	33·1
Cameroon	SAL I	150·0
Central African Republic	SAL I	30·0
Central African Republic	Agricultural Sector Loan	15·0
Central African Republic	SAL II	40·0
Central African Republic	SAL III	45·0
Chad	Financial Sector Loan	37·5
Chad	Transportation Loan	60·0
Chile	SAL I	250·0
Chile	SAL II	250·0
Chile	SAL III	250·0
Chile	Rural Sector Loan	300·0
Colombia	Trade and Export Diversification Loan	300·0
Colombia	Trade and Agricultural Policy	250·0
Colombia	Energy Sector Loan	300·0
Colombia	Public Sector Reform	304·0
Comoros	Macroeconomic Reform and Capital Building (SAL)	8·0
Congo	SAL I	70·0
Costa Rica	Export Development Loan	25·2
Costa Rica	SAL I	80·0
Costa Rica	SAL II	100·0
Cote d'Ivoire	SAL II	250·0
Cote d'Ivoire	SAL III	250·0
Cote d'Ivoire	Agricultural Sector Adjustment	150·0
Cote d'Ivoire	Energy Sector Loan	100·0
Cote d'Ivoire	Water Supply Sewerage Sector Adjustment	80·0
Cote d'Ivoire	Financial Sector Adjustment	200·0
Cote d'Ivoire	Human Resources Development	150·0
Cote d'Ivoire	Regulatory Reform	100·0

Country	Loan	Amount $ millions
Czechoslovakia	SAL I	450·0
Ecuador	Agricultural Sector Loan	100·0
Ecuador	Financial Sector Loan	100·0
Egypt, Arab Republic	Structural Adjustment (SAL)	300·0
El Salvador	SAL I	75·0
Gabon	SAL I	50·0
Gambia	SAL I	16·5
Gambia	SAL II	23·0
Ghana	Trade and Import Sector Loan	40·0
Ghana	Export Rehabilitation Loan	76·0
Ghana	2nd Trade and Import Sector Loan	87·0
Ghana	Industrial Sector Loan	53·5
Ghana	Educational Sector Loan	34·5
Ghana	SAL I	115·0
Ghana	Financial Sector Loan	100·0
Ghana	SAL II	120·0
Ghana	Education SAC II	50·0
Ghana	Private Investment Promotion (SAL)	126·1
Ghana	FINSAC	100·0
Guinea	SAL I	42·0
Guinea	SAL II	65·0
Guinea	Education Sector Adjustment Loan	20·0
Guinea Bissau	Import Reconstruction Loan	15·0
Guinea Bissau	SAL I	15·0
Guinea Bissau	SAL II	23·4
Guyana	SAC	103·4
Honduras	SAL I	50·0
Honduras	SAL II	90·0
Honduras	SAC (SAL)	20·0
Honduras	Energy Sector	83·8
Hungary	Industrial Sector Loan	100·0
Hungary	2nd Industrial Sector Loan	200·0
Hungary	SAL I	200·0
Hungary	SAL II	250·0
Indonesia	Trade Policy Loan	300·0
Indonesia	2nd Trade Policy Loan	300·0
Indonesia	Private Sector Development Loan	350·0
Indonesia	Private Sector Development Loan II	250·0
India	Oil and Gas Sector Development	150·0
India	SAL	500·0
Jamaica	SAL II	60·2
Jamaica	Export Development Fund III	30·1
Jamaica	SAL III	55·0
Jamaica	Trade and Finance Sectors Loan	40·0
Jamaica	Public Enterprises Sector Loan	20·0
Jamaica	Agriculture Sector Adjustment	25·0
Jamaica	Trade and Financial Sectors Adjustment II	30·0
Jordan	Trade Adjustment	150·0
Kenya	SAL II	130·9
Kenya	Agricultural Sector Loan	60·0
Kenya	Industry and Trade Sectors Loan	112·0
Kenya	Financial Sector Loan	120·0
Kenya	Export Development	149·2
Kenya	Agricultural Sector Adjustment II	75·0
Kenya	Education Sector Adjustment Credit	100·0
Korea, Republic of	SAL II	300·0
Korea, Republic of	Industry and Finance Sectors Loan	222·0
Lao, People's Democratic Republic	SAL I	40·0
Lao, People's Democratic Republic	SAL II (SAC)	40·0
Madagascar	Industrial Assistance Loan	60·0
Madagascar	Agricultural Sector Loan	93·0
Madagascar	Industry and Trade Policy Loan	83·0
Madagascar	Public Sector Adjustment Loan	126·3
Malawi	Fertilizer Loan	5·0
Malawi	SAL II	55·0
Malawi	SAL III	70·0
Malawi	Industry and Trade Policy Loan	70·0
Malawi	Agriculture Sector	75·2
Mali	Public Sector Loan	40·0

Country	Loan	Amount $ millions
Mali	Human Resources Loan	26·0
Mali	Agriculture Sector Adjustment Loan	53·0
Mali	SAL I	70·0
Mauritania	Public Sector Loan	16·4
Mauritania	Public Enterprise Loan	20·0
Mauritania	SAL I	42·4
Mauritania	Private Enterprise Sector Adjustment	42·5
Mauritania	Agricultural Sector Adjustment Loan/ Irrigation Improvement	25·0
Mauritius	SAL II	40·0
Mauritius	Industrial Sector Loan	25·0
Mexico	Export Development Loan	352·0
Mexico	Trade Policy Loan	500·0
Mexico	2nd Trade Policy Loan	500·0
Mexico	Agricultural Sector Loan	300·0
Mexico	Fertilizer Sector Loan	265·0
Mexico	Financial Sector Loan	500·0
Mexico	Public Enterprises Reform Loan	500·0
Mexico	Industrial Sector Loan	500·0
Mexico	Industrial Restructuring Loan	250·0
Mexico	Road Transportation/Telecommunications Sector Adjustment	380·0
Mexico	Special Interest Support	1,260·0
Mexico	Agricultural Sector Adjustment II	400·0
Mexico	Export Sector	300·0
Morocco	Trade and Industry Policy Loan	150·4
Morocco	Agricultural Sector Loan	100·0
Morocco	2nd Trade and Industry Loan	200·0
Morocco	Educational Sector Loan	150·0
Morocco	Public Enterprises Reform Loan	240·0
Morocco	Agricultural Sector Loan	225·0
Morocco	SAL I	200·0
Morocco	Financial Sector Development	235·0
Mozambique	Economic Recovery Programme	88·6
Mozambique	Economic Recovery Programme	90·0
Nepal	SAL I	50·0
Nepal	SAL II	60·0
Nicaragua	Economic Reconstruction Credit (SAL)	120·3
Niger	SAL I	60·0
Niger	Public Enterprises Reform Loan	80·0
Nigeria	Fertilizer Sector Loan	250·0
Nigeria	Trade and Investment Sector Loan	452·0
Nigeria	2nd Trade and Investment Loan	500·0
Nigeria	Education University Development	120·0
Pakistan	Energy Sector Loan	178·0
Pakistan	Export Development Loan	70·0
Pakistan	Agricultural Sector Loan	200·0
Pakistan	2nd Energy Sector Loan	278·0
Pakistan	Financial Sector Loan	150·0
Panama	SAL I	60·2
Panama	SAL II	100·0
Papua New Guinea	SAL	50·0
Philippines	SAL II	302·3
Philippines	Agricultural Sector Loan	150·0
Philippines	Economic Recovery Programme	300·0
Philippines	Public Sector Loan	200·0
Philippines	Financial Sector Loan	300·0
Philippines	Debt Management Loan	200·0
Philippines	Environment and Natural Resources Management	224·0
Poland	SAL I	300·0
Poland	Financial Institutions Development	200·0
Poland	Restructuring and Privatisation	280·0
Rwanda	SAL I	90·0
São Tomé and Principe	SAL I	7·0
São Tomé and Principe	SAC II	9·8
Senegal	SAL II	64·0
Senegal	SAL III	85·0
Senegal	Banking Financial Sector	45·0
Senegal	SAL IV	80·0
Sierra Leone	Agricultural Sector Loan	21·5
Somalia	Agricultural Sector Loan	62·6
Somalia	2nd Agricultural Sector Loan	70·0

Country	Loan	Amount $ millions
Sri Lanka	Economic Reconstruction Credit	95·2
Sri Lanka	Public Manufacturing Enterprise Adjustment	120·0
Sudan	2nd Agricultural Rehabilitation Loan	50·0
Tanzania	Multisector Rehabilitation Programme	96·2
Tanzania	Industry Rehabilitation and Trade Loan	135·0
Tanzania	Agricultural Adjustment Credit	211·3
Tanzania	Financial Sector	200·0
Thailand	SAL II	175·0
Togo	SAL I	40·0
Togo	SAL II	37·8
Togo	SAL III	45·0
Togo	SAL IV	55·0
Togo	Population/Health Adjustment	14·2
Trinidad and Tobago	SAL	40·0
Tunisia	Agricultural Sector Loan	150·0
Tunisia	Industry and Trade Policy Loan	150·0
Tunisia	SAL I	150·0
Tunisia	2nd Agricultural Sector Loan	84·0
Tunisia	Private Enterprise Investment	130·0
Tunisia	Economic and Financial Reform Support (SAL)	250·0
Turkey	SAL IV	300·8
Turkey	SAL V	376·0
Turkey	Agricultural Sector Loan	300·0
Turkey	Financial Sector Loan	300·0
Turkey	Energy Sector Loan	325·0
Turkey	2nd Financial Sector Loan	400·0
Uganda	Agricultural Sector Loan	70·0
Uganda	Economic Recovery Programme	65·0
Uganda	Economic Recovery II	126·6
Uganda	Agricultural Sector Adjustment Credit	100·0
Uganda	SAC I (SAL)	125·0
Uruguay	Agricultural Sector Loan	60·0
Uruguay	SAL I	80·0
Uruguay	SAL II	140·0
Uruguay	DDSR Support (DRL)	65·0
Venezuela	Trade Policy Loan	353·0
Venezuela	SAL I	402·0
Venezuela	Financial Sector Adjustment	300·0
Venezuela	Public Enterprise Reform	350·0
Venezuela	Interest Support Loan	150·0
Yugoslavia	SAL I	275·0
Yugoslavia	Fertilizer Loan	90·0
Yugoslavia	SAL II	400·0
Zaire	Industrial Sector Loan	80·0
Zaire	SAL I	149·3
Zambia	Export Rehabilitation and Diversification	75·0
Zambia	Agricultural Sector Loan	35·0
Zambia	Industrial Sector Loan	62·0
Zambia	Economic Recovery Programme	50·0
Zambia	Recovery Credit (SAL)	237·2
Zimbabwe	Export Industry Policy Loan	70·6

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many staff are employed in the United Kingdom's executive director's office at the World bank in Washington DC; and if he will give details of their duties.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The United Kingdom executive director at the World bank, who is also our executive director at the International Monetary Fund, is supported by an alternate director for each institution and by six technical assistants. Details of the activities of the board of directors are set out in the World bank's annual report, a copy of which is available in the Libraries of the House.

Iraq

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress is currently being made by his Department in securing direct flights containing humanitarian aid into Iraqi Kurdistan.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Together with other contributors to humanitarian operations in northern Iraq, we believe that road, rather than air, transport is the most cost-effective way of getting aid to those who need it. We have therefore supported the United Nations plan of action which gives priority to ensuring the delivery of relief supplies by road.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what efforts are currently undertaken by his Department to alleviate any difficulties faced by the Kurdish people of northern Iraq as a direct result of the United Nations imposed sanctions against Iraq.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The difficulties faced by the Kurdish people of northern Iraq result from the actions of the Baghdad Government, including an internal embargo on the supply of essential goods, rather than from United Nations sanctions. Food, medicine and other goods for essential civilian needs are not covered under the terms of the United Nations sanctions resolutions.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make representations to the European Community to ensure that assistance granted to Iraqi Kurdistan is channelled through the Iraqi Kurdish National Assembly and non-governmental organisations.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We are in regular contact with the Commission of the European Community about humanitarian assistance to Kurdish areas of northern Iraq. Like our own bilateral aid, EC aid to these areas is being channelled through non-governmental organisations and the World Food Programme.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the United Nations concerning the delivery of food, fuel, medicine and reconstruction equipment and material for water, sanitation and shelter for the Kurdish people of Northern Iraq.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We hold regular discussions with the United Nations on these issues. My noble Friend the Minister for Overseas Development met the head of the United Nations department of humanitarian affairs on 7 December, and agreed with him on the urgent need for the provision of relief supplies to northern Iraq, in view of the imminent onset of winter.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to channel aid to the Kurdish people of northern Iraq either through the United Nations or through the Iraqi Kurdish National Assembly.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Our bilateral aid to northern Iraq has been channelled through UN agencies, and through British and Kurdish non-governmental organisations. Details of our latest pledge were given in my reply of 26 October to the hon. Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Rooney), at column *433*.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Government of Turkey concerning the transport of non-military aid through Turkey to Iraqi Kurdistan.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We hold regular discussions with the Government of Turkey on humanitarian operations in northern Iraq. We welcome the cooperation which they have given in enabling food and other relief goods to be transported from Turkey to Kurdish areas of Iraq.

Mr. Rooney: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proposals he has for helping the Kurds in Iraq.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have spent £52·4 million since April 1991 on aid for Iraqi civilians. Further relief assistance is urgently needed before the onset of winter. We are therefore making available today a further £2·6 million, of which about £2·4 million will be provided to the World Food Programme for urgently needed edible oil and pulses, and the remainder to British non-governmental organisations for relief activities in northern Iraq.

Forests

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what countries have benefited from United Kingdom bilateral aid assistance under the tropical forestry action plan; and how much money has been pledged and disbursed in relation to each recipient country.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The following countries/areas have benefited from United Kingdom bilateral aid assistance under agreed tropical forestry action plans over the last five years.

	Pledged £ million	*Disbursed £ million*
Belize	Total to be determined	0·404
Cameroon	1·900	1·000
Caribbean Community	0·294	0·245
Costa Rica	0·706	0
Ghana	5·491	3·566
Honduras	4·152	1·765
Jamaica	Total to be determined	0·012
Nepal	9·285	3·613
Papua New Guinea	0·229	0·182
Sri Lanka	10·343	5·900
Total	32·400	16·687

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the publication of the African Development bank's forestry policy will take place.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The African Development bank's forestry policy paper was issued in draft on 2 December 1992. Internal consultations are expected to be completed by end-January 1993, and publication should follow shortly thereafter.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give details of bilateral forestry projects approved for Brazil with total estimated costs.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Following is the information:

1. ABRACOS (Anglo-Brazilian Amazonian climate observation study) operates in the states of Amazonas, Para and Rondonia. The British Institute of Hydrology (IH) is Project Manager, and INPE (Space Research Institute), is the lead Brazilian collaborating institute, together with INPA (National Research Institute for Amazonia) and CENA (Centre for Nuclear Energy in Agriculture). The project is a study of the impact of deforestation on climate. The objective is to improve the accuracy and credibility of general circulation model (GCM) predictions of the climatic consequences of Amazonian deforestation by addressing the land/atmosphere interaction and the difference in near surface climate associated with forest clearance. The project

follows the pioneering work of IH and INPE in the mid-1980s and involves the establishment of four field measuring stations in Amazonas, Para and Rondonia. The Amazonas sites were established in 1990, and the other two set up during 1991. Brazilian scientists take field readings throughout the year, and British scientists participate in periodic intensive field missions. The project was agreed in March 1990 and the first field mission was in September-November 1990. The total cost of the project to ODA is £2·9 million over five years, including the £0·5 million of specialist equipment.

2. Caxiuana research station project, Para state has the Museu Paraense Emilio Goeldi as project manager. The project involves the establishment of a new biological research station in the Caxiuana national forest, with appropriate infrastructure and facilities. We are providing financial support for local construction costs, transport (vehicles and boats) and laboratory equipment, and technical assistance (mainly short-term inputs, plus one full-time expert). The project will provide a well-equipped research station in an undisturbed forest area rich in biodiversity. It should become one of the leading facilities for rainforest research anywhere in the tropics. Construction commenced in February 1992. The cost to ODA is £1·28 million over three years.

3. The aromatic plants development project, Para state has the British Natural Resources Institute (NRI) and Museu Goeldi as joint project managers. FCAP (facility of agricultural science of the university of Para) is also collaborating. The project is an evaluation of the economic potential of the aromatic plants of the state of Para, through a study of indigenous aromatic plants and two applied research programmes concerned with the development potential of rosewood and the aromatic herbs of the piper genus. The project involves a series of short-term consultancies and a programme of plant collection and analysis in Brazil and Britain. Field collections and trials are under way and a natural products laboratory built and equipped. The cost to ODA is £0·6 million over three years, starting in 1991.

4. The floodplain forest ecology and management project, near Belem, Para state has the Museu Goeldi as project manager. The project consists of biological studies of the ecology, natural regeneration and flora of flooded forest, economic studies of farm/forest production systems and an extension programme based at Combu island near Belem. The cost to ODA is £0·24 million over two years, from 1991.

5. The Tocantins forestry and rural development project, Para state aims to conserve the forest in the Brazil nut zone around Maraba through improving the farming systems and living conditions of small farmers. The project will develop ways of improving agricultural productivity and stability through the introduction of agroforestry, tree crops and better marketing systems. Ways of managing and conserving the remaining forest will also be investigated. IDESP (Institute of Socio-Economic Development of Para state) is project manager but field implementation is in the hands of the Tocantins agroenvironmental centre, a local NGO which brings together small farmers from the Maraba area together with researchers from the university of Para. The project was approved in September 1991. The ODA contribution amounts to £1·1 million over three years and consists of technical assistance, training material and equipment.

6. Forest biomass and nutrients research project, Manaus, Amazonas state with INPA (National Research Institute for Amazonia) and NRI as project managers. The proposal involves research on the distribution and dynamics of biomass and minerals in tropical forest. The cost to ODA is £1·74 million over three years, starting this year.

7. The central Amazonia flora and vegetation project, near Manaus, Amazonas state. The project has been designed by INPA and the royal botanic gardens, Kew. It consists of botanical collections, taxonomic studies, the production of a guide to the flora of the Ducke reserve near Manaus, and vegetation-type mapping in central Amazonia. The cost to ODA is £0·57 million over three years, starting this year.

8. Rainforest silviculture research project, CPATU. The eastern Amazonia agroforestry research centre of the Brazilian Agricultural Research Institute (CPATU-EMBRAPA), Belem, is managing this project. The five year programme of studies on forest growth, production and regeneration, timber extraction techniques and genetic resource conservation is aimed at improving forest management. The ODA contribution will consist primarily of training and provision of technical assistance in tropical forest research, and will cost £2·2 million over five years starting this year.

9. Tapajos national forest management project. We are providing £0·85 million through the International Tropical Timber Organisation to support IBAMA (the Federal Environment Institute) to set up a system of sustainable logging practices in a 5,000 hectare area of the Tapajos national forest. Commercial logging will take place under licence to IBAMA. The project aims to provide a model of sustainable logging for Brazil. The project will be managed by the ITTO; ODA will be represented on a project steering committee. The project was agreed in April 1992, and will last five years.

10. Implementation of the Lake Mamirsua ecological station, near Tefe, Amazonas state. The project involves protection and development of a management plan for 200,000 hectares of flooded forest within a recently established state ecological station. It aims to establish a programme that integrates the conservation of biodiversity with the livelihood of local people living within the protected area. Estimated cost to ODA is £1·6 million over three years. The project is also being funded by the World Wide Fund for Nature and World Conservation International. It is expected to begin shortly.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what instructions have been passed to the British executive director at the African Development bank regarding that organisation's planned publication of a forestry policy.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have encouraged the bank for some time to establish and publish its forestry policy. We are currently considering the draft proposals which we have just received.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he had with Senhor Sydney Possuelo, the head of Brazil's Indian Agency, about the illegal mahogany trade with Britain.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: None.

African Development Bank

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many staff are employed in the United Kingdom's executive director's office at the African Development bank in Abidjan; and if he will give details of their duties.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The United Kingdom shares a constituency with Germany, the Netherlands and Portugal. The executive director is assisted by an alternate executive director—who is part time—an adviser and an assistant. The board of directors considers all lending proposals and a wide range of policy documents. Details of its work are set out in the bank's annual report, which is available in the Libraries of the House.

Education Partners Overseas

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he intends to announce a decision concerning the submission for grant aid made by Education Partners Overseas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The application from Education Partners Overseas will be considered, along with other claims, early next year when we consider the allocation of our information budget for the coming financial year.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Pit Closures

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the per capita expenditure to be borne by the Exchequer, involved in redundancy payments for the closure proposals announced by British Coal in October; and to what extent such payments are subject to the approval of the EC.

Mr. Eggar: The British Coal redundancy terms give maximum payments of £37,000 per employee. The Exchequer funds 90 per cent. of such payments direct to the corporation through restructuring grant. Restructuring grant payments have European Community approval and are notified annually to the Commission.

Mr. Churchill: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will place in the Library a copy of the report by John T. Boyd, the American mining consultant, commissioned by his Department; how many of the 31 pits earmarked for closure by British Coal the report indicated could become viable within the next three to four years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 4 December 1992]:* No. I have made arrangements for the report to be made available to the Select Committee in confidence. The Boyd report prepared for my Department earlier this year contains detailed information on individual pits which is commercially confidential. It did not assess the viability of individual collieries, but looked at the scope for productivity improvements and cost reductions in a group of representative collieries.

Offshore Installations

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what action he is taking to ensure that the Welsh marine environment is not damaged by spills from drilling rigs.

Mr. Eggar: It is our general and established policy, before offering blocks for licence in any part of the United Kingdom continental shelf, to consult relevant statutory and non-statutory bodies and to attach licence conditions agreed with such bodies which reflect each block's sensitivities. Environmental conditions are agreed principally with the Joint Nature Conservation Committee, but the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the Department of the Environment, and fishing industry representatives are also consulted. Conditions may include, for example, bans on drilling in specified areas, seasonal restrictions on exploration activities, requirements to carry out environmental and seabed surveys, bans on the use of oil-based drilling muds, and controls or bans on discharges from drilling rigs.

In the block off the north Wales coast where drilling is currently in progress, environmental and local seabed surveys were carried out before drilling started. Water-based muds are being used, and cuttings may be discharged to the sea since tidal conditions in the area ensure their rapid dispersal. No other rig discharges are permitted; nor are any fuel transfers while the rig is on site.

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make it his policy to halt all further exploratory drilling for hydrocarbons off the Welsh coast until the promised energy review takes place.

Mr. Eggar: The purpose of exploration drilling is to search for and identify deposits of hydrocarbons. Oil and gas production continues to make a significant contribution to the United Kingdom economy because new reserves have been identified to replenish supplies as early reserves have become depleted. The longer we can sustain economic indigenous oil and gas production, the better for the United Kingdom economy.

Additional approvals are required before a deposit identified from exploration drilling and found on further appraisal to be of commercial value can be developed for production. A find from current drilling off the Welsh coast would be unlikely to come into production before the end of the century. There is therefore no case for halting exploration drilling.

Civil Servants

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many civil servants from his Department have been relocated from London to other parts of the United Kingdom *(a)* in the last five years and *(b)* in the last 10 years; and if he will list the locations to which those civil servants were relocated.

Mr. Eggar: The table shows the number of Department of Trade and Industry posts which have relocated from London:

Location	*Number*
(a) Since January 1988	
Birmingham	135
Billingham	53
Cambridge	33
Edinburgh	5
Newport	984
Cardiff	24
Teddington	340
(b) During the period 1983 to 1987	
Teddington	49

IAEA

Mr. John Hutton: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what extra-budgetary contributions to meet particular needs of the International Atomic Energy Agency for safeguards equipment have been made by the Government in the last five years.

Mr. Eggar: There has been one such contribution, a payment of £200,000 in 1991-92.

Bureaucracy

Mr. Ancram: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what benefits for consumers he expects to arise as a result of his proposals to remove unnecessary bureaucracy in Government Departments.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The aim of the deregulation initiative is to reduce significantly administrative and regulatory burdens on business. The removal of unnecessary regulation and administrative procedure and simplification of that which remains will allow businesses more time and freedom to respond to their customers' needs. This, together with the beneficial effect on prices and public borrowing as a result of lower compliance and enforcement costs, will benefit consumers as well as business.

Wind Farms

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many megawatts were generated by wind farms in Great Britain in each year since 1989; and if he will make a statement about the future of wind energy generation in Great Britain.

Mr. Eggar: Figures for electricity generation from renewable sources of energy are now published annually in the "Digest of United Kingdom Energy Statistics". The first wind farms to be constructed in Great Britain have all become operational since the beginning of 1992 and have so far generated an estimated 17 GW hours of electricity. These figures are expected to increase rapidly as wind farms constructed under the non-fossil fuel obligation orders come on stream.

Blank Tapes

Mr. Hendry: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has received on the imposition of levies on blank tapes for the music industry.

Mr. Leigh: The Government have received numerous representations for and against the proposal that a levy should be put on blank recording tape to compensate copyright owners for private copying. Representations were particularly numerous during the passage of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, when the Government decided not to introduce such a levy, and many further representations have been received since the European Commission announced in January 1991 its intention to propose a draft directive on private copying. Bodies that have made representations include the Royal National Institute for the Blind, The Talking Newspaper Association of the United Kingdom, the Music Copyright Reform Group, the British Phonographic Industry, the Home Taping Rights Campaign and the British Copyright Council.

Japanese Energy Minister

Ms. Walley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when the Minister for Energy in his Department last met with his Japanese counterpart in Japan; and what specific matters were discussed and decided.

Mr. Eggar: I visited Japan from 11 to 13 November 1992 and met members of the Government and heads of Japanese energy utilities. Discussions focused on the bilateral energy relationship in offshore oil and gas, nuclear and energy policy areas. I also lent my support to British companies at an Offshore Supplies Office technology seminar where I gave the keynote address.

Nuclear Materials

Ms. Walley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what decisions were taken at the recent review conference of the convention on the physical protection of nuclear materials that affect United Kingdom policy; and what representation his Department had at the reveiw conference.

Mr. Eggar: I refer the hon. Lady to the answer I gave to the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Smith) on 5 November 1992, *Official Report*, column *400*. The United Kingdom was represented at the review conference by officials from my Department and the nuclear industry.

Ms. Walley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what are the arrangements for liaison between his Department and the safeguards authorities at *(a)* Euratom and *(b)* the International Atomic Energy Agency over provision of data on the movements into and out of the United Kingdom of (i) plutonium, (ii) enriched uranium, (iii) natural uranium and (iv) spent nuclear fuel, respectively.

Mr. Eggar: The Department forwards to the Euratom safeguards directorate reports submitted in accordance with Euratom regulation 3227/76 on transfers of civil nuclear material. These reports include those materials referred to in the question. In accordance with the UK/IAEA/Euratom safeguards agreement—INFCIRC/263—relevant information is then passed to the IAEA by Euratom.

Insolvency

Mr. Gorst: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the effect of the level of fees charged by insolvency staff for the administration of insolvency services on the interests of creditors; what controls exist to ensure that insolvency companies do not charge excessively for their services; and what plans he has to introduce legislation to impose limits on the fees that accountancy firms can claim.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Fees charged by insolvency staff employed by accountancy firms are not under the control of the President and accordingly he does not have a role in determining their level or assessing whether they are appropriate in the circumstances of any particular case.

In receiverships, the level of remuneration is agreed by the secured creditor making the appointment. In liquidations, fees charged are subject to approval by the creditors who have a financial interest in ensuring that they are fixed at a reasonable level. The means by which they approve them are either through a committee of creditors or in general meeting. In the absence of such approval, remuneration will be paid on the scale laid down for the Official Receiver in general regulations. Where either the liquidator or the creditors are dissatisfied with the level of remuneration, recourse may be had to the court.

There are no proposals to impose limits on the fees that accountancy firms can claim.

Manufacturing Output

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether he will set out the figures for manufacturing output for the last three available quarters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Salisbury *[holding answer 2 December 1992]:* As an index, with 1985 = 100, manufacturing output was 111 in the first quarter of 1992, 111·5 in the second quarter and 111·4 in the third quarter. In the first three quarters of 1992, manufacturing output was over a fifth higher than in 1981, the trough of the last recession.

Natural Gas

Mr. Churchill: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what are the present proven reserves of British natural gas expressed in years remaining calculated *(a)* at

1990 consumption rates, *(b)* forecast consumption rates for 2000 and *(c)* forecast consumption rates for 2020, as forecast in DTI Energy Paper 59, October 1992.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 4 December 1992]:* My Department's most recent estimate of the United Kingdom's proven reserves stood at 540 billion cu m[1]. The total consumption of gas onshore in the United Kingdom during 1990 amounted to 53 billion cu m of gas, which included approximately 7 billion cu m of imported gas[2].

These proven gas reserves are the known reserves in existing discoveries regarded as almost certain to be technically and economically producible following extensive appraisal work. Proven reserves represent some 30 per cent. of all discovered recoverable reserves. In addition, it is likely that further reserves will be proven to be recoverable from significant discoveries made but so far poorly appraised and from geologically identified prospects which have yet to be tested by drilling. It is not normal practice for the gas industry to carry out the expensive exploration and appraisal work required to add to the stock of proven reserves far in advance of production.

My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade announced on 26 October that the coal review would look into the latest estimates of likely reserves of gas and draw conclusions.

Energy Paper 59 presented some possible gas consumption scenarios in the context of a discussion of energy and the environment, in particular, climate change. These are scenarios, not forecasts by my Department.

[1] *Source:* The April 1992 report to Parliament "Development of the oil and gas resources of the United Kingdom" (The Brown Book).

[2] *Source:* The April 1991 report to Parliament "Development of the oil and gas resources of the United Kingdom".

Severn Bridge

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade for what reason British Steel was not invited to quote for the basic plate material supply of the second Severn bridge crossing.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I have been asked to reply.

The letting of contracts relating to the second Severn crossing is entirely a matter for the concessionaire for the project, Severn River Crossing plc, and its contractor for the design and construction of the new bridge, the John Laing-GTM Entrepose joint venture.

Trentham Colliery

Ms. Walley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will require British Coal to pay in full *(a)* attendance bonuses and *(b)* conciliation bonuses in respect of employees at Trentham colliery who are attending for work.

Mr. Eggar: This is a matter for British Coal.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Social Fund

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will increase the budgetary allocation in respect of the social fund to the Belfast, South and Down district section of the Social Security Agency to meet underfunding in this area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: Responsibility for the subject in question has been delegated to the Social Security Agency under its chief executive Mr. Alec Wylie. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Alec Wylie to Mr. Eddie McGrady, dated 3 December 1992:

Your recent Parliamentary Question asking the Secretary of State for an increase in the budget allocation in respect of Social Fund for the Belfast South and Down District of the Social Security Agency has been passed to me for reply as I am responsible for the Social Security Agency.

I should explain that Social Fund budget allocations are made at the beginning of the financial year in accordance with a formula which is applied to all Social Security Offices. While the position is monitored throughout the year additional allocations are normally only made when there has been a higher than expected level of loan recoveries or an unforseen demand on the Social Fund, for example, as a result of flooding or a bomb explosion.

The procedure has already led to two additional allocations to the Belfast South and Down District this year, £50,630 in October and £34,000 in November. As a result the District's total allocation has increased to £2,219,689, (£1,452,114 for Crisis and Budget Loans and £767,575 for Community Care Grants). At present it is not planned to make any further allocations but the situation will be kept under review.

I hope this explanation is helpful but I shall write to you again if the position changes. A copy of this reply will appear in the Official Report and copies will be placed in the Library.

Schools (Funding)

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make it his policy that all maintained schools, including those denominational schools not in receipt of funding from the Department of Education in Northern Ireland, will in future receive funding on the same basis.

Mr. Hanley: All maintained schools and all controlled schools in any education and library board area receive funding on the same basis, that being the formula set out in the board's scheme for the local management of schools. Denominational schools not in receipt of funding from the Department of Education are independent schools which receive no resourcing from any public sector source, and I have no plans to change current policy in their regard.

Water

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the estimated percentage of water lost in the supply system for water in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Atkins: The estimated loss is 20 per cent.

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the names of the chairmen and members of the Northern Ireland water authority, and the date of their appointments.

Mr. Atkins: The Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland is the water authority. It does not have a chairman.

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has to measure supply of water to domestic customers by meters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: I have no plans to do so.

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what is the estimated value of environmental sites and recreational amenities in the ownership of the Northern Ireland water authority;

(2) what is the estimated capital value of the water industry in Northern Ireland both for water and sewerage/sewage disposal.

Mr. Atkins: There is no separate water authority in Northern Ireland. Responsibility for water and sewerage services rests with the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland through its water service. The service is subject to normal Government accounting systems which do not require the value of assets to be shown in a commercial manner as would be the case under a commercial accounting system. Separate information on the value of assets is not therefore available.

Schools (Disciplinary Proceedings)

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what role his Department has in any disciplinary proceedings in locally or directly managed schools.

Mr. Hanley: Responsibility for the disciplinary proceedings in schools in Northern Ireland rests with boards of governors and/or employing authorities, depending on the particular circumstances, and does not involve my Department.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Stratford Local Office

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what steps have been taken to restructure the Stratford Benefits Agency office, Jubilee house; and on what date the work will be completed.

Mr. Burt: The planning for the restructuring or refurbishment of local DSS offices is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Ron Leighton, dated 4 December 1992:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking what steps have been taken to restructure the Benefits Agency Office at Jubilee House, Stratford, and on what date the work will be completed.

Following on from a feasibility study undertaken by the Property Services Agency and in view of the current workloads and operational needs of the office, proposals have been made to refurbish the customer area in Jubilee House rather than to completely restructure the whole building. Plans are already in hand and it is envisaged that, once full consultation has taken place, work should be complete by summer 1993.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the *Official Report*. Copies are also being placed in the Library.

Benefits

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the social security benefits (i) which have been abolished since 1979, (ii) which have not maintained their real value, in 1992 prices, since 1979 or the date at which they were introduced and (iii) whose availability has been restricted.

Mr. Scott: The information is as follows:

(i) Social Security benefits abolished since 1979:

(a) Benefits replaced by reformed schemes
- Attendance Allowance (only for those disabled before age 65)
- Community Charge Rebate (Scotland)
- Death Grant
- Family Income Supplement
- Housing Benefit Supplement and old Housing Benefit scheme
- Industrial Injury Benefit
- Maternity Grant
- Mobility Allowance
- NCIP an HNCIP (non-contributory invalidity pension and housewives' NCIP)
- Rate Rebate
- Special Hardship Allowance
- Supplementary Benefit
- Widow's Allowance

(b) Others (cases which existed at the time of abolition remain in payment)
- Child's Special Allowance
- Industrial Death Benefit
- Reduced Earnings Allowance

(ii) Benefits which have not maintained their real value since 1979* (or the date of their introduction, if later):
- Age addition (for those aged 80 and over)
- Christmas Bonus
- Maternity Allowance
- Sickness Benefit
- Statutory Sick Pay, higher rate
- Child Benefit (when revalued from rate current in April 1979)

* Benefits uprated in November 1978, except for child benefit which was uprated in April 1979, have been revalued to April 1992 prices and compared with the equivalent benefit rates on that date.

(iii) Benefits whose availability has been restricted since 1979, or since the benefit's introduction. The list includes changes in entitlement conditions of a relatively minor nature.
- Housing Benefit
- Income Support
- Industrial Disablement Benefit
- Maternity Allowance
- Sickness Benefit
- Unemployment Benefit
- Widowed Mother's Allowance
- Widow's Pension

Housing Benefit

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he will reconsider his decision not to award rent allowances to claimants whose landlord is a close relative;

(2) what is the definition of close relative for the purpose of eligibility for rent allowances;

(3) if he will estimate the number of *(a)* young people and *(b)* adults who have moved out of accommodation where the landlord is a close relative, because of non-eligibility for housing benefit, over the last two years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: Housing benefit is payable only in respect of a commercial rent liability. Most people living with close relatives do not have a rent liability, but instead made contributions to the household's living costs. It has never been the Government's intention that housing benefit should be payable for such contributions because there is

no commercial liability. In this context a close relative is defined in regulations as a parent, parent-in-law, step-parent, child, step-child, child-in-law, brother, sister or the partner of any of the preceding persons. Information about the numbers of people unable to live with their close relatives because of the non-payment of housing benefit could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Civil Servants

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many civil servants from his Department have been relocated from London to other parts of the United Kingdom *(a)* in the last five years and *(b)* in the last 10 years; and to where they were relocated.

Mr. Burt: The information is in the table and is in terms of posts relocated rather than individual civil servants. It has not been possible in all cases to identify separately posts relocating from London as opposed to the south-east as a whole and this is particularly so for the period before 1988. The information does not take account of the large numbers of new posts that the Department has created in areas away from London and the south-east.

Posts relocated from London in the last five years

Destination	*Number*
Wigan	320
Lytham	[1]243
Newcastle	300
Leeds	458
Glasgow	560
Belfast	421
Total	2,302

[1] It is not possible to identify separately London posts within this number.

Posts relocated between 1982 and 1987

Around 420 posts were relocated from London and the south-east to Newcastle, the North Fylde area and Southampton in this period. Only the posts that moved to Southampton, around 60, can be clearly identified as from London itself.

Young Persons (Benefits)

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will review his policy of refusing benefit to 16 and 17-year-olds without hostel accommodation.

Mr. Burt: There is no such policy. Housing benefit can be paid to 16 and 17-year-olds who have a commercial rent liability. Income support is available to 16 and 17-year-olds not required to be available for work or youth training and also to those at risk of severe hardship. Other benefits may be available subject to the young person meeting the qualifying conditions.

Dependency Regulations

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the Social Security (Dependency) Amendment Regulations 1992; and why it was decided to bring them into operation the day after they were laid before Parliament.

Miss Widdecombe: The Social Security (Dependency) Amendment Regulations 1992 remake the regulations which provide the earnings rules for increases of retirement pension and other benefits for adult dependants. The intention of the earnings rules is to reduce or remove the dependency increase if the dependant has earnings, including any occupational pension, above a certain level. In 1987, a social security commissioner decided that occupational pensions could be taken into account only if the dependant was working. That was never the intention and amendments to the Social Security Act in 1988 were thought to have restored the position so that all occupational pensions could be taken into account, whether the dependant was working or not. However, in a judgment given on 2 December 1992 the Court of Appeal ruled that the amendments to the Act did not automatically carry through to the subordinate regulations. Consequently it remained the case that occupational pensions could only be taken into account if the dependant was working. However, the court's judgment also meant that all that was required for the earnings rules to apply in the way intended was to introduce fresh regulations. In view of this, and in order to keep the additional expenditure as a result of the judgment to a minimum, it was decided to bring the new regulations into force without waiting for the usual 21 days after they were laid.

Income Statistics

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish a table showing changes in real income between 1979 and 1988-89 before and after housing costs for the top five deciles on a similar basis to table A.1 in "Households Below Average Income: a statistical analysis 1979-1988-89".

Mr. Burt: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) on 2 November, at column *100*.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish a table showing the share of total income in 1979 and 1988-89 for the top half of the income distribution broken down into percentiles before and after housing costs on a similar basis to table A.3 in "Households Below Average Income: a statistical analysis 1979-88-89."

Mr. Burt: The information required is in the table.

Share of total income received by individuals below various percentiles of the income distribution per cent.

Income before housing costs	*1979*	*1988-89*
Bottom 60 per cent. of the income distribution	42	37
Bottom 70 per cent. of the income distribution	53	48
Bottom 80 per cent. of the income distribution	65	60
Bottom 90 per cent. of the income distribution	79	74
After housing costs		
Bottom 60 per cent. of the income distribution	42	36
Bottom 70 per cent. of the income distribution	52	46
Bottom 80 per cent. of the income distribution	65	59
Bottom 90 per cent. of the income distribution	79	74

Child Benefit

Ms. Eagle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate the cummulative amount of savings in 1993-94 on child benefit resulting from *(a)* not fully uprating it and *(b)* changing its structure since 1979 in gross and net terms.

Mr. Burt *[holding answer 3 December 1992]:* Information is not available in the form requested. We estimate that gross expenditure on child benefit in 1992-93 is £5·7 billion. If child benefit had been uprated annually in line with the retail prices index and with the normal rounding to the nearest 5p, the April 1979 rate—£4 a week per child—would be £9·20 from April 1992. It is estimated that the total savings in 1992-93 from paying £9·65 for the eldest qualifying child and £7·80 for each other child, instead of £9·20 for every child, are about £240 million. The corresponding net savings, after allowing for normal adjustments to other benefits, are around £145 million. It is not yet possible to make comparable estimates for 1993-94.

The extra help that has been made available to less well-off families since 1988 through the income-related benefits is worth around £620 million 1992-93, raising to around £1 billion in 1993-94.

EMPLOYMENT

Youth Training

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the number and percentage of people leaving youth training in 1991 in Lancashire who were without full-time employment after *(a)* eight months, *(b)* 10 months and *(c)* 12 months.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information requested is not available. Information on YT leavers economic status at eight months, 10 months and 12 months after leaving YT is not collected centrally.

WALES

NHS Trusts

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he intends to lay Statutory Instruments Nos. 2730 to 2742 of 1992 before the House.

Mr. David Hunt: There is no requirement for these statutory instruments to be laid before the House. They are, however, available in the Library of the House.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will advertise in newspapers to invite applications for membership of NHS trusts in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: These appointments are not advertised in newspapers.

Tourism

Mr. Waterson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to discontinue section 4 grants for tourism in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: None.

Mr. Waterson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total expenditure on section 4 grants for tourism-related projects in Wales in the last full year for which figures are available.

Sir Wyn Roberts: In 1991-92 the Wales tourist board provided £4,219,200 for tourism projects. This figure and more detailed information is contained in the board's 1991-92 annual report. A copy is available in the Library of the House.

Occupational Therapists

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many referrals to occupational therapists have been made in each county in Wales so far in the current year and in each of the last five years.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The requested information is not available centrally.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what resources his Department has made available to each county council in Wales for occupational therapy services in the current year and in each of the last five years.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The bulk of central Government support for local authorities' spending on occupational therapy services is provided through revenue support grant and basic credit approvals, which are not specifically earmarked by central Government for the support of particular services. It is for individual local authorities to determine how these resources should be allocated, and details of how much they spend on occupational therapy services are not held centrally.

Hearing Impairment

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many children in south Glamorgan and in each county in Wales have been certified as having a hearing impairment requiring some assistance but who have not been statemented in each of the past five years.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information requested is not collected centrally.

River Acidification

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement of the implications for Wales of the recent findings of a committee of the Forestry Commission on a link between conifer trees and river acidification.

Sir Wyn Roberts: None of the Forestry Commission's committees has made a recent finding of this kind. An expert workshop jointly sponsored by the Forestry Commission and the Department of the Environment concluded in June 1990 that the primary cause of surface water acidification was the deposition of airborne sulphur and nitrogen pollutants, but that there was also an association between trees and acidification resulting from the effectiveness of trees in scavenging these airborne pollutants. Whether the latter phenomenon would result in increased surface water acidification depended, however, on the sensitivity of the geology and soil in any given catchment area.

The members of the Forestry Commission's North Scotland regional advisory committee recently considered

this and other scientific evidence presented to them in the course of considering planting grant applications over which objections had been raised on environmental grounds. They advised the commissioners that, in their opinion, there was sufficient doubt about the effect that tree planting on the specific sites concerned would have on surface water acidification as to prevent their recommending that the applications should be approved at this stage. In the light of this advice, the Forestry Commissioners have decided to delay taking a decision on these applications pending further monitoring of the sensitivity of the sites to further acid inputs from the atmosphere.

This has no particular implications for cases arising in Wales.

Health Service Pay

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will make it his policy to support the continued work of the pay review body for nurses, midwives, health visitors and professions allied to medicine in order to provide objective evidence on comparative pay levels irrespective of any Government action to restrain pay in the short-term.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns) by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, on 13 November, at columns *1002-3*. The Government are confident that the review body system is the right way of determining the pay of those staff within their remits.

South Glamorgan Health Authority

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) which executive directors of South Glamorgan health authority are part of purchaser function; and which are part of the provider function;

(2) he will list the names and roles of the executive directors of South Glamorgan health authority.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: While health authorities retain responsibility for directly managed units, as in the case of South Glamorgan, authority members are accountable for both purchaser and provider issues and performance. As directly managed units achieve NHS trust status, the provider function will diminish and eventually authorities will focus exclusively on their purchaser role.

Details of the precise roles and responsibilities of the executive directors of South Glamorgan health authority, and their names, should be obtained from the health authority.

Schools (Discipline)

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what role his Department has in any disciplinary proceedings in locally or directly managed schools.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The Department has no direct role in staff disciplinary matters. Responsibility for such matters lies with the local education authority in respect of staff in LEA-maintained schools without delegated budgets. In the case of schools with delegated budgets and grant-maintained schools, the responsibility rests with the governing body.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Parliamentary Pensions

Mr. Eastham: To ask the Lord President of the Council what action he has taken, since the debate on Members' salaries on 25 November, in regard to hon. Members who may end their service after 1 January 1993, due to death or ill-health.

Mr. Dixon: To ask the Lord President of the Council what steps he has now taken for the parliamentary contributory pension fund to include a scheme for additional voluntary contributions or otherwise to protect hon. Members who may have to retire due to ill-health after 1 January 1993 and to protect the dependants of hon. Members who may die while in the service of the House after that date.

Mr. Newton: I shall be meeting the trustees of the parliamentary contributory pension fund shortly to discuss the pensions matters raised in the debate on 25 November, including the possibility of setting up an additional voluntary contribution scheme.

SCOTLAND

Council Tax

Mr. Gallie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about the draft council tax valuation lists which were delivered to levying authorities in Scotland by 30 November.

Mr. Stewart: Assessors delivered draft valuation lists, showing the bandings of dwellings in Scotland, to levying authorities by 30 November. The number of dwellings in each valuation band is given in the table.

	Percentage	*Number*
Band A	27·40	590,499
Band B	26·32	567,268
Band C	15·28	329,246
Band D	10·89	234,568
Band E	10·77	232,037
Band F	5·24	112,871
Band G	3·64	78,353
Band H	0·47	10,075
Total	100·00	2,154,917

Note:
The figures exclude lock-ups and private storage premises that are separately entered in the valuation list and are exempted from the council tax.

Information on the number of dwellings in each district and islands area and their distribution between bands has been placed in the Library. Householders will be able to see the draft lists at the principal offices of their levying authority. The valuations have been carried out by local assessors. Valuations have been made on the basis of the price, subject to certain assumptions, which dwellings might have reasonably been expected to realise on the open market if sold on 1 April 1991.

Arrests

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people were arrested by the police in Scotland for each year since 1986.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Information on the number of arrests by police is not held centrally in Scotland.

Tourism

Mr. Waterson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to recommend the discontinuance of section 4 grants in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have no such plans. The arrangements for Government support for the tourism industry in Scotland, including the Scottish tourist board's section 4 scheme of assistance, are however, kept under constant review. I am at present seeking views on their effectiveness.

Mr. Waterson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total expenditure on section 4 grants for tourism-related projects in Scotland in the last full year for which figures are available.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Scottish tourist board awarded section 4 grant assistance amounting to £3,616,000 during 1991-92.

Wildlife Incident Investigation Scheme

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the future funding of the wildlife incident investigation scheme in Scotland.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 3 December 1992]:* The Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department is reviewing the information required to monitor the effects of pesticides on wildlife and will be putting proposals to the Advisory Committee on Pesticides. Arrangements for funding will need to be considered in the light of its recommendations.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he or his officials last met representatives of the agrochemical industry to discuss the future funding of the wildlife incident investigation schemes.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 3 December 1992]:* Officials of the Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department met representatives of the agrochemical industry and other interested organisations on 30 October to discuss industry funding of pesticides-related work, including the wildlife incident investigation schemes.

NHS Management Consultants

Dr. Moonie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much has been spent by each Scottish health authority on the services of management consultants in *(a)* 1991 and *(b)* 1992.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 4 December 1992]:* Information available from the annual accounts of health boards relates to the total fee paid to management consultants, to legal firms, other than for legal expenses connected with compensation claims, and to work study consultants. The amounts for each health board for each year are shown in the table.

	1990-91 £	*1991-92* £
Argyll and Clyde	148,303	292,173
Ayrshire and Arran	287,041	—
Borders	24,809	3,733
Dumfries and Galloway	114,522	—
Fife	245,548	197,631
Forth Valley	182,447	158,871
Grampian	164,749	87,549
Greater Glasgow	1,905,149	1,544,987
Highland	208,087	2,500
Lanarkshire	293,242	48,870
Lothian	441,798	69,710
Orkney	11,929	330
Shetland	4,659	10,185
Tayside	70,664	89,796
Western Isles	105	—
CSA	—	—
Total	4,103,052	2,506,335

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what meetings he attended whilst in the United States of America on issues relating to GATT in the month prior to the announcement of the settlement of the GATT round of discussions on rapeseed and cereals.

Mr. Curry: My right hon. Friend was in Chicago when EC and United States negotiators met from 1 to 3 November. He was present in his capacity as president of the Agriculture Council, after prior discussion with, and agreement by, the Commission in order to provide any support that the Commission might have found useful. He took no part in the negotiations themselves.

Mr. Lord: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much land he estimates will have to be set aside from oilseeds and cereals growing, in the United Kingdom, following the recently negotiated GATT agreement.

Mr. Curry: Under the common agriculture policy reform agreement reached by the Council in May this year, EC growers of cereals, oilseeds and protein crops—other than those categorised as small producers—are required to setaside 15 per cent. of the land on which they are claiming arable support in relation to the 1993 harvest. The figure of 15 per cent. may be varied in later years. The settlement reached between the EC and the United States of America over the GATT oilseeds dispute includes provisions to contain EC production of oilseeds. To this end, the EC will establish a separate oilseeds base area of 5,499 million hectares for the 1994 harvest and 5·128 million hectares for the 1995 and subsequent harvests. This base area, reduced by either the EC's general arable set-aside percentage for the year in question, or 10 per cent. if that is greater, will be eligible for full EC oilseeds area aid. Should a larger area of oilseeds be grown in the EC, the aid will be reduced by 1 per cent. for each 1 per cent. of increased area.

Aujeszky's Disease

Mr. Lord: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement giving precise details of how the new animal health trade rules designed to safeguard the United Kingdom's freedom from Aujeszky's disease, recently agreed by the European Community, differ from those which previously protected pig producers.

Mr. Soames: In recent years, very few pigs have been imported into Great Britain and only under trade conditions to ensure that Aujeszky's disease would not be introduced. Now that other member states have accepted our approach in dealing with foot and mouth disease and trade can therefore take place more easily, pigs from other member states will be free to enter Great Britain without entering quarantine. To protect our freedom from Aujeszky's disease, we sought, and have now obtained, Community approval for additional trade guarantees which will apply to imports from other member states from 1 January 1993.

Fisheries (Rating)

Ms. Walley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what offsetting benefits he proposes to angling clubs against their increased costs arising from the proposed rating of fisheries;

(2) if he will meet the Mow Cop angling club to discuss their concerns on rating of angling clubs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: Under section 142 of the Water Resources Act 1991, the National Rivers Authority may apply to Ministers for an order requiring owners and occupiers of fisheries to contribute to the cost of the carrying out of its fisheries functions. No such application has yet been made. The authority is, we understand, developing proposals for a section 142 contributions scheme and has already undertaken a consultation exercise based on its discussion document "A Fair Assessment". The NRA is developing ideas for a further round of consultations. Angling clubs and others will have every opportunity to express their concerns in this context, and may submit further comments on the proposals to Ministers if and when the authority applies for an order. In these circumstances, I have no plans at present to meet angling clubs.

Meat Inspections

Mr. Spreat: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proportion of meat carcases are found to have significant pathology by meat inspectors in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Soames: This information is not available centrally.

Regulatory Measures

Mr. Spreat: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his answer of 26 November, *Official Report*, column *826*, if he will list, by identifiable title for each measure, all the measures in areas governed by the EC increasing regulation in any area for which his Department has responsibility which his Department has caused to be put into effect since 9 April.

Mr. Curry: A very high proportion of the activities for which this Department has policy responsibility are governed by EC regulation. EC Council and Commission regulations are directly applicable and in general do not require United Kingdom legislation for their implementation beyond enforcement and offence provisions. EC directives require United Kingdom implementing legislation to apply them although the boundary between EC and United Kingdom legislative responsibility is not always clear cut. I consider the following measures, implemented since 9 April, might have increased the legislative burden on business:

Council Regulation (EEC) No. 1765/92 of 30 June 1992 establishing a support system for producers of certain arable crops (as amended).

Commission Implementing Regulation (EEC) No. 2780/92 of 24 September on the conditions for the grant of compensatory payments under the support system for producers of certain arable crops.

Commission Implementing Regulation (EEC) No. 2294/92 of 31 July on detailed rules for the application of the support system for producers of the oil seeds referred to in Council Regulation (EEC) No. 1765/92 (as amended).

Commission Implementing Regulation (EEC) No. 2295/92 of 31 July 1992 on detailed rules for the application of the support system for producers of the protein crops referred to in Article 6 of Council Regulation (EEC) No. 1765/92 (as amended).

Commission Regulation (EEC) No. 2293/92 of 31 July 1992 laying down detailed rules for the application of Council Regulation (EEC) No. 1765/92 with regard to the set-aside scheme referred to in Article 7.

Commission Regulation (EEC) No. 2296/92 of 31 July 1992 laying down certain rules of application of the use of land set aside for the provision of materials for the manufacture within the Community of products not primarily intended for human or animal consumption (as amended).

The Food Additives Labelling Regulations 1992 (SI 1991 No. 1978).

The Flavourings in Food Regulations 1992 (SI 1992 No. 1971).

The Organic Products Regulations 1992 (SI 1992 No. 2111). Entered into force 1 October 1992. This SI implements the requirement of Council Regulation 2092/91 for a national control body. This body will oversee the registration of all organic farmers/producers etc. and ensure organic standards are met. There is a charge for registration.

Two SIs will come into effect on 1 January 1993 on horses. One will implement 90/428 the other 90/427. The titles are:

The Horses (Free Access to Competitions) Regulations 1992.

The Horses (Zootechnical Standards) Regulations 1992.They are to be laid before Parliament on 10 December.Council Regulation 2083/92 (14 July 1992)—amending Regulation 2092/91 on third country imports whereby a Member State's 'competent authority' may authorise imports from a third country that is not on the official Commission list. This amendment also alters the date of implementation of Regulation 2092/91 from 23 July 1992 to 1 January 1993.

Commission Regulation 1535/92 (15 June 1992)—amending Annexes II and III of Council Regulation 2092/91 whereby national rules on organic animals and organic animal products shall apply until Commission standards are agreed.

The Oil and Fibre Plant Seeds (Amendment) Regulations 1992 SI No. 1613.

These Regulations implement Commission Directive 92/9/EEC so as to introduce standards for seed borne disease organisms harmful to soya beans.

The Fodder Plant Seeds (Amendment) Regulations 1992 SI No. 1614 *and*

The Seeds (National Lists of Varieties) (Amendment) Regulations 1992 SI 1615.

These two Regulations implement Commission Directive 92/19/EEC by adding Festulolium (a cross between Meadow fescue and Italian Ryegrass) to each of the Regulations.

A number of quota management measures have been put into effect to regulate the fishing industry, but this is a continuing requirement reflecting the United Kingdom's CFP obligation and does not represent any increase in regulation.

Council Regulation (EEC) 345/92 amending for the 11th time Council Regulation (EEC) 3094/86 laying down certain technical measures for the conservation of fishery resources.

Council Regulation (EEC) 1465/96[1] amending for the 12th time Council Regulation (EEC) 3094/86 laying down certain technical measures for the conservation of fishery resources.

Council Regulation (EEC) 2120/92[1] amending for the 13th time Council Regulation (EEC) 3094/86 laying down certain technical measures for the conservation of fishery resources.

Council Regulation (EEC) 3034/92 amending for the 14th time Council Regulation (EEC) 3094/86 laying down certain technical measures for the conservation of fishery resources.

All these EEC Regulations are enforced in the United Kingdom by the Sea Fishing (Enforcement of Community Conservation Measures) Order 1986. SI 1986 No. 2090 (as amended).

[1] Council Regulations (EEC) 1465/92 and 2120.92 lapse on 31 December 1992 if not renewed.

The Fresh Meat (Hygiene & Inspection) Regulations 1992 (SI 1992 No. 2037). These Regulations replace all the previous GB legislation on slaughterhouse hygiene and meat inspection: 15 earlier SIs are revoked. They are however wider in scope than the earlier Regulations, since all cutting rooms and cold stores handling fresh meat are now affected.

Salmonella Controls: The Poultry Flocks, Hatcheries and Processed Animal Protein (Fees) Order 1992.

Food For Britain

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about the chairmanship of Food for Britain.

Mr. Gummer: Mr. Paul Judge's recognition as chairman of Food from Britain will take effect on 31 December. He will be taking up his new appointment with the Conservative party organisation on 1 January. An announcement of his successor will be made in due course.

HEALTH

Health Service Funding

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what level of funds were provided per head of population in each district health authority and each family health services authority in each year since 1989-90.

Mr. Sackville: The allocation of funds to district health authorities is a matter for regional health authorities and detailed information is not collected centrally. The spending of family health services authorities is primarily demand-led and funded accordingly. However, information which relates to the expenditure of DHAs and FHSAs to their resident populations for the years 1989-90 and 1990-91 is shown in the table.

The figures, which pre-date the national health service reforms, show DHAs as providers rather than purchasers of health care. Expenditure per head of population therefore reflects patterns of local service provision and the effects of patient flows across health authority boundaries. Thus the figures for DHAs will tend to vary significantly.

Information for 1991-92 will be available shortly.

Revenue expenditure per head of population

District Health Authorities	*1989-90 £(cash)*	*1990-91 £(cash)*
Northern Region		
Hartlepool	303	318
North Tees	212	222
South Tees	300	328
East Cumbria	264	284
South Cumbria	203	226
West Cumbria	229	242
Darlington	299	313
Durham	162	173
North-West Durham	264	277
South-West Durham	264	282
Northumberland	257	271
Gateshead	197	215
Newcastle	626	687
North Tyneside	166	181
South Tyneside	193	214
Sunderland	269	290
Yorkshire Region		
Hull	292	310
East Yorkshire	232	233
Grimsby	245	271
Scunthorpe	192	225
Northallerton	158	172
York	248	274
Scarborough	199	229
Harrogate	242	272
Bradford	253	280
Airedale	224	244
Calderdale	217	244
Huddersfield	263	280
Dewsbury	190	223
Leeds Western	321	343
Leeds Eastern	332	328
Wakefield	387	420
Pontefract	205	229
Trent Region		
North Derbyshire	179	191
South Derbyshire	233	248
Leicestershire	236	253
North Lincolnshire	264	287
South Lincolnshire	201	217
Bassetlaw	197	217
Central Nottinghamshire	233	244
Nottingham	300	325
Barnsley	213	229
Doncaster	234	249
Rotherham	200	248
Sheffield	392	421
East Anglian Region		
Cambridge	339	356
Peterborough	259	276
West Suffolk	214	230
East Suffolk	245	270
Norwich	258	276
Great Yarmouth and Waveney	216	243
West Norfolk and Wisbech	203	221
Huntingdon	241	276
North-West Thames Region		
North Bedfordshire	189	200
South Bedfordshire	204	220
North Hertfordshire	191	215
East Hertfordshire	150	162
North West Hertfordshire	344	365
South West Hertfordshire	160	174
Barnet	325	356
Harrow	273	294
Hillingdon	346	385
Hounslow and Spelthorne	262	275
Ealing	198	214
Riverside	614	628
Parkside	422	450
North East Thames Region		
Basildon and Thurrock	230	245
Mid Essex	237	255
North East Essex	236	247

District Health Authorities	1989-90 £(cash)	1990-91 £(cash)
West Essex	222	239
Southend	199	219
Barking, Havering and Brentwood	220	237
Hampstead	729	799
City and Hackney	574	612
Newham	273	299
Tower Hamlets	588	613
Enfield	200	214
Haringey	337	363
Redbridge	235	245
Waltham Forest	359	390
Bloomsbury and Islington	791	818
South East Thames Region		
Brighton	264	294
Eastbourne	239	256
Hastings	235	262
South East Kent	191	211
Canterbury and Thanet	253	271
Dartford and Gravesham	252	270
Maidstone	237	253
Medway	199	223
Tunbridge Wells	305	329
Bexley	220	234
Greenwich	373	397
Bromley	244	267
West Lambeth	699	750
Camberwell	459	519
Lewisham and North Southwark	465	498
South West Thames Region		
North West Surrey	262	274
West Surrey and North East Hampshire	168	182
South West Surrey	330	348
Mid Surrey	330	388
East Surrey	338	362
Chichester	236	254
Mid Downs	219	232
Worthing	204	227
Croydon	259	273
Kingston and Esher	304	320
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	207	225
Wandsworth	670	712
Sutton and Merton	270	270
Wessex Region		
East Dorset	225	254
West Dorset	229	249
Portsmouth and South East Hampshire	210	229
Southampton and South West Hampshire	307	336
Winchester	246	266
Basingstoke and North Hampshire	230	251
Salisbury	332	361
Swindon	244	258
Bath	222	243
Isle of Wight	249	275
Oxford Region		
East Berkshire	203	213
West Berkshire	211	227
Aylesbury	374	391
Wycombe	157	172
Milton Keynes	176	191
Kettering	180	194
Northampton	235	249
Oxford	283	303
South Western Region		
Bristol and Weston	302	340
Frenchay	293	322
Southmead	277	298
Cornwall	212	234
Exeter	279	297
North Devon	265	288
Plymouth	275	300
Torbay	258	288
Cheltenham	229	261
Gloucester	237	257
Somerset	232	255
West Midlands Region		
Bromsgrove and Redditch	199	218
Hereford	220	241
Kidderminster	303	325
Worcester	224	239
Shropshire	225	249
Mid Staffordshire	179	192
North Staffordshire	268	296
South East Staffordshire	209	222
Rugby	182	197
North Warwickshire	254	267
South Warwickshire	256	276
Central Birmingham	652	742
East Birmingham	255	294
North Birmingham	266	283
South Birmingham	342	369
West Birmingham	375	408
Coventry	273	292
Dudley	228	245
Sandwell	167	184
Solihull	184	207
Walsall	212	236
Wolverhampton	273	289
Mersey Region		
Chester	330	349
Crewe	195	213
Halton	153	163
Macclesfield	244	261
Warrington	305	319
Liverpool	396	438
St. Helens and Knowsley	208	219
Southport and Formby	289	301
South Sefton	457	505
Wirral	235	251
North Western Region		
Lancaster	410	433
Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde	218	242
Preston	629	679
Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley	214	233
Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale	329	338
West Lancashire	272	300
Chorley and South Ribble	96	103
Bolton	209	225
Bury	192	309
North Manchester	538	573
Central Manchester	699	790
South Manchester	604	636
Oldham	203	217
Rochdale	173	189
Salford	423	456
Stockport	207	221
Tameside and Glossop	184	198
Trafford	168	181
Wigan	203	219

Family Health Services Authorities	1989-90 £(cash)	1990-91 £(cash)
Northern region		
Cleveland	101	118
Cumbria	100	116
Durham	100	116
Northumberland	101	115
Gateshead	97	113
Newcastle	102	117

Family Health Services Authorities	1989-90 £(cash)	1990-91 £(cash)
North Tyneside	106	123
South Tyneside	99	113
Sunderland	101	115
Yorkshire region		
Humberside	98	112
North Yorkshire	101	116
Bradford	99	115
Calderdale	97	115
Kirklees	91	107
Leeds	104	117
Wakefield	105	119
Trent region		
Derbyshire	93	108
Leicestershire	91	104
Lincolnshire	104	119
Nottinghamshire	88	107
Barnsley	102	115
Doncaster	102	117
Rotherham	89	102
Sheffield	100	119
East Anglian region		
Cambridgeshire	92	105
Norfolk	105	121
Suffolk	97	112
North West Thames region		
Bedfordshire	90	104
Hertfordshire	96	111
Barnet	94	105
Brent and Harrow	106	125
Ealing, Hammersmith and Hounslow	100	113
Hillingdon	92	105
Kensington, Chelsea and Westminster	120	137
North East Thames Region		
Essex	95	111
Barking and Havering	87	104
Camden and Islington	111	124
City and East London	108	127
Enfield and Haringey	98	110
Redbridge and Waltham Forest	95	108
South East Thames Region		
East Sussex	101	118
Kent	96	119
Greenwich and Bexley	91	101
Bromley	88	100
Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham	102	117
South West Thames Region		
Surrey	94	105
West Sussex	102	120
Croydon	91	103
Kingston and Richmond	98	107
Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth	95	107
Wessex Region		
Dorset	105	123
Hampshire	95	107
Wiltshire	87	104
Isle of Wight	107	123
Oxford Region		
Berkshire	92	106
Buckinghamshire	92	105
Northamptonshire	91	105
Oxfordshire	91	104
South Western Region		
Avon	92	108
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	111	132
Devon	105	122
Gloucestershire	95	113
Somerset	101	118
West Midlands Region		
Hereford and Worcester	90	107
Shropshire	94	111
Staffordshire	88	100
Warwickshire	96	110
Birmingham	104	117
Coventry	103	117
Dudley	86	98
Sandwell	104	116
Solihull	96	112
Walsall	94	111
Wolverhampton	97	110
Mersey Region		
Cheshire	98	114
Liverpool	109	131
St. Helens and Knowsley	101	116
Sefton	99	114
Wirral	105	121
North Western Region		
Lancashire	103	116
Bolton	93	111
Bury	104	118
Manchester	115	128
Oldham	95	110
Rochdale	102	117
Salford	112	133
Stockport	102	115
Tameside	99	112
Trafford	105	119
Wigan	94	109

Sources:

(a) Annual accounts of district health authorities and family health services authorities (formerly family practitioner committees)—1989-90 and 1990-91.

(b) Mid-year estimates of resident population—1989 and 1990 (Office of Population Censuses and Surveys/Department of Health).

Notes:

1. The figures for the district health authorities are based upon their total revenue expenditure on the services which they managed or accounted for in the relevant financial years. Capital expenditure incurred by district health authorities and all expenditure incurred by regional health authorities is excluded.
2. The figures for the family health services authorities cover their total expenditure on family health services and revenue expenditure on their administrative expenses. Expenditure on family health services (which is essentially regarded as current —ie revenue—expenditure) is included on a net basis as reported in annual accounts (ie after the deduction of charges to patients).

Elderly Population

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give her best estimates of the impact of the growing elderly population on health expenditure; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: I refer the hon. Member to the reply my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State gave the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) on 27 November, at column *877*.

Dental Treatment

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what rights NHS dental patients have to make a formal complaint about their treatment.

Dr. Mawhinney: A national health service patient has the right to complain formally to the family health service authority on whose list the dentist is included about an alleged failure by the dentist to comply with his or her terms of service, or about the fit or efficiency of a denture provided for him or her by the dentist.

Hospitals

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will list all those hospitals in England and Wales which have had more than £1 million spent on them since 1979, with the relevant figure;

(2) if she will list all the hospital building programmes currently under way in England.

(3) if she will list *(a)* all the new hospitals opened in England since 1979 and *(b)* the new hospitals planned to be completed by 2000.

Mr. Sackville: The Government attach the highest priority to improving and modernising the national health service estate, on which around £1·5 billion will be spent in the current year. Data are not held centrally for expenditure on individual hospitals, but information on NHS construction schemes in England costing over £1 million completed since 1979 is shown in the table which I have placed in the Library. The information is incomplete for schemes started prior to 1986, but the number of schemes recorded totals 666, with expenditure on construction cost totalling over £2·8 billion. I have also placed in the Library a table listing the 111 schemes costing over £1 million currently under construction. In total, some 400 schemes each costing more than £1 million are at various stages of planning, design and construction throughout the NHS in England.

Information relating to Wales is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Infant Mortality

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which region in England has the lowest infant mortality.

Mr. Sackville: The lowest infant mortality rate in England by regional health authority for 1991 is South West Thames, with 5·6 per 1,000 live births.

Teenage Pregnancies

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what measures are being taken to combat single teenage pregnancies in England.

Mr. Sackville: One of the main targets in the "Health of the Nation" White Paper is to reduce the rate of conceptions amongst the under-16s by at least 50 per cent. by the year 2000. Everyone—parents, health services, local authorities, the voluntary and education sectors and the Government—needs to work together to achieve this target. Measures which are effective in substantially reducing pregnancies in the under-16s can be expected to have a similar effect on unwanted pregnancies in the over-16s. A range of initiatives is under way both nationally and locally. These include comprehensive family planning services, ready access to professional advice suitable for young people and the provision of publications that will be helpful to both young people and their parents. Regional health authorities are currently reviewing national health service family planning services, with particular reference to the needs of the young. Grants have been awarded to enable voluntary organisations to carry forward projects related to the aims of "The Health of the Nation" White Paper. Responsibility for policy on sex education in schools is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education.

AIDS

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the figures for reported AIDS cases in England for 1989, 1990, 1991 and to date in 1992.

Mr. Sackville: The information is as follows:

	Number
1989	766
1990	1,183
1991	1,255
[1]1992	1,060

[1] to end September

Civil Servants

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many civil servants from her Department have been relocated from London to other parts of the United Kingdom *(a)* in the last five years and *(b)* in the last 10 years; and if she will list the locations to which those civil servants were relocated.

Mr. Sackville: The information requested is as follows and is in terms of posts relocated.

Posts relocated from London in the last five years

Destination	*Number*
Nottingham	7
Leeds	[1]540
Total	547

[1] A further 630 posts are due to be relocated to Leeds in 1993.

Posts relocated between 1982 and 1987

14 posts were relocated to Lancashire.

Natural Medicines

Mr. Tredinnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to appoint experts in homoeopathic, biochemic and anthroposophic medicines to *(a)* the staff of the Medicines Control Agency, *(b)* a committee constituted under section 14 of the Medicines Act 1968 to advise in technical matters and appeals and *(c)* the Medicines Commission in order to ensure the implementation of the EC directive on homoeopathic medicinal products; and when she plans to take action.

Mr. Sackville: The EC directive on homoeopathic products was adopted on 22 September 1992 for

implementation by 31 December 1993. There are already professional staff within the Medicines Control Agency who are knowledgeable about homoeopathic medicines and expertise in these areas can be strengthened if this becomes necessary as a result of the directive.

It is anticipated that there will need to be access to independent expert advice on some applications, but the procedures and the structure and status of advisory bodies depends on many factors. Discussions are ongoing, both within the Department and with interested parties, on how best to develop channels whereby such advice on homoeopathic, anthroposophic and biochemic medicines can be made available to the agency and the licensing authority.

Residential Drug Projects

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will require the ring fencing of community care funding after April for residential drug and alcohol projects; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: The special transitional grant totalling £565 million will be ring-fenced for implementation of all aspects of community care, including the purchase of services for alcohol and drug misuers.

Disabled People

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received recently on local authorities wishing to provide disabled people with direct payments to make their own personal assistance arrangements; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: We have received one such representation from the Association of Directors of Social Services. There are no current plans to amend legislation in this way.

St. Bartholomew's Hospital

Sir Michael Neubert: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether she will list the possible alternative uses of St. Bartholomew's hospital which have been proposed to her as part of the consultation on the Tomlinson proposals.

Dr. Mawhinney: The St. Bartholomew's shadow trust has put forward an alternative proposal to use the site primarily as a centre for specialist services. We are considering the future use of the hospital sites mentioned in the Tomlinson report, and will put forward our proposals for action in the new year. Any proposed changes in the use of hospital sites will be subject to formal consultation.

Paracetamol

Mr. Eastham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will refer to the relevant safety committee the issue of the placing of a limit on the number of paracetamol which may be sold over the counter in one pack or in one purchase; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: On the advice of the Medicines Commission, there are already limits on the size of the packs of paracetamol products which may be supplied from retail outlets. Packs containing more than 30 effervescent tablets, more than 25 tablets that are not effervescent and more than 10 sachets of powder and granules may be sold only from retail pharmacies. The Department's Medicines Control Agency will keep under review the need to seek further committee advice on controls on the sale of paracetamol, including pack size and numbers.

Mr. Eastham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what figures she has for the number of people who have committed or attempted suicide by use of paracetamol.

Mr. Sackville: The latest available figures for the number of people who have been recorded as having committed suicide and where paracetamol is mentioned in the records is shown in table 1. Table 2 combines the information provided in table 1 with information on the number of people where paracetamol is mentioned in the records and where it was undetermined whether death was accidentally or purposely inflicted. Both tables refer to England and Wales, and are for 1990; the latest year for which statistics are available.

Information pertaining to the number of people who have attempted suicide by use of paracetamol is not collected centrally.

Table 1. Numbers of recorded deaths from suicide where paracetamol is mentioned in the records. England and Wales, 1990. persons only.

	Total	
Paracetamol	101	([1]5)
Paracetamol Prothiaden	1	
Paracetamol Salicylate (NOS)	1	
Paracetamol Temazepam Tricyclic Anti Depressant (NOS)	1	
Paracetamol Triazolam	1	
Paracetamol Warfarin	1	

Table 2. Numbers of recorded deaths from suicide and undertermined whether accidentally or purposely inflicted where paracetamol is mentioned in the records. England and Wales. 1990, persons only.

	Total	
Paracetamol	185	([1]13)
Paracetamol Propoxyphene	5	([1]1)
Paracetamol Propranolol	1	
Paracetamol Prothiaden	1	
Paracetamol Salicylate (NOS)	5	([1]1)
Paracetamol Temazepam Tricyclic Anti Depressant (NOS)	1	
Paracetamol Triazolam	1	
Paracetamol Warfarin	1	
Paracetamol Verapamil	1	

[1] Number of deaths with mention of alcohol.
NOS Not otherwise stated.

The inclusion of a substance in this list does not imply that it is necessarily toxic. Where two or more substances are mentioned together the contribution, if any, of each to the death is unknown; even where one substance is listed alone there may well be other factors with an important bearing on the death.

Mr. Eastham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what figures she has for the number of deaths from liver disease of which a part cause has been an earlier paracetamol overdose.

Mr. Sackville: In 1991 in England and Wales there were 25 recorded accidental deaths from liver disease of which a part cause was an earlier paracetamol overdose.

Essex Health Authorities

Mr. Jenkin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what administrative cost savings will be made as a result of merging the North East Essex district health authorities with Mid-Essex.

Mr. Sackville: The proposals by North East Thames regional health authority to merge the three existing health authorities of North East Essex, Mid Essex and West Essex to create a new North Essex health authority have recently been the subject of public consultation. I understand that the regional health authority will be submitting its formal recommendations to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State shortly. It would not be appropriate for me to speculate on the level of administrative cost savings, but the effective use of resources is one of the criteria used in assessing the benefits of mergers.

NHS Pay

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether she will make it her policy to support the continued work of the pay review body for nurses, midwives, health visitors and professions allied to medicine in order to provide objective evidence on comparative pay levels irrespective of any Government action to restrain pay in the short term.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Warrington South (Mr. Hall) on 30 November, at column 76.

Hyperbaric Units

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidelines she has issued to regional and district health authorities as to the referral of national health service patients to hyperbaric units; and if she will amend them to draw attention to the dangers of treatment by unqualified staff.

Mr. Sackville: Health notice (90)20, a copy of which is available in the Library, gives guidance. Training and standards of care are matters for the professions.

Orthodontic Dentists

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment has been made on the number of orthodontic dentists required per 1·5 million people.

Dr. Mawhinney: No assessment has been made by the Department. The planning and provision of dental treatment is a matter for district health authorities to undertake jointly with family health services authorities.

Children's Homes

Mr. Jonathan Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish the report of the Warner committee inquiry into the selection, development and management of staff in children's homes.

Mr. Yeo: We are publishing the report "Choosing with Care" today. Copies have been placed in the Vote Office and the Library. We welcome the report and its thorough and constructive analysis of the issues identified by the inquiry. Although there are many caring and dedicated staff working in children's homes, the Government are concerned about the serious deficiencies and weaknesses of existing personnel procedures and practices. The report is clear that poor selection procedures can result in the appointment of some staff who are unsuited to the care of children. It makes vitally important recommendations for early improvements to employers selection and appointment procedures which the Government accept. We are therefore acting immediately to inform local authorities and employers in the voluntary and private sectors of the committee's findings, so that they can make changes that are required. It is essential, in the interests of children, that these recommendations are implemented. We will be consulting with local authorities about how we can ensure that this happens.

The report raises other important issues that the Department will be considering carefully in consultation with the relevant parties.

HEALTH

Dental Services

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the family health services authorities which have *(a)* held no dental services committee meeting and *(b)* cancelled a meeting in each month since July.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 30 November 1992]:* The information requested could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many dentists who have not given notice to leave the dental list have given written notice to each FHSA to deregister some or all of their continuing care arrangements for adult patients in each week since 8 July; how many dentists have deregistered patients; and how many patients have been deregistered.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 30 November 1992]:* The information is contained in the tables. The tables give the number of dentists who have given written notice to the family health services authority of their intention to deregister adult patients under continuing care arrangements and the numbers of adults affected. Over the period 30 June 1992 to 30 September 1992, the total number of adult registrations has increased from 20,618,887 to 21,829,488.

Number of adult patients for whom notice of de-registration has been received

	Week ending																					
FHSA	*3 July*	*10 July*	*17 July*	*24 July*	*31 July*	*7 Aug*	*14 Aug*	*21 Aug*	*28 Aug*	*4 Sept*	*11 Sept*	*18 Sept*	*25 Sept*	*2 Oct*	*9 Oct*	*16 Oct*	*23 Oct*	*30 Oct*	*6 Nov*	*13 Nov*	*20 Nov*
Cleveland	0	0	0	0	0	13	37	0	0	0	56	91	15	42	71	56	307	0	120	109	122
Cumbria	0	0	98	173	231	129	347	192	213	121	280	121	79	141	285	78	453	115	338	217	346
Durham	0	0	0	81	62	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Northumberland	0	1	103	47	35	5	0	0	26	0	0	0	35	75	41	53	69	49	0	19	81
Gateshead	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	11	21	33
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
North Tyneside	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
South Tyneside	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sunderland	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Humberside	22	69	65	7	7	18	10	15	3	4	5	9	9	30	9	40	27	22	15	104	39
North Yorkshire	0	25	n/k	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	35	0	70	15	4	10	9	23	32	7
Bradford	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Calderdale	2	0	1	1	0	1	3	6	2	1	5	10	12	2	13	4	1	0	1	0	11
Kirklees	0	0	0	0	33	0	4	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	20	6	0	3	17	9	21
Leeds	10	16	43	28	54	41	66	166	28	16	27	36	65	154	34	82	61	34	222	28	291
Wakefield	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Derbyshire	0	40	0	0	49	74	48	27	47	29	41	28	27	107	79	89	72	13	176	126	1,185
Leicestershire	0	0	47	71	44	4	84	33	26	47	124	170	100	51	210	120	97	185	90	150	310
Lincolnshire	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Nottinghamshire	0	0	0	0	0	94	72	89	49	44	0	5	3	110	15	111	18	2	21	5	2,226
Barnsley	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Doncaster	0	0	0	0	13	2	4	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Rotherham	12	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Sheffield	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cambridgeshire	0	0	0	0	0	0	162	82	20	44	89	62	62	54	186	45	28	62	43	93	76
Norfolk	651	385	270	330	287	120	312	329	63	67	237	696	329	378	1,319	290	710	410	99	178	393
Suffolk	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1,393	0	4	0	0	1	0	0	0	102	24	0
Bedfordshire	300	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Hertfordshire	25	30	30	56	103	137	89	147	20	116	64	91	147	67	10	139	111	151	300	163	267
Barnet	4,000	0	2	0	22	0	5	0	3	9	6	16	20	2	1	0	0	5	1	0	33
Brent and Harrow	0	0	0	0	30	0	0	0	621	0	0	500	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ealing, Hammersmith and Hounslow	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Hillingdon	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kensington and Westminster	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Essex	0	0	10	5	9	3,647	33	606	8,146	0	31	18	17	177	11	20	17	162	47	2	120
Barking and Havering	0	10	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	160	0
Camden and Islington	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	52	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	30	0	0	30	0
City and East London	0	0	0	0	34	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	3	0	5	4
Enfield and Haringey	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	500	0	0	0	234	0	0	0
Redbridge and Waltham Forest	0	0	0	26	91	57	64	45	92	21	0	66	66	120	30	101	52	43	52	101	83
East Sussex	12	0	106	52	53	2,098	1,720	373	47	126	1,055	1,550	356	44	107	127	79	101	110	87	71
Kent	345	1,558	861	777	859	786	971	1,151	1,086	597	935	1,485	1,027	1,502	1,720	1,209	1,878	781	2,754	691	670
Greenwich and Bexley	0	0	16	0	103	0	1	77	191	87	89	15	195	225	120	2	192	133	54	109	185
Bromley	0	0	20	63	9,121	16	7	20	0	346	30	21	112	0	16	112	642	144	45	19	229
Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham	0	0	0	0	2	18	2	0	0	51	12	3	18	8	5	10	0	0	2	12	3
Surrey	0	973	1,846	251	2,595	233	102	438	361	387	466	507	323	444	352	575	466	368	533	357	166
West Sussex	4,000	5,500	1,900	0	5,500	500	1,000	0	0	0	3,000	1,500	0	0	0	2,000	0	2,000	4,000	0	0
Croydon	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kingston and Richmond	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	43	20	0	35	0	3	76	74	103	0	0	0	80	47
Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth	0	1	1	33	1	28	33	40	0	34	33	1	57	0	1	4	5	1	3	1	1
Dorset	233	226	267	322	433	274	252	296	218	223	517	215	375	390	1,340	586	333	201	320	408	220
Hampshire	93	3	0	183	863	0	432	705	12	170	344	434	428	24	5,527	157	120	39	110	150	39
Wiltshire	0	0	1,000	1,000	1,036	690	199	72	76	0	47	88	61	72	43	176	65	118	129	40	72
Isle of Wight	0	0	0	0	0	1	55	22	0	0	0	45	27	4	109	4	0	126	10	12	45
Berkshire	0	0	0	0	0	955	489	77	478	97	201	422	250	50	250	72	102	100	2,337	2,088	101
Buckinghamshire	1,375	3,100	1,800	3,300	1,855	1,800	0	0	0	0	50	0	250	0	350	0	400	2,000	0	0	0
Northamptonshire	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Oxfordshire	0	121	156	80	103	260	74	1,412	133	158	162	1,627	467	287	183	397	241	298	285	540	470
Avon	0	0	0	0	55	0	0	800	0	0	300	0	0	2,700	0	500	0	0	43	40	190
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	0	n/a	n/k	120	150	158	111	100	60	132	300	24	90	100	422	232	43	48	262	139	154
Devon	2,930	268	376	149	120	89	56	124	47	153	127	132	74	208	341	551	202	751	126	332	394
Gloucestershire	59	364	129	560	312	489	1,389	422	341	351	733	325	677	563	2,448	1,641	3,927	2,873	1,997	1,191	902
Somerset	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Hereford and Worcester	0	0	0	0	0	0	72	128	0	61	36	48	61	59	47	58	42	52	48	94	83
Shropshire	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Staffordshire	24	7	20	11	48	140	0	5	0	0	2	16	0	0	0	0	117	0	28	0	0
Warwickshire	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	33	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1,328	0
Birmingham	0	0	0	0	0	26	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	32	5	3
Coventry	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	60	0	0	0	0	0	115	0	0	0	0	133	0
Dudley	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Walsall	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

FHSA	Week ending 3 July	10 July	17 July	24 July	31 July	7 Aug	14 Aug	21 Aug	28 Aug	4 Sept	11 Sept	18 Sept	25 Sept	2 Oct	9 Oct	16 Oct	23 Oct	30 Oct	6 Nov	13 Nov	20 Nov
Solihull	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Walsall	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Wolverhampton	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cheshire	0	0	14	43	1	2,822	45	54	18	0	6	33	951	1	17	0	15	25	80	0	
Liverpool	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	2	5	0	0	0	0	1	4	5	2	0	8	0	2
St. Helens and Knowsley	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sefton	0	0	200	100	50	25	20	0	0	0	0	52	18	23	9	15	14	10	13	0	3
Wirral	0	0	0	0	67	110	0	0	4	8	4	0	1	0	2	0	33	9	13	0	12
Lancashire	12	58	133	75	81	197	1,749	285	295	216	1,992	138	247	1,616	774	404	413	346	420	283	395
Bolton	9	2	1	0	5	1	130	5	0	4	1	2	209	0	1	1	0	0	1	4	17
Bury	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	15	25	0	0	0	9	3	0	0	0
Manchester	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Oldham	0	0	0		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Rochdale	0	0	0		4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Salford	5	13	13		0	0		0	0	0	60	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Stockport	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Tameside	0	0	30	0	60	40	0	0	50	30	50	0	50	0	0	0	0	100	60	0	0
Trafford	2	0	12	13	13	15	17	18	1	2	1	20	4	25	0	1	3	3	21	5	13
Wigan	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
England	14,293	12,949	9,614	7,977	24,713	14,430	10,287	8,473	10,663	5,165	11,390	10,703	8,434	9,743	16,896	10,256	11,321	12,401	15,362	10,203	10,092

n/a = Not available.
n/k = Not known.

Number of dentists who have given notice of intention to de-register adult patients

FHSA	Week ending 3 July	10 July	17 July	24 July	31 July	7 Aug	14 Aug	21 Aug	28 Aug	4 Sept	11 Sept	18 Sept	25 Sept	2 Oct	9 Oct	16 Oct	23 Oct	30 Oct	6 Nov	13 Nov	20 Nov
Cleveland	0	0	0	0	0	4	3	0	0	0	2	2	2	2	1	4	6	0	5	5	2
Cumbria	0	0	7	3	0	3	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	3	2	0	0	0	1	0	0
Durham	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Northumberland	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Gateshead	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	6	3
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
North Tyneside	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
South Tyneside	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sunderland	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Hambleton	1	12	12	2	2	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
North Yorkshire	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	2	1	4	2	8	11	2
Bradford	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Calderdale	2	0	1	1	0	1	1	3	2	1	1	3	2	1	1	2	1	0	1	0	1
Kirklees	0	0	0	0	3	0	3	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	4	1	0	3	6	2	2
Leeds	2	4	5	5	2	1	0	6	8	4	4	7	3	9	4	6	7	7	12	4	9
Wakefield	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Derbyshire	0	0	0	0	0	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Leicestershire	0	0	1	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Lincolnshire	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Nottinghamshire	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	9	4	2	0	2	2	3	7	8	3	1	6	4	13
Barnsley	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Doncaster	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Rotherham	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sheffield	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cambridgeshire	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	5	9	9	9	10	9	9	10	0	1	1	1	0	2
Norfolk	11	7	9	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	8	2	1	0	0
Suffolk	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	2	4	0
Bedfordshire	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Hertfordshire	2	1	0	2	7	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	3	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Barnet	4	0	2	0	7	0	3	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	3	0	0	0
Brent and Harrow	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ealing, Hammersmith and Hounslow	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Hillingdon	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kensington and Westminster	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Brent	0	0	3	2	6	2	7	9	10	0	2	3	6	12	2	2	1	6	13	2	4
Barking and Havering	0	2	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0
Camden and Islington	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	1	0
City and East London	0	0	0	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	3	0	3	2
Enfield and Haringey	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	0
Redbridge and Waltham Forest	0	0	0	1	2	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	0
East Sussex	9	0	4	2	0	9	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kent	9	13	35	34	25	35	16	34	34	22	29	32	25	35	37	22	38	0	17	8	5
Greenwich and Bexley	0	0	1	0	2	0	1	0	0	3	0	1	1	0	0	2	3	0	0	0	0
Bromley	0	0	7	2	5	0	2	0	0	3	0	2	1	0	1	11	5	1	0	0	0
Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham	0	0	0	0	2	3	1	0	0	2	4	2	5	4	3	5	0	0	2	2	2
Surrey	0	3	5	5	8	1	0	8	2	2	6	1	0	1	5	1	2	1	1	0	0
West Sussex	2	3	2	0	4	1	1	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	2	0	1	2	0	0
Croydon	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kingston and Richmond	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	2	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	2	2
Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth	0	0	1	1	4	1	2	1	2	0	1	3	1	2	1	1	0	4	1	1	1	1

Number of adult patients for whom notice of de-registration has been received

FHSA	Week ending 3 July	10 July	17 July	24 July	31 July	7 Aug	14 Aug	21 Aug	28 Aug	4 Sept	11 Sept	18 Sept	25 Sept	2 Oct	9 Oct	16 Oct	23 Oct	30 Oct	6 Nov	13 Nov	20 Nov
Dorset	5	5	1	4	4	5	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	1
Hampshire	2	0	0	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	2	7	0	0	0	2	1	0
Wiltshire	0	0	1	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	0
Isle of Wight	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
Berkshire	0	0	2	0	9	1	3	2	3	1	3	0	4	0	1	5	0	0	0	3	0
Buckinghamshire	1	2	1	3	3	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	3	0	2	1	0	0	0

FHSA	Week ending 3 July	10 July	17 July	24 July	31 July	7 Aug	14 Aug	21 Aug	28 Aug	4 Sept	11 Sept	18 Sept	25 Sept	2 Oct	9 Oct	16 Oct	23 Oct	30 Oct	6 Nov	13 Nov	20 Nov
Northamptonshire	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Oxfordshire	0	4	0	3	0	3	0	3	0	3	0	1	1	4	0	2	2	0	0	0	0
Avon	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	2
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	13	5	4	12	10	8	2	2	0	0	0	0	5	3	3	1	1	0	0	1	3
Devon	22	27	24	16	10	17	7	8	5	1	2	3	1	2	1	2	0	2	1	2	5
Gloucestershire	6	0	9	10	4	0	4	1	3	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	4	1	1	0	0
Somerset	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Hereford and Worcester	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	0
Shropshire	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Staffordshire	8	5	5	1	6	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Warwickshire	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0
Birmingham	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0
Coventry	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	0
Dudley	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sandwell	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Solihull	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Walsall	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Wolverhampton	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cheshire	0	0	3	2	1	2	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Liverpool	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	3	0	0	0	0	1	3	2	2	0	3	0	2
St. Helens and Knowsley	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sefton	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Wirral	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	3	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Lancashire	7	14	12	8	9	12	8	12	10	3	8	6	5	3	9	2	3	5	3	2	3
Bolton	3	2	1	0	3	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	1
Bury	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0
Manchester	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Oldham	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Rochdale	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Salford	2	2	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Stockport	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Tameside	0	0	1	0	2	2	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0
Trafford	1	0	3	1	0	1	2	1	1	1	1	2	3	1	0	1	1	2	1	1	2
Wigan	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
England	123	115	176	133	159	127	90	115	106	62	92	91	90	109	119	87	108	53	100	77	65

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many dentists, who have not given notice to leave the dental list, have given written notice to each FHSA to terminate or deregister some or all of their capitation arrangements for child patients in each week since 8 July 1982; how many dentists have deregistered patients; and how many patients have been deregistered.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 30 November 1992]:* The information is contained in the tables. The tables give the numbers of dentists who have given written notice to the family health services authorities of their intention to deregister child patients under capitation arrangements and the numbers of children affected. For the period 30 June 1992 to 30 September 1992, the total number of children covered by capitation payments has increased from 6,472,689 to 7,103,096.

Number of child patients for whom notice of de-registration has been received

FHSA	Week ending 3 July	10 July	17 July	24 July	31 July	7 Aug	14 Aug	21 Aug	28 Aug	4 Sept	11 Sept	18 Sept	25 Sept	2 Oct	9 Oct	16 Oct	23 Oct	30 Oct	6 Nov	13 Nov	20 Nov
Cumbria	0	0	19	4	1	0	3	1	1	16	2	1	1	1	4	1	74	0	0	8	1
Gateshead	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	2	0
Humberside	1	6	5	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	1	3	0	2	4	0	0	3	4
Calderdale	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Leeds	2	3	4	1	0	0	3	2	12	0	4	0	0	1	0	0	0	5	1	0	4
Leicestershire	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Nottinghamshire	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	3	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	1
Rotherham	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cambridgeshire	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Norfolk	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	11	0	0	0
Hertfordshire	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Barnet	2	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Essex	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	1	2
Enfield and Haringey	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
East Sussex	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kent	0	0	0	7	0	2	0	2	2	203	10	0	6	1	0	0	3	0	1	0	0
Bromley	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Hampshire	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Berkshire	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Oxfordshire	0	0	0	10	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0
Devon	0	2	3	10	2	6	3	5	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	1	116	0	0	0
Gloucestershire	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Staffordshire	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cheshire	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Lancashire	2	2	1	3	2	4	3	6	2	0	3	4	9	2	7	4	8	4	0	4	2
Bolton	0	0	0	0	2	2	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Rochdale	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Trafford	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Total England	12	19	34	40	27	20	23	23	20	229	21	10	32	11	11	9	96	147	6	18	20

FHSAs not shown, have had no child patients deregistered.

Number of dentists giving notice of intention to de-register child patients

FHSA	Week ending 3 July	10 July	17 July	24 July	31 July	7 Aug	14 Aug	21 Aug	28 Aug	4 Sept	11 Sept	18 Sept	25 Sept	2 Oct	9 Oct	16 Oct	23 Oct	30 Oct	6 Nov	13 Nov	20 Nov
Cumbria	0	0	0	0	7	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Gateshead	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	0
Humberside	1	3	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Calderdale	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Leeds	1	2	2	1	0	0	0	1	3	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	1	0	3
Leicestershire	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Nottinghamshire	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	1
Rotherham	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cambridgeshire	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Norfolk	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Hertfordshire	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Barnet	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Essex	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Enfield and Haringey	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
East Sussex	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kent	0	0	0	2	0	2	0	1	1	2	4	0	0	4	1	0	0	3	0	1	0
Bromley	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Hampshire	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Berkshire	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Oxfordshire	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	3	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Devon	0	1	2	4	1	5	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Gloucestershire	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Staffordshire	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cheshire	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Lancashire	2	1	1	3	1	0	3	1	1	0	3	2	2	1	2	1	0	3	0	2	2
Bolton	0	0	0	0	1	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Rochdale	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Trafford	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Total England	11	10	11	15	14	11	8	7	7	3	10	3	9	5	2	2	3	14	3	6	8

FHSAs not shown, have had no child patients de-registered.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many dentists have given written notice to each FHSA to remove their name from the dental list in each week since 8 July; and what is the total for this period.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 30 November 1992]:* The information requested is contained in the table. The total number of dentists who have given written notice to family health services authorities to remove their names from the dental list since 3 July is 120. Additions to the list in the period 30 June to 30 September mean that overall, there was a decrease of 15 dentists.

Number of dentists giving written notice to remove their names from dental list

FHSA	Week ending July 3	10	17	24	31	August 7	14	21	28	September 4	11	18	25	October 2	9	16	23	30	November 6	13	20	Total
Humberside	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Calderdale	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	4
Wakefield	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	3
Norfolk	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Ealing, Harrow and Hounslow	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Barking and Havering	0	1	0	0	2	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
City and East London	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	0	0	0	5
Enfield and Haringey	0	0	1	2	0	0	5	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	4	18
East Sussex	0	0	1	1	4	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	12
Kent	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	3	1	2	0	10
Greenwich and Bexley	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2	1	1	0	0	0	8
Bromley	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	1	0	2	1	0	0	0	11
Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham	2	0	4	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	13
Surrey	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Croydon	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	5
Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Hampshire	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Oxfordshire	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Devon	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Somerset	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
Dudley	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Wirral	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Manchester	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Salford	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Tameside	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Trafford	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	3	0	1	0	0	0	0	6
Total England	11	2	8	8	9	4	8	2	6	1	4	2	3	6	5	5	11	11	2	5	7	120

Note: No dentists have asked for their names to be removed from the dental list in the other 63 FHSAs.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients have contacted each FHSA asking for help in finding a dentist in each week since 8 July; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 30 November 1992]:* The information is contained in the tables.

Number of patients contacting the FHSA for help in finding an NHS dentist

FHSA	Week ending 8 July	15 July	22 July	29 July	5 Aug	12 Aug	19 Aug	26 Aug	2 Sept	9 Sept	16 Sept	23 Sept	30 Sept	7 Oct	14 Oct	21 Oct	28 Oct	4 Nov	11 Nov	18 Nov	25 Nov
Cleveland	0	30	100	60	42	33	45	30	35	35	10	15	10	10	10	5	5	3	60	35	30
Cumbria	15	45	39	65	20	30	43	60	30	40	60	60	30	67	75	70	54	30	90	35	75
Durham	0	10	16	19	15	16	16	20	12	6	14	6	5	4	0	0	0	0	0	5	0
Northumberland	5	8	8	11	12	8	14	5	9	5	4	11	11	2	5	5	7	16	9	6	5
Gateshead	0	41	27	60	30	40	40	21	25	15	20	24	9	6	15	7	12	5	20	5	9
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	2	7	29	35	31	28	16	14	23	5	15	18	15	8	10	15	14	10	11	15	4
North Tyneside	1	0	0	7	5	8	0	2	6	0	5	1	1	1	4	2	1	0	2	0	0
South Tyneside	0	59	84	62	32	18	4	0	10	8	12	12	7	16	11	12	20	25	10	6	6
Sunderland	0	0	119	45	45	35	25	21	30	15	12	17	31	34	20	14	6	12	7	7	12
Humberside	105	103	115	99	91	87	86	86	94	33	77	131	88	83	86	74	67	110	96	93	131
North Yorkshire	0	3	2	1	3	3	21	10	8	19	15	30	20	35	17	20	40	20	13	9	6
Bradford	5	0	3	1	3	1	2	2	4	0	3	5	3	6	5	5	5	4	6	3	4
Calderdale	2	1	2	0	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	2	2	0	1	2	3	7
Kirklees	2	10	12	8	12	12	6	3	15	10	15	10	16	29	11	15	15	15	27	15	15
Leeds	2	6	25	11	10	24	25	60	30	25	40	35	28	40	5	35	20	35	37	45	25
Wakefield	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	3	1	2	0	1	1	27	5	5	4	2	6	2	6
Derbyshire	18	77	58	71	59	94	91	69	70	45	78	81	84	59	68	58	78	71	44	31	56
Leicestershire	2	20	22	15	12	12	9	11	12	13	14	16	17	14	16	18	10	8	15	22	27
Lincolnshire	1	2	0	0	2	0	2	1	1	2	2	3	4	2	3	0	0	2	0	5	2
Nottinghamshire	0	6	36	28	12	28	30	15	24	20	27	20	14	19	20	21	23	12	20	14	14
Barnsley	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Doncaster	0	2	0	1	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Rotherham	3	2	2	4	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	2	0	1	1	0	0	0	1
Sheffield	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0
Cambridgeshire	293	371	228	245	279	207	161	162	163	161	274	192	146	136	152	97	134	182	125	0	152
Norfolk	72	162	148	123	110	136	135	139	136	138	145	160	121	158	160	154	82	120	111	112	135
Suffolk	0	16	0	0	0	3	13	4	0	2	5	2	24	4	4	5	5	10	43	20	16
Bedfordshire	28	67	46	62	26	19	28	26	54	46	62	45	38	51	47	61	29	43	68	71	57
Hertfordshire	6	40	5	30	16	33	62	29	28	34	21	23	17	21	35	29	29	34	30	40	23
Barnet	76	68	82	26	49	23	24	20	15	24	20	24	23	30	20	18	13	26	24	14	10
Brent and Harrow	25	30	15	11	6	10	6	9	29	21	15	35	24	12	14	27	27	4	15	11	22
Ealing, Hammersmith and Hounslow	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	8	7	9	3	9	7	13	11
Hillingdon	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kensington Westminster	45	56	36	40	37	30	24	58	48	30	27	41	31	34	34	30	30	48	42	60	60
Ilam	10	23	18	23	28	21	45	33	45	42	54	46	32	42	36	42	42	42	79	67	42
Barking and Havering	17	35	39	18	13	18	9	11	17	13	17	15	19	13	17	11	10	17	17	17	13
Camden and Islington	30	25	14	10	27	18	25	24	17	23	43	23	24	15	15	24	20	17	14	19	15
City and East London	22	61	75	34	32	49	39	86	31	31	36	61	33	34	66	49	42	21	39	49	47
Enfield and Haringey	12	8	17	10	29	24	23	14	17	29	16	22	14	10	23	32	21	29	35	33	23
Redbridge and Waltham Forest	20	7	3	0	8	10	8	8	10	7	4	8	6	10	8	9	6	4	1	5	9
East Sussex	25	164	200	152	109	163	168	160	151	103	111	121	137	134	107	111	109	103	84	82	77
Kent	80	116	191	136	109	213	203	139	154	121	205	132	202	172	161	146	167	139	193	134	191
Greenwich and Bexley	4	12	6	6	5	21	12	0	8	6	8	13	4	8	5	4	10	16	7	7	5
Bromley	40	40	36	30	40	30	36	34	32	48	32	32	46	26	32	13	34	34	11	29	26
Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham	8	15	11	16	21	14	22	13	15	21	23	5	20	23	37	44	24	24	22	27	17
Surrey	20	42	41	40	39	53	52	54	45	28	31	30	47	54	48	37	30	35	28	45	31
West Sussex	20	65	96	96	65	66	69	67	85	57	98	79	90	77	63	62	97	79	67	33	60
Croydon	4	11	6	3	4	8	13	6	9	7	11	4	3	4	9	5	10	6	8	11	9
Kingston and Richmond	12	28	29	25	23	23	33	24	20	0	40	30	40	30	47	27	24	28	32	34	44
Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth	15	34	19	18	21	20	18	25	27	20	25	45	15	21	23	32	24	17	14	15	24
Dorset	23	62	122	66	63	96	105	110	113	79	122	125	123	115	78	105	112	102	85	98	93
Hampshire	12	55	69	55	146	116	104	89	77	76	65	65	62	64	72	57	46	57	53	57	57
Wiltshire	12	19	35	47	32	46	37	46	50	54	64	61	24	73	50	51	37	81	76	92	83
Isle of Wight	43	75	55	53	63	37	64	81	76	42	59	66	42	44	48	53	56	41	44	43	33
Berkshire	21	31	66	51	32	56	82	61	67	74	92	72	71	58	71	65	63	62	65	76	68
Buckinghamshire	31	67	63	67	64	31	39	47	47	33	61	33	40	39	42	27	27	28	40	31	27
Northamptonshire	46	74	84	79	67	38	35	66	58	42	67	68	60	63	63	54	64	62	54	68	69
Oxfordshire	16	44	56	58	60	58	75	121	85	42	84	86	69	52	75	72	64	55	61	59	81
Avon	112	192	145	141	164	138	110	129	157	110	154	129	91	122	135	118	108	95	78	95	98
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	15	40	15	16	14	25	30	38	74	41	62	45	15	32	25	42	31	35	44	43	48
Devon	55	106	75	75	68	76	90	85	101	81	90	87	78	90	89	115	105	97	100	90	132
Gloucestershire	1	48	33	62	101	79	77	68	62	63	64	99	100	138	94	108	104	114	104	87	76
Somerset	2	75	111	86	103	82	79	69	88	62	80	63	40	70	76	78	52	17	12	9	39
Hereford and Worcester	4	25	59	61	46	41	59	62	54	52	52	39	32	44	45	51	40	103	78	29	44
Shropshire	11	43	35	44	33	25	23	20	28	11	25	35	32	28	18	25	24	22	16	21	26
Staffordshire	4	69	61	45	31	46	36	34	37	34	18	22	23	25	19	20	24	20	21	42	18
Warwickshire	5	17	12	11	20	18	24	31	23	17	20	14	23	19	21	21	13	23	16	32	19
Birmingham	0	0	0	0	2	0	4	0	0	11	11	9	6	5	13	0	6	3	0	10	5	0
Coventry	0	8	47	17	62	45	45	32	75	28	50	40	37	0	28	22	15	0	11	12	16
Dudley	0	0	3	3	3	0	11	7	2	0	4	3	3	4	3	2	4	2	3	4	0
Sandwell	0	0	0	0	2	1	4	2	1	2	0	2	3	0	0	0	1	4	4	0	1
Solihull	0	2	4	3	4	3	3	2	2	3	5	2	3	22	0	3	6	2	3	2	11
Walsall	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	2	1	0	1	1	1	3	0	1	0	1	0	1	2
Wolverhampton	0	0	5	2	6	0	1	2	0	0	1	1	0	4	0	2	20	0	3	4	2
Cheshire	3	9	11	7	14	14	7	8	4	7	4	8	6	4	6	4	3	5	6	9	6
Liverpool	5	8	10	13	17	26	36	36	97	8	12	6	12	15	13	8	11	6	5	3	5
St. Helens and Knowsley	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0
Sefton	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Wirral	0	4	2	2	4	2	2	4	3	2	4	2	0	3	3	4	3	1	2	2	6
Lancashire	10	40	34	22	40	34	25	38	42	38	40	49	40	51	32	35	34	53	27	34	34
Bolton	3	11	18	1	9	0	0	0	3	2	1	4	4	3	2	3	2	1	2	1	3
Bury	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	2	0
Manchester	3	4	4	1	3	3	3	4	2	4	2	1	2	7	4	2	2	0	4	4	3
Oldham	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0

FHSA	Week ending: 3 July	10 July	17 July	24 July	31 July	7 Aug	14 Aug	21 Aug	28 Aug	4 Sept	11 Sept	18 Sept	25 Sept	2 Oct	9 Oct	16 Oct	23 Oct	30 Oct	6 Nov	13 Nov	20 Nov
Rochdale	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0
Salford	15	10	20	5	2	16	2	15	10	3	7	15	20	27	8	0	0	3	0	20	15
Stockport	0	0	6	11	5	3	1	4	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	4	0	2	1
Tameside	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Trafford	0	n/k	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	1	2	3	2	0
Wigan	0	0	2	0	3	1	1	1	2	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	3	3	0	1	0
Total, England	1,351	3,166	3,364	2,939	3,331	2,891	2,939	2,945	3,093	2,527	3,861	2,906	2,883	2,792	2,646	2,826	2,552	2,831	2,716	2,488	2,682

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many FHSAs have referred patients, who have been unable to obtain treatment from a general dental practitioner, to *(a)* the community dental service, *(b)* the hospital dental service and *(c)* a salaried dentist, in each week since July.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 30 November 1992]:* The information is not held in the form requested. The number of family health services authorities that have referred patients who have been unable to obtain treatment from a general dental practitioner to the community dental service, hospital dental service or a salaried dentist is contained in the table.

Week ending	Number of FHSAs
3 July	20
10 July	23
17 July	19
24 July	18
31 July	22
7 August	26
14 August	21
21 August	24
28 August	25
4 September	23
11 September	26
18 September	23
25 September	24
2 October	22
9 October	24
16 October	23
23 October	24
30 October	26
6 November	28
13 November	28
20 November	27

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many FHSAs have been unable to provide emergency dental services in each week since 8 July.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 30 November 1992]:* The information is contained in the table. General dental practitioners have an obligation under their terms of service to provide emergency cover to their registered patients. They may also offer emergency treatment to non-registered patients. Family health services authorities make arrangements for those patients who are not registered.

Week ending	Number of FHSAs
3 July	13
10 July	8
17 July	8
24 July	7
31 July	8
7 August	8
14 August	7
21 August	7
28 August	8
4 September	8
11 September	8
18 September	9
25 September	8
2 October	8
9 October	8
16 October	8
23 October	8
30 October	8
6 November	8
13 November	7
20 November	7

Total number of FHSAs = 90

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients have reported to each FHSA that they have been unable to arrange NHS dental treatment in each week since 8 July; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 30 November 1992]:* Information showing the number of patients for whom family health services authorities were unable to arrange treatment is contained in the table.

Number of patients for whom FHSAS were unable to arrange NHS Dental Treatment

FHSA	Week ending: 3 July	10 July	17 July	24 July	31 July	7 Aug	14 Aug	21 Aug	28 Aug	4 Sept	11 Sept	18 Sept	25 Sept	2 Oct	9 Oct	16 Oct	23 Oct	30 Oct	6 Nov	13 Nov	20 Nov
North Yorkshire	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cambridgeshire	130	n/k	n/k	n/k	n/k	n/k	n/k	n/k	12	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Norfolk	0	0	0	0	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	13	27	54	67	97	117
Essex	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Redbridge & Waltham Forest	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
East Sussex	0	0	n/k	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	n/k	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kent	0	0	0	n/k	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/k	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Gloucester and Bexley	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Bromley	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0
Surrey	n/k	2	0	0	1	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Hampshire	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Wiltshire	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Isle of Wight	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cornwall & Isles of Scilly	0	21	13	14	9	14	13	16	n/k	13	n/k	n/k	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Gloucestershire	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	3	5	7
Somerset	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Hereford and Worcester	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/k	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Shropshire	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

FHSA	Week ending 3 July	10 July	17 July	24 July	31 July	7 Aug	14 Aug	21 Aug	28 Aug	4 Sept	11 Sept	18 Sept	25 Sept	2 Oct	9 Oct	16 Oct	23 Oct	30 Oct	6 Nov	13 Nov	20 Nov
Stockport	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total England	115	36	15	15	14	17	16	23	20	14	3	0	0	2	1	16	27	56	72	100	124

Note: the other 71 FHSAs were able to arrange NHS dental treatment for all people requesting assistance.

Personal Social Services Authorities

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish a table showing for each personal social services authority (i) the 1993-94 standard spending assessment for PSS on which the Government are consulting, (ii) the percentage difference between the proposed standard spending assessment and *(a)* the 1992-93 standard spending assessment and *(b)* the 1992-93 budget estimate, and (iii) the year on year change in each authority's total budget permitted by the Government's provisional capping criteria for 1993-94.

Mr. Yeo *[holding answer 30 November 1992]:* The 1993-94 standard spending assessment for PSS and the percentage differences between that proposed standard spending assessment and the 1992-93 standard spending assessment and the 1992-93 budget estimate are shown in the table. The year-on-year change in each authority's total budget permitted by the Government's provisional capping criteria for 1993-94 will shortly be made available in the Library by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

The Government announced on 26 November 1992 that the spending for local authority personal social services in 1993-94 would be £5,585 million, an increase of 15 per cent. over the figure for 1992-93 of £4,850 million. This includes £5,020 million for existing responsibilities —a rise of 3·5 per cent.—and £565 million for the community care special transitional grant. The grant based on the total announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health on 2 October and totalling £538·6 million is shown in the table and has been added to the 1993-94 SSA for the purpose of comparison with 1992-93 budgets. This grant will be increased further once the distribution of additional funding to take account of change to the independent living fund has been decided.

A circular was issued to all local authorities LASSL(9212 which gave indicative figures for the community care special transitional grant. Since the circular was issued it has been discovered that there was a technical error in the calculation. The figures included in this answer are now correct. A new circular will be issued later this week.

The 1993-94 PSS standard spending assessments are based on the latest population estimates derived from the 1991 census. For some authorities the previous population estimates based on the 1981 census were too high and as a consequence the new population estimates lead to a decrease in the 1993-94 PSS standard spending assessments. We believe that it is correct and fair to all authorities to use the most up-to-date information available to calculate the standard spending assessments.

The final column in the table illustrates the wide variation in local decisions on spending. The standard spending assessments are not hypothecated for individual services and it is for local authorities to decide on their own level of expenditure on individual service areas, taking account of local priorities as well as legislative and other pressures when setting budgets.

Local authority	*PSS SSA 1993-94 £ million*	*Increase in SSA for 1993-94 Per cent.*	*STG Community Care £ million*	*Difference PSS SSA and STG and Budget 1992-93 Per cent.*
Metropolitan				
Bolton	26·908	3·0	2·834	8·4
Bury	14·843	3·2	2·467	11·5
Manchester	79·424	3·5	5·985	32·1
Oldham	23·659	1·7	2·298	4·9
Rochdale	22·836	4·9	2·632	7·5
Salford	31·464	3·8	3·197	15·2
Stockport	24·733	3·6	2·952	1·2
Tameside	20·971	2·2	2·457	1·3
Trafford	20·378	3·1	2·575	19·0
Wigan	24·962	2·5	2·732	6·8
Knowsley	23·495	5·3	1·692	56·8
Liverpool	75·838	0·3	6·787	10·4
St. Helens	16·455	3·4	1·686	−17·9
Sefton	27·990	8·1	6·224	23·9
Wirral	36·254	4·5	5·299	19·9
Barnsley	19·563	3·4	2·673	19·0
Doncaster	25·948	1·2	2·846	18·8
Rotherham	22·491	3·1	2·424	−1·1
Sheffield	39·745	3·5	6·052	0·0
Gateshead	22·207	2·0	2·476	0·8
Newcastle	34·237	−1·2	3·208	−0·6
North Tyneside	19·969	−0·8	2·337	−9·1
South Tyneside	17·802	−1·6	1·678	11·3
Sunderland	29·378	3·2	3·220	5·5
Birmingham	138·342	5·4	11·103	8·6
Coventry	33·372	1·7	3·170	−3·2
Dudley	23·724	5·7	3·383	11·8

Local authority	PSS SSA 1993-94 £ million	Increase in SSA for 1993-94 Per cent.	STG Community Care £ million	Difference PSS SSA and STG and Budget 1992-93 Per cent.
Sandwell	35·213	2·2	2·953	−0·3
Solihull	15·966	2·3	1·368	−4·4
Walsall	23·786	2·5	2·194	13·1
Wolverhampton	30·915	1·7	2·633	3·3
Bradford	54·860	4·5	6·540	12·3
Calderdale	20·410	1·0	2·553	2·8
Kirklees	38·853	5·3	4·308	19·6
Leeds	76·073	−0·2	7·598	−0·5
Wakefield	26·305	0·5	2·811	−0·5
Inner London				
City of London	0·608	11·1	0·038	−80·6
Camden	43·868	−0·3	2·392	2·1
Greenwich	35·151	1·5	1·969	−17·7
Hackney	60·848	2·7	2·039	9·0
Hammersmith	40·022	−3·8	1·692	9·2
Islington	45·658	−2·3	2·018	−2·5
Kensington	32·246	−0·3	1·805	3·1
Lambeth	75·461	−0·5	2·853	−1·1
Lewisham	46·963	−1·0	3·027	5·2
Southwark	54·321	−3·6	2·402	1·8
Tower Hamlets	46·354	3·8	1·772	22·6
Wandsworth	57·149	−2·6	3·718	0·3
Westminster	42·722	−7·3	2·371	−22·1
Outer London				
Barking	19·561	−2·3	1·369	3·5
Barnet	32·554	3·0	3·395	−1·7
Bexley	18·294	2·9	1·880	−2·5
Brent	46·945	3·0	2·077	7·7
Bromley	27·438	1·3	3·019	18·5
Croydon	37·899	3·6	3·664	1·8
Ealing	41·116	0·7	2·900	12·4
Enfield	28·588	−0·5	2·427	−3·4
Haringey	44·029	−1·0	2·372	26·9
Harrow	18·030	4·0	1·526	−9·0
Havering	19·138	3·4	1·830	−15·7
Hillingdon	21·346	−1·0	1·645	−18·8
Hounslow	25·418	1·1	1·434	−19·9
Kingston	13·438	−3·6	1·427	−14·9
Merton	20·273	0·0	1·577	2·9
Newham	43·490	4·2	1·882	1·0
Redbridge	24·290	1·6	2·184	7·4
Richmond	17·910	−3·5	1·545	10·9
Sutton	17·006	3·4	1·969	3·3
Waltham Forest	36·082	1·6	2·392	−4·9
Shires				
Isles of Scilly	0·153	−2·5	0·016	17·6
Avon	84·323	3·5	11·820	3·6
Bedfordshire	44·406	6·6	3·750	8·0
Berkshire	59·050	6·0	5·744	−4·8
Buckinghamshire	45·918	6·5	3·978	−4·8
Cambridgeshire	50·166	4·3	5·126	3·2
Cheshire	74·873	6·5	9·713	8·9
Cleveland	56·874	2·9	5·727	8·3
Cornwall	38·913	7·8	6·504	30·5
Cumbria	41·430	4·3	4·969	14·6
Derbyshire	76·731	5·2	10·509	−2·1
Devon	90·327	6·6	17·424	36·6
Dorset	59·550	3·7	9·953	54·1
Durham	54·012	1·4	7·125	33·6
East Sussex	81·370	11·0	14·114	42·3
Essex	128·180	6·1	14·070	15·3
Gloucestershire	43·663	3·7	6·299	29·3
Hampshire	131·524	10·0	15·778	48·6
Hereford and Worcestershire	51·276	8·7	7·387	15·7
Hertfordshire	79·054	2·3	7·831	5·3
Humberside	80·447	4·8	10·548	7·2
Isle of Wight	11·979	6·0	2·285	33·4
Kent	136·146	7·5	19·937	20·9
Lancashire	126·452	5·1	20·070	5·9
Leicestershire	77·204	2·4	8·451	15·2

Local authority	PSS SSA 1993-94 £ million	Increase in SSA for 1993-94 Per cent.	STG Community Care £ million	Difference PSS SSA and STG and Budget 1992-93 Per cent.
Lincolnshire	47·929	6·4	8·418	40·1
Norfolk	62·809	5·4	9·157	32·5
Northamptonshire	47·848	5·7	5·856	12·1
Northumberland	24·686	6·6	3·199	3·6
North Yorkshire	55·556	5·1	10·172	35·0
Nottinghamshire	96·060	2·3	[illegible]·870	8·5
Oxfordshire	45·496	3·5	[illegible]555	4·9
Shropshire	31·725	6·5	[illegible]062	17·0
Somerset	35·790	0·8	5·607	21·2
Staffordshire	79·106	5·7	10·127	13·2
Suffolk	52·808	7·0	[illegible]·293	23·4
Surrey	82·229	4·9	10·427	32·0
Warwickshire	37·674	7·2	4·700	18·6
West Sussex	62·901	7·1	10·142	45·9
Wiltshire	41·976	4·6	5·242	12·6

DEFENCE

Civil Servants

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many civil servants are currently employed by his Department *(a)* in London, *(b)* in Scotland and *(c)* elsewhere in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Aitken: At 1 October 1992, the Ministry of Defence employed 134,907 full and part-time civil servants in the United Kingdom, broken down as follows:

	Number
London	17,846
Scotland	11,907
Elsewhere in the United Kingdom	105,154

Cnewr Estate

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for South Shields on 27 November, *Official Report*, columns *892-93*, when he intends to publish the notice of proposed development under Department of the Environment circular 18/84 concerning his Ministry's plans for the Cnewr estate; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Discussions with the trustees of the Cnewr estate regarding future arrangements for Army adventurous training are at an early stage. It is not possible to say when a notice of proposed development might be published.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 27 November, *Official Report*, columns *892-93*, if he will give the cost of his Ministry's agreement with the Cnewr estate in the Brecon Beacons national park in pounds per hectare per year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No formal agreement between MOD and the Cnewr estate exists at present. Payment in respect of any such agreement would be considered commercial in confidence.

Ship Charters

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list for each of the last five years, including the current year, the amount spent on chartering merchant ships and the number of charterings; if he will indicate for each year the number of charters with British registered ships; and if he will make a statement on his policy for chartering Merchant Navy ships.

Mr. Aitken: Wherever possible, commercial vessels chartered by the Ministry of Defence are obtained from the open market and on the basis of cost, availability and suitability. As many shipowners as possible, both British and foreign, are made aware of the Department's requirements. Value for money takes a high priority in the evaluation of bids. Information on the number of vessels chartered and the cost is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Cnewr Estate

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 27 November, *Official Report*, columns *892-93*, when his Ministry learnt that the National Park Authority had been pursuing an access agreement on the Cnewr estate in the Brecon Beacons.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My Department first became aware of discussions between the trustees of the Cnewr estate and the National Park Authority in May this year.

Waste Disposal

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 26 October, *Official Report*, column *508*, where his Department's waste disposal sites are to be located; what consultations his Department has had with local authorities about these sites; what progress has been made in constructing a purpose-built ammunition disposal facility; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Land-based disposal of redundant munitions, explosive waste and residues is currently carried out by the MOD at the central ammunition depots at Kineton and Longtown. Other sites include the Otterburn, Sennybridge and Salisbury Plain

training areas. Disposals are also carried out at established MOD sites that have been in use for many years and operate within specified explosives limits which take account of strict safety and environmental considerations and regulations. There are no plans to open new MOD demolition sites. Warwickshire county council and Stratford upon Avon district council are, however, being consulted on plans to construct a purpose-built tri-service disposal facility at the central ammunition depot at Kineton. The MOD is also considering extending private sector involvement in the disposal of redundant munitions, but no decisions have been taken.

Dumping at Sea

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all the substances which his Department currently disposes of by dumping at sea giving the quantities for 1991 in each case; how each substance will be disposed of as from January 1993; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Ministry of Defence has no future plans to dispose of redundant munitions by sea dumping. In the past, preparation for munitions for sea dumping included the removal of components containing toxic heavy metals where this was practicable. Bulk stocks of explosives, propellants, detonators and certain specialised munitions types were prohibited from disposal at sea. In 1991 the Ministry of Defence disposed of 1,093 tonnes of redundant munitions by sea dumping. This material comprised inert packaging, metal casing, conventional explosives (nitros/nitrates) and propellants (double-base/composite/cellulosic) but it would involve disproportionate cost to identify the particular substances involved. In the future, such material will be disposed of on land at suitable MOD sites which already handle ammunition disposal and under contract by industry. The Ministry of Defence plans, also, to construct a purpose built ammunition disposal facility.

Yugoslavia

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many financial and administrative staff are currently deployed in the former Yugoslavia; if he will outline their roles; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Within British forces there are 27 personnel, both service and civilian, employed on financial or administrative duties. Their role is to support the deployment in the areas of public information, postal and courier service, contracts, financial monitoring and accounts, and ensure that soldiers' circumstances are properly recorded and any pay and allowance matters promptly dealt with.

Forces' Clothing

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much was spent on clothing for each of the armed forces for each of the last five years, indicating how much was spent on exports in each case; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: Expenditure on clothing by the armed forces in each of the last five years is as shown. The figures for each service include the cost of clothing bought on behalf of the others. None of the clothing was purchased for onward sale by export.

	Navy £ million	*Army* £ million	*RAF* £ million
1987-88	14·280	62·138	18·677
1988-89	13·996	56·794	23·947
1989-90	14·298	56·966	21·805
1990-91	17·013	75·165	20·443

Field Army

Dr. Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many *(a)* tanks, *(b)* armoured combat vehicles, *(c)* armoured combat vehicle lookalikes and *(d)* artillery pieces are currently deployed in the field Army.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The quantities of equipment, as defined under the terms of the conventional forces in Europe—CFE—treaty, currently deployed in the field Army are:

	Number
Tanks	472
Armoured Combat Vehicles	1,865
Armoured Combat Vehicle Lookalikes	970
Artillery Pieces	281

Expenditure

Dr. Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give the defence expenditure figures for each year from 1974-75 to 1986-87 in *(a)* cash prices and *(b)* real terms using the method of calculation used in table 2A.5 of the "Autumn Statement" 1992.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Defence expenditure figures in outturn and constant prices, and adjusted to include the technical changes outlined in paragraphs 2B-7 to 2B-12 of the "Autumn Statement", are not available for the period 1974-75 to 1977-78 and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. Adjusted outturn figures for 1978-79 to 1986-87 will be published in the "Statistical Supplement to the Autumn Statement" early in 1993.

RNAC Coulport

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what compensation has been paid to, or agreed with Tarmac Ltd. over delays in work at the Royal Navy armaments depot at Coulport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: No settlement has been reached with Tarmac Ltd. Details of negotiations with the company and of sums paid on account in respect of work completed are commercially confidential.

Iraqi and Iranian Nationals

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if there are *(a)* any Iraqi or *(b)* Iranian nationals currently training in British military establishments.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No.

Underwater Test Centre

Mr. Charles Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his letter to the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye concerning the future of the British underwater test and evaluation centre range at Kyle of Lochalsh, Ross-shire, if he will clarify what role he envisages for the base facilities and its functions beyond the five-year period indicated; whether a management staff tender for those functions being tested in the market will have preparatory professional advice and support available to it from within his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: I have written to the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye to advise him that a recent study has recommended that the operation at the British underwater test and evaluation centre (BUTEC), at the Kyle of Lochalsh, will be market-tested in accordance with stated policy to examine ways of improving efficiency and value for money throughout the Government. Many of the activities of the range are already managed by industry, and the new initiative will mainly affect the afloat services (boats and crews) currently provided by the chief executive (Marine Services) of the Ministry of Defence. In-house bids will be encouraged and, within the constraints of Government policy, professional advice and support will be made available to the chief executive (Marine Services) for him to construct an in-house bid. The future of the base beyond the five-year period addressed by the market-testing exercise will have to be determined nearer the time, and will depend on the defence requirement as then identified. However, we expect that the need to test and evaluate torpedoes and other underwater systems will continue for the foreseeable future.

HMS Drake

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the cost of maintaining and staffing the decompression chamber at HMS Drake for 24 hours.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: When in use, the cost of maintaining and staffing the decompression chamber at HMS Drake for 24 hours is about £600.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 8 December 1992

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Market Testing

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is his estimate of the number of civil service jobs likely to be lost as a consequence of market testing.

Mr. Waldegrave: Market testing is not about abolishing jobs but about testing whether services performed in-house or by the private sector offer better value for money.

Until the outcome of individual market testing exercises is known, it is not possible to say whether the question of job losses will arise.

Where, in the past, contracting out has offered best value for money, in most cases staff have been taken on by the contractor, or they have been redeployed by their Department or absorbed through natural wastage.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Civil Servants

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many civil servants are currently employed by his Department *(a)* in London and *(b)* elsewhere.

Mr. Brooke: The total number of permanent staff in the Department of National Heritage is 862. This figure includes 352 in the Historic Royal Palaces Agency—HRPA. All are based in London.

The total number of casual staff in the Department is 73. This figure includes 69 in the HRPA. All are based in London.

National Lottery

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what assessment he has made of the impact of a national lottery on employment in the pools industry.

Mr. Brooke: Employment levels in the pools industry are dependent on many factors and are a matter for the pools companies. Estimates of the effects of the national lottery on the level of pools turnover are subject to a series of hypotheses.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what assessment he has made of the impact of the proposed national lottery on employment in Scotland.

Mr. Brooke: It is too early to say precisely what jobs will be created by the introduction of the national lottery and where they will be located.

Longford Hall

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage, pursuant to his answer of 16 November, *Official Report*, column *43*, what actions were taken by his Department or its predecessors following receipt of letters dated 7 December 1991, 20 May 1992 and 17 August 1992 regarding disrepair of Longford hall, from the hon. Member for Stretford; what consideration was given to an inspection by English Heritage; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: I refer to the answers I gave on 16 November 1992, *Official Report*, column *43*. Longford hall is in the first instance the responsibility of its owners, Trafford metropolitan borough council: I understand that consideration is still being given to possible new uses for the building.

St. Anne's Hotel, Buxton

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what action he is taking to ensure that the necessary structural repairs are carried out to the former St. Anne's hotel, the Crescent, Buxton.

Mr. Key: My right hon. Friend has today authorised the service on the owners, Capitalrise Ltd, of a notice under section 48 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 specifying the works which he considers reasonably necessary for the proper preservation of the building and notifying them that, if these are not carried out within three months, he may begin proceedings for the compulsory purchase of the building under section 47.

Royal Palaces

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list the publicly owned works of art in royal palaces which have not been on public exhibition.

Mr. Brooke *[holding answer 7 December 1992]:* A list of works of art in the royal collection held in trust for the nation which have not been on public exhibition is not available. However, a large proportion of works of art from the royal collection are on permanent public display at Hampton Court palace, Kensington palace, the state apartments at Windsor castle, Osborne house, the palace of Holyroodhouse, Kew palace, the banqueting hall and the national gallery. Other paintings are on periodic display at the Queen's gallery in Buckingham palace and the Queen's private residence at Balmoral and Sandringham. In addition, about 500 paintings have been loaned to exhibitions in the United Kingdom and abroad over the last five years.

Theatres Restoration Fund

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what are the guidelines for the theatres restoration fund and for application eligibility; and what conditions are imposed as to the age of the building on behalf of which an application is to be made.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 4 December]:* The purpose, scope and eligibility criteria of the theatres restoration fund are set out in "Notes for Applicants", copies of which

I am sending to my hon. Friend and placing in the Library of the House. In essence, the criteria are that only purpose-built theatres are eligible; that they must be constituted as charitable trusts; and that they should be of architectural merit and/or that the work produced in the theatre is of artistic significance. There are no specific conditions relating to the age of a building.

Windsor Castle

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what delay experienced by the county fire brigade in reaching the fire at Windsor castle was due to the presence of soldiers carrying out band and other ceremonial duties.

Mr. Brooke *[holding answer 3 December 1992]:* I understand that the Royal Berkshire fire and rescue service encountered no such delay.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Dangerous Dogs

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what advice is given to police forces regarding identification of dog types in relation to prosecutions under the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The Home Office issued guidance to the police about the identification of specially controlled dogs shortly before the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 came into force in August 1991. Chief officers of police were also sent posters giving further indication of typical size and range of colouring of pit bull terriers.

In a Home Office circular containing further advice on the 1991 Act, issued this year, the attention of the police was drawn to a list, provided by the Staffordshire Bull Terrier Breed Council, of clubs which are willing to offer advice where there is any doubt about whether a particular dog is a Staffordshire bull terrier. This is the type with which the pit bull terrier is most commonly confused.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received regarding problems arising from the operation of the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991.

Mr. Charles Wardle: We regularly receive representations from hon. Members, animal welfare bodies and other organisations and individuals about the 1991 Act. There is also regular contact with the enforcement authorities on various aspects of the operation of the Act. We shall continue to listen carefully to those who wish to offer constructive comments.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the estimate of the cost of keeping dogs in kennels during the course of appeals in relation to prosecutions under the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Information relating to the total cost of keeping dogs in kennels pending the outcome of appeals under the 1991 Act is not collected centrally. Kennelling costs may vary around the country. However I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that the cost of kennelling one dog for one day in the London area is about £8.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the cost to date of prosecutions under the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991; how much has been paid to the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals; and what other organisations have received payment.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Information on the costs to the police, local authorities, the Crown prosecution service and the courts of prosecutions under the 1991 Act is not available centrally.

The Home Office has not made any payments to the RSPCA or the SSPCA. At the time the exemption scheme was coming into effect, payments were made to the Index of Exempted Dogs, which administers the exemption scheme established under the Act, in respect of reminder letters issued by the index to the owners of specially controlled dogs who had registered with the police but who had not at that time completed the exemption process. The index also received revenue from fees collected in respect of applications made for certificates of exemption.

Betting

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consultation is taking place or is planned with betting shop employees about proposals to introduce evening off-course betting.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We issued a consultation document in October 1991 inviting the views of all interested parties, including betting office employees, on whether licensed betting offices should be open in the evening and, if so, at what times. We are giving careful consideration to views received in response to that document, including those from betting office employees, and will announce our conclusions as soon as possible.

Drugs

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what part of Wales has the highest per capita conviction rate for drug offences in Wales;

(2) what percentage of convictions in Wales *(a)* involving under-18s and *(b)* in total, are for drug-related offences.

Mr. Jack: Information for 1991, which is provisional, is given in the tables.

Table A

Number of persons per 100,000 population convicted of indictable drug offences in Welsh police forces areas 1991[1]

Police force area	*rate*
Dyfed-Powys	43
Gwent	25
North Wales	44
South Wales	77
Wales	56
England and Wales	53

[1] Provisional.

Table B
Persons convicted of indictable drug offences as a percentage of all indictable offences by age 1991[1]—Wales

All ages		Aged 10 to under 18 years	
Total indictable offences	Indictable drug offences	Total indictable offences	Indictable drug offences
100	6·1	100	2·1

[1] Provisional.

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the percentage increase in the amount of cocaine seized in the United Kingdom over the last 10 years.

Mr. Jack: The information requested is contained in table 1.1 of the Home Office statistical bulletin "Statistics of Drugs Seizures and Offenders dealt with, United Kingdom, 1991", a copy of which is in the Library. The table shows that in 1981, 21 kg of cocaine was seized; in 1991 the corresponding amount was 1,078 kg, representing a proportional increase of 5,133 per cent.

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much crack cocaine was seized in the United Kingdom in 1991-92.

Mr. Jack: There were 583 recorded seizures of the type of cocaine known as "crack" in the United Kingdom during 1991. These weighed 1.9 kg. Data for 1992 are not yet available.

Immigration

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the maximum number of individuals who at any one time will be detained under Immigration Act powers at Her Majesty's prison Kidlington; and when the proposed use of Her Majesty's prison Kidlington for the detention of individuals under Immigration Act powers will commence.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The use of the vacant Prison Service establishment at Campsfield house, Kidlington is one of the options being considered for additional accommodation for Immigration Act detainees. No final decision has yet been taken as to when or whether Campsfield house will be brought into use for this purpose.

Civil Servants

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many civil servants from his Department have been relocated from London to other parts of the United Kingdom *(a)* in the last five years and *(b)* in the last 10 years; and to where they were relocated.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The numbers of Home Office posts relocated during the periods specified are as follows:

	Number
(a) in the last five years	
to Birmingham	80
Derby	5
Glasgow	200
Liverpool	275
Nottingham	120
Total	680
(b) in the last 10 years the total above, plus to Bootle	300
Grand total	980

Figures on the proportion of these posts filled by relocating civil servants, as opposed to local recruitment, cannot be provided without incurring disproportionate cost.

Terrorism

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to grant the police further powers to help them deal with the threat of terrorism.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: It is essential that the police have the necessary powers to deal with terrorism and it is for this reason that the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 remains in force. This and other measures are kept under review.

Young Offenders

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* 16-year-olds, *(b)* 15-year-olds and *(c)* 14-year-olds have been held in an adult prison for more than 24 hours after being convicted of (i) a section 53 offence under the Children and Young Persons Act 1933 any (ii) and other offence in each of the last five years.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested is not recorded centrally. The readily available data are given in the table.

Juveniles initially received under sentence into adult prisons and remand centres in England and Wales: by age, type of sentence and type of initial reception establishment, 1989-91

Type of initial reception establishment, type of sentence and age	Number of persons 1989	1990	1991
Remand centre:			
S.53, C&YP Act 1933:			
14	7	5	5
15	41	30	26
16	75	78	55
Detention in a Young Offender Institution:			
14	1	11	13
15	28	30	67
16	77	81	152
Adult prison:			
S.53, C&YP Act 1933:			
14	—	—	—
15	—	—	—
16	6	1	—
Detention in a Young Offender Institution:			
14	1	2	—
15	24	17	12
16	113	85	50

Underground Emergency Facilities

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) further to his answer of 27 November, *Official Report*, columns *849-50*, how Her Majesty's Government will be able to dispose of the underground facilities for which he has no plans to permit use for purposes not related to wartime or other emergencies;

(2) further to his answer of 27 November, *Official Report*, columns *849-50*, if he will give fresh consideration to the uses to which the underground facilities might be put; and if he will provide a list of uses which Her Majesty's Government are willing to *(a)* permit or *(b)* encourage in the event of the facilities being disposed of.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We do not propose to use or to develop these sites for alternative purposes. The normal rules for disposal will be followed including, where necessary, first offering sites back to the current or previous owner. Other sites will be placed for sale on the open market. The use to which they are put after disposal will be a matter for whoever acquires them.

Prison Education Service

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will set out his future plans for the prison education service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Prison Service has invited competitive tenders for the provision of education to inmates in prisons and young offender institutions in England and Wales, for which it is responsible, with effect from 1 April 1993. The present arrangements have to be changed because local education authorities, who currently provide education in prisons, lose most of their responsibilities for further education from that date. They will no longer be primarily responsible for a range of courses, including those leading to vocational training, GCSE and A-level courses, basic literacy courses in English, basic mathematics, English as a second language, and courses to teach independent living and communication skills. These make up the core of most education programmes in prisons.

The Government have made clear in the White Paper "Custody, Care and Justice", Cm. 1647, that education is an essential part of the opportunities which must be provided in a prison. Through more detailed specification of prisoners' requirements, establishment by establishment, by competition between the public and private sector and by rigorous monitoring, the Prison Service should be better able to ensure the future education provision offers value for money and is of a consistently high quality.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the application of the acquired rights directive on his plans to privatise the prison education service.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Government are not privatising the provision of education services to prison establishments in England and Wales. The purpose of competitive tendering is to stimulate new and better ways of carrying out existing tasks by inviting tenders from both the public and the private sector. The contracts will be placed with those who offer the best combination of quality and price.

On the application of the EEC acquired rights directive 77/187, I would refer the hon. Member to the reply which I gave to his question on 1 December, at column *98*, and to the reply that my hon. Friend, the Minister of State, Department of Employment, gave to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Edmonton (Dr. Twinn) on 19 November, at columns *338-39*. I am also placing in the Library of the House copies of guidance which, following legal advice, the Prison Service has sent to those tendering for the provision of educational services in prisons and of guidance which the Department for Education has issued on the application of the directive to staff transferring from the employment of a local education authority to a further education corporation under the provisions of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992.

Animal Experiments

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many scientific procedures on living animals have been undertaken without anaesthesia since 1986.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information is published in table 21 of the "Statistics of Scientific Procedures on Living Animals 1991", a copy of which is in the Library. Information for 1986 relates to animal experiments under the Cruelty to Animals Act 1876.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many scientific procedures were carried out on living animals in the first half of 1992 and for the first half of each year since 1986.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Information on the number of scientific procedures is collected only for whole years and is published in table 23 of the Command Paper "Statistics of Scientific Procedures on Living Animals, Great Britain 1991", Cm 2023, a copy of which is in the Library.

Information for 1986 relates to animal experiments under the Cruelty to Animals Act 1876, which was replaced on 1 January 1987 by the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986. The 1986 Act not only encompasses work covered by the 1876 Act, but extends to some work not previously controlled.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many scientific procedures on living animals in the United Kingdom have bred animals with harmful genetic defects or transgenic animals since 1986.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information requested is contained in table 15 of the Command Paper "Statistics of Scientific Procedures on Living Animals, Great Britain" for each year since 1987, and table 6 or 7 of the HMSO publication "Statistics of Scientific Procedures on Living Animals, Northern Ireland", copies of which are in the Library.

Information with respect to transgenic animals is not available before 1990. Also, from 1990 inclusive the method of counting the production of animals with harmful genetic defects changed, so it is not possible to make a direct comparison of data from before and after that date.

Information for the year 1986 is not available since the procedures described were not regulated by the Cruelty to Animals Act 1876, which was then in force.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to revise the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: A number of revisions to the 1986 Act will be made during 1993.

The Government announced on 3 December, at column *336*, in response to a question by my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler), that we have accepted the majority view of the Animal Procedures Committee that the common octopus or *Octopus vulgaris* should be brought within the controls of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986.

As reported in the annual report of the Animal Procedures Committee for 1991, schedule 1 to the Act, which sets out those methods of humane killing which do not require project or personal licence authority, is currently being revised.

We shall also be adding quail—coturnix coturnix—to schedule 2 to the Act, which lists those animals for use in scientific procedures which may be obtained only from designated breeding or supplying establishments. This is in order to ensure that the United Kingdom complies fully with the requirements of EC directive 86/609.

Motor Cycle Noise

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many prosecutions have taken place in each year since 1983 for breaches of noise limits by motor cycles;

(2) how many prosecutions have taken place of suppliers of open exhaust systems for motor cycles in each year since 1983.

Mr. Jack: The information requested is not available centrally.

New Prison

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will publish a list of all of the sites which have been considered for the site of a new prison in the north-west region of England since 1984.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information is not readily available in the form requested, but, where there would be no breach of commercial confidentiality in doing so, I will write to the hon. Member with details of Merseyside sites considered prior to the purchase of land at Fazakerley.

Asylum and Immigration Appeals Bill

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received concerning clause 9 of the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Bill on the right of visitors, short-term and prospective students and their dependants.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Between 22 October and 7 December the Home Office has received representations about clause 9 of the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Bill from approximately 25 organisations and individuals.

Terrorist Attacks

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will take urgent steps to facilitate the setting up of a fund to insure victims of terrorist attacks; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The criminal injuries compensation scheme provides compensation for personal injuries suffered by the innocent victims of violent crime. So far as commercial property is concerned, my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade is considering representations from the insurance industry and other interested parties.

Racial Violence

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce legislation whereby racial violence would be a specific criminal offence, along the lines recommended by the Commission for Racial Equality.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The recommendations in the Commission for Racial Equality's second review of the Race Relations Act have wide-ranging implications for a number of Government Departments. A response to the idea of a new offence of racial violence will be made as part of the Government's response to the CRE review as a whole.

Young Offenders (Self-harm)

Mr. Heppell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many acts of deliberate self-harm by young offenders were recorded in each year since 1986; and how many young offenders died as a result in each of those years.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 26 November 1992]:* Information about the incidence of deliberate self-harm prior to 1991 is not available. The numbers of prisoners aged under 21 who deliberately harmed themselves in 1991 was 1,156. Figures for 1992 are not yet available.

The number of prisoners under the age of 21 who died as the result of an act of deliberate self-harm in each year since 1986 is shown in the table.

Deaths by prisoners aged under 21 years resulting from an act of deliberate self-harm 1986-1992 (to 19 November)

Year	*Deaths*
1986	5
1987	7
1988	9
1989	11
1990	9
1991	5
1992	7

Directive 89/816/EURATOM

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on what steps have been taken by his Department to implement the European Community directive 89/816/EURATOM.

Mr. McLoughlin: I have been asked to reply.

Regulations which implement European Community directive 89/618/EURATOM were laid before the House on 8 December 1992. These regulations entitled "Public Information for Radiation Emergencies Regulations 1993" are expected to come into force on 1 January 1993.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Morbidity and Mortality Levels

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information the Overseas Development Administration collects on the levels of morbidity and mortality in countries to which Her Majesty's Government send aid moneys or provide support technology and assistance.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Overseas Development Administration uses data produced and analysed by developing country Governments, the UN and its agencies, other international organisations and academic bodies. The ODA itself does not collect morbidity and mortality data but has provided technical and financial assistance to both countries and UN agencies to support the collection and dissemination of such data.

Tanzania

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 9 November, *Official Report*, columns *553-54*, when the Tanga Port rehabilitation project in Tanzania began; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Six contractors have been prequalified for the civil works at Tanga Port. Tender documents are now being finalised. A contract for the rehabilitation of four quayside cranes will be negotiated with the original manufacturer. It is planned that project implementation will start in the earlier part of 1993.

Gabon

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been received from Friends of the Earth over the World bank-funded forestry and environment project for Gabon; and what reply has been sent.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: A representative of Friends of the Earth raised concerns about the forestry and environment project in Gabon with senior officials of the ODA in September. Through a subsequent exchange of correspondence, Friends of the Earth has been advised that World bank staff have been asked to respond to the issues raised in a memorandum prepared by some non-governmental organisations.

Malawi

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made by Friends of the Earth to the United Kingdom's executive director at the World bank on the subject of the recently approved Malawi Power loan V; and what reply has been sent.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We are not aware of any representations made by Friends of the Earth in connection with the Malawi Powr V project which was approved by the World bank's executive board in June 1992.

Bosnia

Mr. Brandreth: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on the visit to Bosnia by the permanent secretary of the Overseas Development Administration.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Copies of the visit report by Mr. Tim Lankester, Permanent Secretary of the ODA, have been placed in the Libraries of the House.

World Bank

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to publish, on a monthly basis, details of those structural adjustment loans which are being considered by the World bank and which are listed in the World bank's operational review.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I have made arrangements for a copy of the World bank's operational summary of proposed projects to be made available in the Libraries of the House. This document contains information on all loans, including those related to structural adjustment, which are being considered by the bank.

EDUCATION

Post-16 Education

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what percentage of children in the United Kingdom remain in full-time education beyond the age of 16 years; and if he will tabulate the United Kingdom figures alongside those for other Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries.

Mr. Forsyth: The available information is given in the table.

Participation rates in full-time education and training[1] of 16 and 16 to 18 year olds, 1988[2]

Country	Percentages	
	16 year olds	*16-18 year olds*
Australia[3]	76	52
Belgium[3]	92	82
Canada[3]	100	77
Denmark	90	79
France	82	73
Germany (Federal Republic)[4]	71	49
Italy[3]	65	55
Japan[3]	93	84
Netherlands[4]	93	77
Spain[3]	68	58
Sweden	84	73
United Kingdom[3]		
1988	50	35
1989	53	36
USA[3]	95	75

[1] Includes apprenticeships, YTS and similar schemes.
[2] 1987 for Belgium and Italy (provisional), 1989 for USA.
[3] Includes higher education for some 18 year olds.
[4] Includes an estimate for those students studying subsidised courses at non-governmental business colleges.
[5] Excludes certain part-time students, 16 per cent. at 16-18.
[6] Includes compulsory part-time education for 16 and 17 year olds in Germany and Netherlands.
[7] Includes private sector higher education and an estimate for special training and rehabilitation schools providing vocational

training.

[2] Includes estimates for 18 year olds in universities.

[3] Includes estimates for those studying only in the evening and for private sector further and higher education, including training courses with employers.

Sources: Education Statistics for the United Kingdom 1992, Table BB (1992 edition draft).

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will indicate the comparable levels of literacy and numeracy for 16 to 18-year-olds in the United Kingdom and other OECD countries.

Mr. Forman: Information on levels of literacy and numeracy among 16 to 18-year-olds in the United Kingdom is not available centrally. However, the adult literacy and basic skills unit estimates that 5·5 million adults in England and Wales have some difficulty with reading, writing, spelling and basic mathematics. It does not, however, have a basis for making comparisons with other countries.

Expenditure

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what percentage of gross domestic product was spent on education in the current fiscal year for *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* other Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries.

Mr. Forman: The readily available information is as follows:

Total Public Expenditure[1] on education as a Percentage of Gross National Product (Calender Year)

	1988
United Kingdom	[2]4·6
Australia	[3]5·0
Austria	5·7
Belgium	[4]4·9
Canada	7·1
Denmark	7·8
Finland	7·4
France	5·3
Germany (Federal Republic)	4·2
Greece	[3]2·7
Iceland	5·4
Ireland	[3]7·0
Italy	[4]4·8
Japan	[4]4·3
Luxembourg	4·6
New Zealand	n/a
Netherlands	6·8
Norway	7·4
Portugal	4·8
Spain	4·3
Sweden	6·7
Switzerland	4·9
Turkey	n/a
United States of America	[5]5·3

Sources: UNESCO Statistical Yearbook 1991.
Education Statistics for the United Kingdom 1991.

[1] Public subsidies to the private sector are included.
[2] Excludes expenditure on students at DH establishments on nursing and paramedical courses.
[3] 1987 data.
[4] Ministry of Education only.
[5] Estimated. Includes some private funds, but excludes fees.
n/a = not available.

School Transport

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what provision is being made for transport for children attending grant-maintained schools.

Mr. Forth: Local education authorities have a statutory duty to provide free transport for pupils who attend grant-maintained schools for whom they consider it necessary, and the power to assist other pupils. Information on LEAs' schools transport arrangements is not collected centrally, but they must treat GM pupils no less favourably as regards transport than pupils who attend schools maintained by an LEA.

School Catering

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what independent assessment has been made of the standards of school catering since the introduction of local authority competitive tendering.

Mr. Forth: We are aware of no study on the effects of compulsory competitive tendering on the standards of school catering. CCT should represent an opportunity for improving the quality of school meals as it places greater emphasis on specifying the standards which services are expected to meet. This was recognised in the report "Nutritional Guidelines for Schools" published by the Caroline Walker Trust on 24 November.

Popular Schools

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what provision is being made to meet an increase in demand for places at schools which have demonstrated the best results in recently published league tables.

Mr. Forth: In distributing capital resources we already give a high priority to providing new places where demand is rising, though in doing so we also take account of any surplus places in the area.

In addition, the powers my right hon. Friend proposes in the Education Bill will also facilitate imaginative rationalisation schemes, which will create further opportunity recognising the needs of popular schools.

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what selection criteria will be set for the selection of pupils at more popular schools.

Mr. Forth: Admission arrangements in maintained schools are the responsibility of the governing body or local education authority, depending on the nature of the school. Admission arrangements for grant-maintained schools must be approved by the Secretary of State. The criteria established for deciding between pupils if the school is oversubscribed must be clear, reasonable and objective; and consistent with the established character of the school.

The Department plans to consult shortly on updated guidance to schools and LEAs on admission arrangements.

Higher Education

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the rate for the numbers of higher education in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* other Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries.

Mr. Forman: The readily available figures are shown in the table.

New entrants[1] to higher education, 1988

Country	Participation rate[2] (percentage)
United Kingdom[3]	37
United Kingdom[3] 1989	41
Australia[4]	57
Belgium[5]	49
Canada[5,6]	59
Denmark	48
France	44
Germany (Federal Republic)	32
Italy[5]	27
Japan[7] (a)	37
(b)	52
Netherlands[5,9]	36
Spain[5]	35
Sweden[9]	47
United States of America[10] (a)	65
(b)	33

Sources: Education Statistics for the United Kingdom, Table CC (1992 edition draft).

[1]Includes full-time and part-time students entering higher education for the first time i.e. excluding postgraduate students and others already having a qualification in higher education. Not all other countries may adhere to this general definition.

[2]To aid comparison and overcome the problem of the varying lengths of courses in different countries the participation rate is the percentage of all new entrants (defined above) to a derived relevant single year group. The latter is calculated by taking the total populations for the ages providing at least 70 per cent. of the new entrants and dividing by the number of ages involved. For the United Kingdom this is the population of ages 18 to 21 divided by 4. OECD recommend this procedure.

[3]Excludes the private sector and students from abroad. Includes nursing and paramedical students at Health Department establishments.

[4]Excludes Technical and Further Education (TAFE).

[5]1986 data for Canada, 1987 for Belgium, Netherlands, Italy and Spain.

[6]Provisional.

[7]The (b) rate shown includes data for advanced special training schools (SENSHU's) which may be equivalent to sub-degree higher education.

[8]Full-time only and excludes Open University.

[9]Excluding one-year courses, which may be below level 5.

[10]The (b) rate excludes students on two-year courses, some of which may not be equivalent to sub-degree higher education.

Examination Results, Liverpool

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has received from schools in Liverpool about the recent publication of exam results.

Mr. Forth: None.

Further Education

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will set out by local education authority *(a)* the actual spending on further education and sixth-form colleges for the financial year 1991-92, *(b)* the planned spending on further education and sixth-form colleges for the financial year 1992-93, *(c)* the standard spending assessment—SSA—for further education and sixth-form colleges for the financial year 1992-93 and *(d)* the amount deducted from the standard spending assessment for further education and sixth-form colleges for the financial year 1993-94.

Mr. Forman: Information about *(a)* is not yet available. In respect of *(b)*, the Government have calculated for each local education authority a further education adjustment for the purposes of proposing a relevant notional amount. These proposed adjustments are set out in the table. So far as *(c)* is concerned, authorities' SSAs for 1992-93 do not identify an element for further education and sixth-form colleges. As for *(d)*, there has been no deduction from 1993-94 SSAs for further education and sixth-form colleges. The 1993-94 education standard spending total from which the education component of SSAs is derived covers only those functions for which LEAs will be responsible from 1 April 1993.

4 December 1992 *Page 1*

The further education adjustment used in calculation of provisional relevant notional amounts

Local authority	Provisional further education adjustment (£ million)
Greater London	
City of London	4·151
Camden	11·056
Greenwich	9·355
Hackney	13·172
Hammersmith and Fulham	8·250
Islington	9·668
Kensington and Chelsea	9·167
Lambeth	16·146
Lewisham	14·894
Southwark	11·976
Tower Hamlets	12·197
Wandsworth	19·490
Westminster	10·385
Barking and Dagenham	6·404
Barnet	13·040
Bexley	6·330
Brent	22·839
Bromley	7·841
Croydon	18·535
Ealing	11·495
Enfield	13·341
Haringey	11·439
Harrow	13·652
Havering	10·139
Hillingdon	7·916
Hounslow	5·320
Kingston upon Thames	5·420
Merton	8·924
Newham	21·298
Redbridge	6·304
Richmond upon Thames	8·383
Sutton	4·485
Waltham Forest	12·858
Greater Manchester	
Bolton	11·266
Bury	11·460
Manchester	26·563
Oldham	15·585
Rochdale	10·408
Salford	10·872
Stockport	16·799
Tameside	3·767
Trafford	9·432
Wigan	20·491
Merseyside	
Knowsley	4·669
Liverpool	19·450
Sefton	10·284
St. Helens	12·362
Wirral	12·989
South Yorkshire	
Barnsley	9·738
Doncaster	11·712

Local authority	Provisional further education adjustment (£ million)
Rotherham	12·146
Sheffield	23·306
Tyne and Wear	
Gateshead	6·067
Newcastle upon Tyne	6·854
North Tyneside	7·273
South Tyneside	8·894
Sunderland	14·436
West Midlands	
Birmingham	57·798
Coventry	14·501
Dudley	14·905
Sandwell	16·748
Solihull	9·482
Walsall	10·092
Wolverhampton	14·094
West Yorkshire	
Bradford	20·815
Calderdale	10·460
Kirklees	21·005
Leeds	31·971
Wakefield	18·657
Shire counties	
Avon	33·404
Bedfordshire	20·719
Berkshire	29·402
Buckinghamshire	23·327
Cambridgeshire	32·716
Cheshire	52·790
Cleveland	37·034
Cornwall	21·790
Cumbria	17·671
Derbyshire	41·562
Devon	41·651
Dorset	22·698
Durham	24·633
East Sussex	33·034
Essex	63·777
Gloucestershire	24·388
Hampshire	97·094
Hereford and Worcester	33·482
Hertfordshire	40·943
Humberside	41·290
Isle of Wight	5·003
Kent	54·536
Lancashire	78·502
Leicestershire	37·585
Lincolnshire	27·457
Norfolk	27·622
Northamptonshire	24·714
Northumberland	7·929
North Yorkshire	31·097
Nottinghamshire	50·874
Oxfordshire	22·216
Shropshire	25·451
Somerset	25·847
Staffordshire	51·848
Suffolk	24·655
Surrey	52·294
Warwickshire	25·815
West Sussex	31·117
Wiltshire	23·432
Isles of Scilly	0·274

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what spending per student in further education colleges was in 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93, in cash terms and in a real-terms index with 1979-80 as the base year.

Mr. Forman: Expenditure per student in further education colleges for financial years 1979-80, 1989-90 and 1990-91, the latest year available, are shown in the table.

Financial years	1979-80	1989-90	1990-91
Expenditure per student (fte)			
Cash terms (£)	1,540	2,780	2,920
Real terms index[1]	100	90	88

[1] The real terms index has been calculated using the current Gross Domestic Product Deflators.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what part of the provision to be made available to the Further Education Funding Council is directly related to student numbers in both cash terms and as a percentage in 1993-94, 1994-95 and 1995-96; and on what assumptions this figure is calculated.

Mr. Forman: In order to encourage efficiency in the achievement of increased student numbers, part of the provision to be made available to the Further Education Funding Council will be directly related to actual student numbers and will be paid from a non cash-limited vote. This element of funding will be introduced in the academic year 1993-94 and will be limited initially to full-time students. The total amount to be made available in this element will be the product of the actual number of full-time students and a rate per student of £750 a year. The rate per student and the scope of funding in later years will be subject to review.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what part of the proposed expenditure total for further education in 1993-94 is assumed to be spending per student in both cash terms and in a real terms index with 1979-80 as the base year; and what are the figures for 1994-95 and 1995-96.

Mr. Forman: The total funding made available to the Further Education Funding Council—FEFC—in 1993-94, 1994-95 and 1995-96 for recurrent expenditure is planned to be £2,550 million, £2,734 million and £2,944 million respectively. The FEFC has announced that from the 1993-94 total it intends to make available to colleges £2,507 million. On the basis of the Government's projection of 970,000 full-time equivalent students for whom provision will be made by the FEFC in 1993-94, the level of support per student would be some £2,600

Figures for 1979-80 are not available on a comparable basis.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Education pursuant to his answer of 16 November, *Official Report*, column *42*, what assumptions and information about the current level of fundings by local education authorities of courses for which the Further Education Funding Council will be responsible from 1993 were made on deciding the level of funds to be made available to the Further Education Funding Council in 1993-94.

Mr. Forman: In reaching a notional apportionment of local education authorities' spending on education in 1992-93, the Government assumed that their recurrent spending in that year on activities which from 1993-94 would be the responsibility of the Further Education Funding Council would appropriately be £2,341 million. This assumption took account of the latest available

expenditure data and student, pupil, lecturer and teacher numbers. It also took account of the findings of a special survey of LEA spending on further education.

Health Education

Ms. Coffey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will reconsider his decision to withdraw the 60 per cent. funding for health education co-ordinators from local education authorities from March 1993; and if he will provide information about the numbers of school children who smoke.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend's decision, which is now final, to discontinue the grant for education support and training programme for preventive health education at the end of the current financial year, was relayed to local education authorities through the Department's circular 10/92 which issued on 13 August.

A Health Education Authority/MORI survey undertaken in 1989 of nine to 15-year-olds in England, suggested that about 200,000 young people had become regular smokers by the age of 15.

Rudolf Steiner Schools

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what consideration he has given to *(a)* the resolution of the European Parliament on freedom of education, dated 14 March 1984, *(b)* the right to education in Article 1 (b) of the declaration of fundamental rights and freedoms of 12 April 1989, and *(c)* article 63 of the concluding document of the Vienna meeting of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, dated 15 January 1989, in drawing up his policy on the funding of Rudolf Steiner education in Rudolf Steiner schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forman: My right hon. Friend is aware of the various provisions referred to, but he does not consider that they require the Government to fund any particular form of independent education, including Steiner schools.

Unemployed Students

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what specific financial incentives have been given to the Further Education Funding Council to increase participation by unemployed students in education courses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forman: The Government's expenditure plans for further education will allow for a 25 per cent. increase in student numbers, and hence a significant increase in participation, over the period 1993-94 to 1995-96. The funding for the Further Education Funding Council will allow colleges to continue the arrangements for fee remission for students such as those who are unemployed, which are currently operated by local education authorities. The council will shortly be issuing a consultative document on options for a funding method for 1994-95 onwards which will address funding issues related to widening access and meeting the needs of different client groups.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

European Union

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what criteria were used in deciding which aspects of the treaty on European union to omit from the summary pamphlet "Britain in Europe".

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The pamphlet "Britain in Europe" provides a straightforward but accurate picture of the European Community and the Maastricht treaty.

Mohammed Afzal

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 6 November, *Official Report*, column *428*, what reports the high commission in Islamabad has received from the Pakistan authorities concerning the progress of the investigation into the murder of Mohammed Afzal in Jaurah village, Pakistan, on 4 October.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The British high commission in Islamabad have not yet received a report from the Pakistan authorities. They are in close touch with the Pakistan police, and I will write to the hon. Member as soon as we have a report.

Iraq

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement outlining the links which have been established to date between his Department and the Iraqi Kurdish National Assembly; and if he has any plans to place a diplomatic representative in Iraqi Kurdistan.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: A delegation from the Iraqi Kurdish National Assembly is at present visiting London. They will meet my right hon. and noble Friend the Minister for Overseas Development and officials.

We have no plans to place a diplomatic representative in northern Iraq.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to maintain the air umbrella over northern Iraq.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The air umbrella over northern Iraq plays an important role in preserving the safety and well-being of the people of northern Iraq. The decision on its renewal rests with the Turkish National Assembly. We have been in close touch with the Turkish Government about this. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister discussed this issue with the Turkish Prime Minister during his visit to London last month.

Sudan

Mr. O'Hara: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Sudan Government about persecutions of non-Muslims in that country.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have made clear to the Sudanese Government our abhorrence of the systematic abuses of human rights throughout Sudan, and the importance we

attach to respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of religion. We co-sponsored the United Nations General Assembly resolution on the human rights situation in Sudan, adopted on 4 December.

Macedonia

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to date during the United Kingdom Presidency of the European Community to the Government of Greece concerning the official recognition of Macedonia.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Mr. Robin O'Neill, as personal representative of the Foreign Secretary, has regularly visited Athens and Skopje. He has held talks in both capitals in an effort to find a formula which will permit recognition for Macedonia in accordance with the Lisbon declaration.

Albania

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will inform the Albanian Government that British aid is conditional on the ending of public executions in that country.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: In deciding aid policy for individual countries, we take into account a number of factors relating to good Government, including human rights. Where improvements are needed we make our views clear to the country concerned. Our aim is to influence the government in whatever ways are most appropriate. The suspension of United Kingdom and EC aid, designed to relieve extreme hardship, would not necessarily be an effective way of improving human rights in Albania.

Western Sahara

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy on the current developments in western Sahara following the visit of President Abdelaziz of Sadr.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Mr. Mohamed Abdelaziz called on a senior official at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on 27 November. We took this opportunity to reiterate our support for the United Nations settlement plan and the efforts of the United Nations Secretary-General and his special representative to overcome the problems which have delayed the holding of a referendum.

Angola

Mr. Loyden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations Her Majesty's Government have made to the United Nations on the post-election situation in Angola; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 3 December 1992]*: We have been actively involved in United Nations Security Council discussions on the situation in Angola. On 30 November, the council adopted Security Council resolution 793 which extended until 31 January 1993 the role of the United Nations Angolan verification mission, and called on the parties in Angola to observe the ceasefire and create all the conditions necessary for the completion of the peace process.

International Atomic Energy Agency

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the implications for his Department of the procedure used by Argentina and Brazil in negotiating and signing agreements with the International Atomic Energy Agency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: I have been asked to reply.

We welcome the safeguards agreement between the IAEA, Argentina, Brazil and the Brazilian—Argentine agency for accounting and control of nuclear materials. It has no particular implications for my Department.

Japan

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 3 November, *Official Report*, column *171*, on Japan, what discussions he has had with his Japanese counterparts relating to *(a)* the funding of the International Atomic Energy Agency and *(b)* the reduction of International Atomic Energy Agency inspections in Japan; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: I have been asked to reply.

I have not discussed the funding of the International Atomic Energy Agency with the Japanese. The second subject is a matter for the IAEA and the Japanese Government.

Zangger Committee

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 3 November, *Official Report*, column *170*, on the Zangger committee, what recent work has been produced by the Zangger committee; when it is next due to meet; whether it has discussed the establishment of a reporting system on the export and import of nuclear material and relevant equipment and certain non-nuclear material; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: I have been asked to reply.

Discussions in the Zangger committee are confidential to the parties involved. The next meeting is scheduled to take place in May 1993.

In an effort to strengthen the international safeguards system, the United Kingdom, along with European Community partners, has recently notified the International Atomic Energy Agency that EC member states intend to provide information on transfers of ore concentrates imported or exported from the European Community and information on the items listed in annex B to IAEA INFCIRC/254/Revl/Part 1, when a licence for whose export to a country outside the European Community has been approved. These new arrangements are expected to commence in the new year.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Chancellor's Legal Expenses

Mr. John Morris: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps were taken by the Treasury to satisfy themselves as to the propriety of the amount which they paid to Carter-Ruck solicitors; how the proportion to be paid by the Treasury was arrived at; what assessment was made as to whether this was the most economical way of doing the work; and whether a remuneration certificate was requested from the Law Society as to the reasonableness of the charges carried and paid for by the Treasury.

Mr. Nelson: The decision that the Treasury should meet that part of the Chancellor's legal costs which related to the release of a press statement on the evening of 13 April 1991 and to the subsequent handling of extensive press inquiries was taken by the then accounting officer. He was satisfied that the actions taken by the Chancellor and his solicitors were justified in order to retain full confidence in the office of the Chancellor of the Exchequer and its holder and to forestall or correct misleading and inaccurate press stories which would have been damaging to the Chancellor's reputation and would therefore have had a bearing on his performance of his public duties. The Treasury did not meet any of the costs incurred in evicting the Chancellor's tenant.

Given the extensive interest generated by the press story and the high volume of inquiries which followed, the bill presented by Peter Carter-Ruck and Partners did not appear to the accounting officer to be either disproportionate or unjustified. No approach was made to the Law Society.

VAT

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will make it his policy that the agreement reached at the Council of Finance Ministers on 27 July does not in any way jeopardise the right of the United Kingdom Government to maintain a zero rate of value-added tax on children's clothes and shoes;

(2) if he will make it his policy that the current zero rate of value-added tax on children's shoes and clothes will remain a derogation which is not time-limited;

(3) if he will make it his policy to ensure that the current right to maintain a zero rate of value-added tax on children's clothes and shoes remains in force indefinitely; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope: The United Kingdom's current zero rates, including those on children's clothes and shoes, are protected by the EC sixth VAT directive which can only be amended by the unanimous agreement of all member states. The Government remain committed to the retention of the right to maintain existing zero rates.

Earth Summit

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the contribution the Central Statistical Office is making towards achieving the aim of the Earth summit relating to integration of environmental factors and costs into the national accounts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson: In June this year, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development proposed that member states should establish integrated economic and environmental accounts, in parallel to existing national accounts, at the earliest possible date. The Central Statistical Office published an article examining the theory behind such integration, with illustrative statistics, in the November 1992 issue of "Economic Trends". Developing such integrated accounts will be a difficult task, not least because of the difficulty of putting monetary values on environmental factors.

Housing (Capital Receipts)

Ms. Walley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to allow local authorities to use all their capital receipts for the provision of affordable housing.

Mr. Portillo: No. It is important that local authorities in England and Wales use accumulated receipts to repay debt. They may, however, spend virtually all the capital receipts they acquire between 13 November 1992 and 31 December 1993 on new capital investments. This is in addition to spending financed by any usable receipts local authorities acquired before 13 November. Local authorities in Scotland are free to use capital receipts within the overall arrangements for the control of local authority capital spending in Scotland.

Public Sector Deficit

Mr. Gould: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish figures showing the extent to which the public sector deficit was either overfunded or underfunded over the period since 1975.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 30 November 1992]:* The extent to which the public sector deficit was overfunded or underfunded in each year over the period since 1975 is shown in the table:

In-year over(+)/under(−) funding

Financial year	*£ billion*
1975-76	−4·1
1976-77	−0·1
1977-78	−3·1
1978-79	−0·1
1979-80	−1·1
1980-81	−1·3
1981-82	+3·6
1982-83	+1·8
1983-84	+4·3
1984-85	+4·7
1985-86	−0·3
1986-87	−0·4
1987-88	0·0
1988-89	+2·7
1989-90	−0·7
1990-91	+0·3
1991-92	+0·3

Notes:

1. From 1988-89, the funding sector consists of the overseas sector and the domestic private sector excluding banks and building societies. In earlier years, the building societies were also included in the funding sector.
2. Figures take account of purchases of Treasury Bills by funding sector up to and including 1988-89. In subsequent years, Treasury Bills no longer count as funding.
3. No data is available for the funding sector's holding of tax

instruments prior to 1976-77. However, the holdings were probably not material.

4. National Savings Bank Investment Account became part of National Savings on 31 December 1980, and moved from private sector to public sector.
5. The Trustee Savings Bank became part of the non-funding sector as from 31 December 1981, when the "banking sector" became the "monetary sector".
6. Public Sector Borrowing Rate was redefined in March 1984 to treat public sector bank deposits as a financing item rather than as one of the determinants of the PSBR, but the effect is minimal.

PRIME MINISTER

Cold Weather Credits

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Prime Minister when he will be replying to the letter of 21 October from the Campaign for Cold Weather Credits.

The Prime Minister: A reply was sent on my behalf by the Department of Social Security on 2 December 1992.

World Summit for Children

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Prime Minister whether he will make a statement on the progress made towards the goals established at the World summit for children in 1990.

The Prime Minister: The Government published a "Report on United Kingdom Implementation of the Goals agreed by the World Summit for Children" as a Command Paper on 24 June 1992.

ENVIRONMENT

Tenants Charter

Mr. Deva: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to make the council tenants charter available to ethnic minorities.

Mr. Baldry: The council tenants charter has been available in five ethnic languages since 24 November. They are Bengali, Greek, Hindi, Urdu and Vietnamese. Copies of the new translations are being sent to all local authorities in England, community groups, advice organisations and individual tenants who used the reply slip on the English language introductory leaflet to obtain an ethnic language version. For those who understand only spoken English, the council tenants charter is also available on audio-cassette.

Waste Management

Mr. Bellingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he will take to safeguard the future of the Waste Management Industry Training and Advisory Board in the event that regulations detailing the introduction of certificates of technical competence in respect of waste management are not laid before 15 December.

Mr. Maclean: The Waste Management Industry Training and Advisory Board is an independent body whose future the Government do not control. My Department's involvement with the board is that of a client. The board was commissioned by the Department to prepare a system of certificates of technical competence for the waste industry. That work is largely complete and the Government have proposed to prescribe those certificates as evidence of technical competence for the purposes of the Environmental Protection Act 1990. Final regulations will be laid before Parliament as soon as possible, with a view to bringing the system into force on 1 April 1993. The board has represented to Government the importance of early issue of the final regulations if the technical competence system is to be introduced on that date. My officials keep in close contact with the board about the timetable for implementation. Transitional arrangements will be included in the regulations to ensure the orderly introduction of the assessment of technical competence.

Mr. Bellingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will publish the draft waste management guidance note No. 26A on the surrender of licences for landfill sites; and what assessment he has made of the effect of the time taken to publish this draft guidance on the target date for implementing the new licensing scheme.

Mr. Maclean: Draft guidance on the surrender of site licences will be published as soon as possible. The target date for the implementation of waste management licensing remains 1 April 1993.

Housing Associations (Empty Properties)

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many properties owned by housing associations were empty at the latest convenient date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: The latest available statistics, for 31 March 1992, show that there were 16,200 empty housing association owned properties in England.

Housing associations in England have been seeking to maximise the occupation of their stock, and have reduced the proportion of empty properties from 4·2 per cent. in 1989 to 2·5 per cent. in 1992.

Flue Gas Desulphurisation

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate he has made of the effect on the United Kingdom's commitment to meet the targets of the 1988 large combustion plant directive of the refusal by PowerGen to retrofit flue gas desulphurisation—FGD—technology to 4,000 MW of capacity; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: Planning consent has been granted for PowerGen to retrofit 2,000 MW of capacity at Ratcliffe and work is well underway. PowerGen's application for consent to retrofit another 2,000 MW of capacity, at Ferrybridge, is still being considered by my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade.

The United Kingdom intends to meet the reductions required by the large combustion plants directive by a range of measures, including the retrofitting of FGD, the use of alternative fuels and the construction of new, cleaner plant. My right hon. and learned Friend has the power to direct Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution to require the fitting of FGD in a particular case if he considers it appropriate.

Rough Sleeping

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the schemes and initiatives that have received or are currently receiving Government funding under the rough sleeping initiative.

Mr. Baldry: I have today placed in the Library a list of all the voluntary organisations and housing associations funded under the Government's rough sleepers initiative in central London, showing the schemes they have provided or are currently providing.

Household Heating

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the number of households with solid fuel heating where the residents are too infirm to heat their homes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: Figures for the number of households with residents too infirm to heat their homes are not available. However, the 1986 English house condition survey estimated that solid fuel was the main heating fuel for 730,000 pensioner households, of which nearly a third were headed by residents aged 75 years and over.

Ozone Depletion

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will issue specific guidance for waste holders and waste regulation authorities relating to the status of ozone-depleting substances as controlled waste under section 33 (1)(c) of the Environmental Protection Act 1990; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: Yes. Guidance on the circumstances in which ozone-depleting substances may become controlled wastes for the purposes of part II of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, will be included in the circular to be issued by my Department before the whole of section 33 is brought into force, which is intended to be on 1 April 1993.

Thorne and Hatfield Moors

Mr. Kevin Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the timetable for English Nature to take possession of the freehold of Thorne and Hatfield moors site of special scientific interest.

Mr. Maclean: English Nature has been managing the vegetated areas since February this year, with assistance from Fisons. The transfer of ownership will be completed as soon as possible.

Mr. Kevin Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what effect he expects the sale of Fisons horticultural division to have on the negotiation of an agreement between the company and English Nature on the purchase of Thorne and Hatfield moors.

Mr. Maclean: None.

Mr. Kevin Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment English Nature has made of the extent to which damage to Thorne and Hatfield moors site of special scientific interest as a result of peat extraction has been reduced during negotiations for the purchase of the site.

Mr. Maclean: I am advised by English Nature that the vegetated areas previously planned for peat extraction are still intact and will remain so. Water levels on the moors have been successfully raised and the prime area of the site is now in better condition than before the negotiations.

Derelict Land Grant

Mr. Dover: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much derelict land grant has been made available for each local authority area in the last two financial years; and what level is expected to be paid for the current financial year.

Mr. Robin Squire: The table shows derelict land grant expenditure—grants and supplementary credits—incurred by local authorities over the last two years and the forecast for the current year.

Derelict land grant expenditure 1990-91 to 1992-93

Local Authority	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*1992-93*
Allerdale	1,571,074	312,648	0
Alnwick	0	350	0
Amber Valley	71,415	0	235,000
Ashfield	54,773	65,944	24,000
Barking	74,166	0	0
Barnsley	1,685,189	877,713	1,646,964
Barrow in Furness	0	3,000,000	2,000,000
Bath	0	139,755	530,000
Bedfordshire	0	29,583	0
Birmingham	281,537	893,446	1,224,000
Blackburn	370,811	374,415	200,000
Blackpool	23,992	0	18,000
Blyth Valley	0	36,100	100,000
Bolsover	68,967	33,549	80,000
Bolton	493,239	221,066	660,000
Boothferry	773,560	838,673	140,000
Bradford	780,617	494,522	396,000
Braintree	7,753	0	0
Breckland DC	0	3,156	0
Bristol	84,161	138,741	0
Broadland	45,837	0	0
Burnley	47,573	81,182	200,000
Bury	156,165	697,395	660,000
Calderdale	51,104	2,970,946	2,000,000
Camden	15,000	15,000	0
Cannock Chase	280,030	152,138	511,000
Caradon	0	0	100,000
Carlisle	0	216,043	900,000
Carrick	670,113	0	250,000
Cheshire	744,142	101,794	500,000
Cheshire CC	1,070,145	1,434,597	1,500,000
Chester	0	0	60,000
Chesterfield	2,497	864,493	122,000
Chichester	43,315	941	0
Chorley	160,956	228,034	200,000
Cleethorpes	10,900	949	0
Cleveland CC	35,401	15,463	120,000
Congleton	231,624	47,564	100,000
Copeland	0	163,190	900,000
Corby	1,374,391	1,914,953	1,927,000
Cornwall CC	25,289	288,851	400,000
Coventry	0	0	25,000
Darlington	668,018	370,164	780,000
Daventry	0	0	50,000
Derby	0	180,000	25,000
Derbyshire CC	2,958,839	2,672,151	2,997,000
Derbyshire Dales	0	16,737	260,000
Derwentside	475,920	15,000	155,000
Devon CC	57,387	94,053	0
Doncaster	1,371,837	702,420	2,150,783
Dudley	3,997,461	4,887,623	2,780,000
Durham CC	980,666	553,286	1,500,000
Durham City	2,035	10,145	10,000
Easington	125,113	149,290	325,000
Eden	0	0	130,000

Local Authority	1990-91	1991-92	[1] 1992-93
Ellesmere Port and Neston	2,185,766	1,503,996	1,650,000
Enfield	6,358	38,843	0
Erewash	308,066	555,234	1,000,000
Forest of Dean	3,204	142,417	0
Gateshead	1,303,606	1,558,246	1,700,000
Gedling	0	124,982	27,000
Glanford	2,494,436	3,612,119	3,000,000
Gloucester	3,684	3,684	0
Gravesham	0	1,800	0
Greenwich	182,044	81,884	0
Grimsby	99	37,200	106,383
Halton	1,312,617	914,466	1,275,000
Hartlepool	256,776	11,575	500,000
Havering	17,640	0	0
Herts CC	0	15,000	0
Holderness	115,612	0	0
Hyndburn	174,072	115,890	200,000
Ipswich	0	11,812	0
Isle of Wight	49,704	0	0
Kent CC	11,747	120,728	0
Kerrier	93,286	1,728,293	1,420,000
Kettering	0	6,875	0
Kingston-upon-Hull	38,856	139,811	62,386
Kingswood	1,286	0	0
Kirklees	957,389	1,054,334	980,000
Knowsley	378,728	634,424	650,000
Lancashire CC	740,240	528,947	300,000
Lancaster	203,071	421,906	500,000
Langbaurgh	251,102	27,809	250,000
Leicester CC	697,283	367,717	873,000
Lichfield	215,464	1,000	103,000
Lincoln City	1,425,107	694,932	334,000
Liverpool	1,746,514	3,047,190	1,450,000
Luton	0	77,257	0
Macclesfield	101,358	74,661	150,000
Manchester	0	372,930	1,200,000
Mansfield	249,176	823,915	1,168,000
Merton	0	20,521	0
Mid Suffolk	0	593	0
Middlesbrough	50,284	296,874	550,000
North Tyneside	773,567	508,513	750,000
North West Leicester	899,602	5,618	5,000
Newark and Sherwood	0	0	77,000
Newcastle upon Tyne	104,818	338,561	450,000
Newcastle-Under-Lyme	1,239,612	691,486	1,614,000
North Yorkshire	0	0	10,000
Northumberland CC	1,429,134	800,706	1,700,000
Norwich	126,408	152,074	0
Nottingham	12,820	176,280	600,000
Nottinghamshire CC	1,631,835	2,638,540	2,631,000
Nuneaton and Bedworth	170,744	50,554	0
North Cornwall	16,596	18,345	20,000
North East Derbyshire	2,727	43,669	204,000
Oldham	724,291	676,265	1,250,000
Oswestry	0	33,250	33,000
Pendle	219,486	0	200,000
Penwith	0	0	60,000
Plymouth	55,823	82,000	100,000
Portland	30,882	0	0
Portsmouth	0	16,814	0
Preston	19,240	436,405	300,000
Reading	0	10,279	0
Reigate and Banstead	3,777	0	0
Restormel	0	31,298	250,000
Ribble Valley	575,532	249,009	200,000
Richmond Upon Thames	8,400	0	0
Richmondshire	0	21,621	40,000
Rochdale	34,444	0	310,000
Rochester	0	39,857	0
Rossendale	149,385	120,095	200,000
Rotherham	3,876,401	4,585,974	5,149,396
South Lakeland	10,350	0	100,000
South Staffordshire	6,074	2,945	1,000
South Tyneside	341,907	297,004	200,000
Salford	563,947	820,103	2,680,000
Sandwell	1,865,409	1,023,621	1,425,000
Scarborough	45,157	0	0
Sedgefield	10,169	124,360	160,000
Sefton	605,741	408,728	1,200,000
Segemoor	10,590	0	0
Selby	21,729	2,581	0
Sheffield	133,873	635,888	599,929
Shrophire CC	1,458,615	615,850	1,257,000
South Cambs	335,229	142,039	0
South Ribble	0	41,876	0
St Helens	416,148	1,368,914	975,000
Staffordshire CC	275,262	1,387,127	601,000
Staffordshire Moorlands	0	6,000	51,000
Stockport	72,448	13,931	500,000
Stockton on Tees	34,885	155,178	500,000
Stoke-on-Trent	256,706	763,752	695,000
Sunderland	1,403,637	1,593,509	1,700,000
Swale	138,405	0	0
South Derbyshire	467,923	297,485	7,000
Tameside	64,487	1,263,999	1,200,000
Tamworth	0	0	6,000
Teesdale	0	6,418	0
Teignbridge	5,154	5,354	800
Test Valley	0	8,760	0
Thamesdown	455,680	33,659	20,000
Thanet	0	12,807	0
Thurrock	0	8,177	0
Torbay	7,695	0	8,000
Tower Hamlets	364,026	1,963,775	0
Trafford	7,200	19,688	150,000
Vale Royal	59,045	134,157	200,000
West Lancashire	0	59,709	200,000
Wakefield	944,341	1,160,250	1,498,000
Walsall	3,738,123	4,222,623	3,838,000
Warrington	313,164	90,022	200,000
Warwickshire	157,345	36,760	29,000
Wealden	0	2,500	0
Wear Valley	39,896	429,818	350,000
Wolverhampton	447,375	1,676,043	1,981,000
Woodspring	1,919	1,000	1,200
Wrekin	336,154	672,755	773,000
West Derbyshire	42,550	0	0
West Devon	0	47,666	0
York	0	0	10,000
TOTAL	69,127,962	84,860,641	89,401,841

[1] Forecast expenditure.

Mr. Dover: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment on what grounds he will allow derelict land grant reclamation contracts to be awarded to contractors on a negotiated basis.

Mr. Robin Squire: Normally reclamation works supported by derelict land grant must be subject to competitive tendering. However, a negotiated contract may be accepted where site constraints make it reasonable to employ a contractor reclaiming adjacent land; or where the future occupant of the site wishes to reclaim the land himself. In either case the Department must be satisfied that the estimated costs represent value for money.

Empty Government Properties

Sir Anthony Durant: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress the Government have made on establishing a task force on empty Government residential properties; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: I am pleased to announce the establishment of the task force on Government Departments' empty houses. Its first meeting will be on Wednesday 9 December. The task force has been established to help bring empty Government residential properties back into use, essentially to be sold, or let on

short-term leases to people in housing need. The role of the task force will be to oversee Departments' achievements of their respective targets for disposals.

Mr. John Baker, chief executive of National Power, has been appointed as its chairman. The task force will also comprise an independent deputy chairman, Mr. Anthony Fletcher, two independent experts, Major-General Patrick Stone and Mr. David Yorke, and representatives from Government Departments with an interest in disposal of empty residential property.

The task force will be overseen by a ministerial steering group under the chairmanship of my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning. The ministerial steering group will monitor progress and give added impetus to the task force's work.

Methyl Bromide

Mr. Loyden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the United States of America's proposal at the Montreal protocol to phase out by 2000 the use of methyl bromide; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 3 December 1992]:* In the recent Montreal protocol negotiations the United States of America proposed that the production and supply of methyl bromide be phased out by the year 2000. Methyl bromide is a wide spectrum biocide used in soil fumigation and in vital quarantine applications. The United Kingdom proposed to its EC partners that its production and consumption should be frozen at 1991 levels by 1995, and cut by 25 per cent. by the year 2000. In the event, only a freeze proved acceptable to all member states. We will continue to press for a reduction in the forthcoming discussions on a new EC regulation.

Earth Summit

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those nations known by Her Majesty's Government to have ratified agreements made at the Earth summit, stating for each which agreements have been ratified; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 4 December 1992]:* The Seychelles, Mauritius and China have ratified both the framework convention on climate change and the convention on biological diversity. The USA, the Marshall Islands, Zimbabwe, the Maldives and Monaco have ratified the climate change convention.

Council House Sales

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the number and value of council house sales by region in each year since 1989 *(a)* at current prices and *(b)* at 1989 prices.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 30 November 1992]:* The information requested is given in the table. The figures exclude dwellings transferred to housing associations and other registered bodies in large-scale voluntary transfers. Such transfers accounted for some 71,000 dwellings valued at about £600 million in the period January 1989 to December 1991.

Number of council house sales and value by region (£000)

DOE Regions	1989			1990			1991 (Provisional)		
	Number of sales	*Undiscounted Value of Sales*	*Value 1989 prices*	*Number of sales*	*Undiscounted Value of Sales*	*Value 1989 Prices*	*Number of Sales*	*Undiscounted Value of Sales*	*Value 1989 Prices*
Northern (excluding Cumbria)	11,298	216,495	216,495	9,913	225,064	209,073	5,581	147,342	127,744
Yorkshire and Humberside	19,217	412,554	412,554	13,425	377,114	350,320	5,879	180,504	156,495
East Midlands	12,758	375,860	375,860	5,467	191,881	178,248	3,186	115,086	99,778
Eastern	12,875	700,572	700,572	7,388	402,114	373,544	5,264	274,210	237,737
London Boroughs	29,525	1,687,263	1,687,263	22,758	1,434,148	1,332,252	12,754	788,502	683,623
South East	20,760	775,947	775,947	7,043	398,161	369,872	5,211	290,333	251,716
South West	11,555	511,789	511,789	5,026	226,213	210,141	3,248	145,850	126,450
West Midlands	19,082	543,366	543,366	12,228	415,888	386,339	6,014	219,991	190,730
North West (including Cumbria)	17,924	391,293	391,293	16,361	400,305	371,863	8,032	227,309	197,075
England	154,994	5,615,139	5,615,139	99,609	4,070,888	3,781,651	55,169	2,389,127	2,071,349

Non-Domestic Rates

Mr. David Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what will be the distributable amount of non-domestic rates for 1993-94 and if he will explain the basis of his calculations.

Mr. Redwood *[pursuant to his reply, 26 November 1992, c. 836]:* My right hon. and learned Friend announced on 12 November that the non-domestic rate multiplier for 1993-94 will rise by 3·5 per cent. from its 1992-93 level to 0·416. The distributable amount of non-domestic rates based on this poundage will be £11,599 million. This includes an Exchequer payment of £922 million into the non-domestic rates pool to compensate local authorities for the shortfall in 1992-93 and 1993-94 which would otherwise occur as a result of the Non-Domestic Rating Act 1992. The basis of the calculation is set out in the table.

Calculation of distributable amount 1993-94

	£ million
1. *Income from Local Lists in 1993-94*	
(a) Total Local List RV × Multiplier (£31,500 million × 0·416)	13,104
(b) Less Transitional decrease	(489)
(c) Less Reliefs on empty and partially empty properties	(1,218)
(d) Less Reliefs to charities	(330)
(e) Less Discretionary Reliefs	(19)
(f) Less Losses on collection	(200)

	£ million
(g) Less Appeals in respect of previous years and other rating adjustments	(541)
Sub Total	**10,302**
2. Income from Central List in 1993-94	
Total Central List RV × Multiplier—and after transition—(£2.714 million × 0·416)	1,126
3. Income from Crown Contributions in Aid in 1993-94	
Net Crown yield (after transition)	455
Net Yield for 1993-94 (Items 1, 2 and 3)	**11,883**
4. Reductions to Contributions	
(a) Offset for City of London	(25)
(b) Allowance for local authorities' collection costs	(66)
Net Contributions for 1993-94 (1, 2 and 3 less 4)	**11,792**
5. Outturn Adjustments for previous years	
(a) Less adjustments for empty property relief in respect of 1992-93 and previous years	(606)
(b) Less other outturn adjustments in respect of 1992-93 and previous years	(549)
Sub total of net contributions for 1993-94 less outturn	**10,637**
6. Exchequer Contributions to compensate for reductions in revenue resulting from the provisions of the Non-Domestic Rating Act 1992 (the 1992 Act)	
(a) Add income foregone in 1992-93 due to revised transitional arrangements	400
(b) Add income foregone in 1993-94	520
(c) Add addition to cost of collection allowance in 1992-93 and 1993-94	2
Sub-total	**922**
Total NNDR Distributable Amount for 1993-94	**11,559**

Notes:

1. Item 1(a): the estimated rateable value total represents the values of non-domestic hereditaments on local rating lists.

2. Item 1(b): the adjustment includes the estimated amount of rates that will not be recouped locally due to the revised transitional arrangements under the provisions of the 1992 Act.

3. Item 1(e): discretionary relief granted to charities, non-profit making organisations and for other reasons.

4. Item 1(g): net adjustments in respect of appeals and other amendments to the rating list affecting liability for previous years' rates settled in 1993-94.

5. Item 2: the rateable value of non-domestic hereditaments on the central rating list after adjustments for appeals.

6. Item 4(a): a preliminary estimate of the reduction in the amount which the City of London will not be required to pay into the non-domestic rating pool on account of the local rate in the City. It is the amount which will be retained by the authority to meet its expenditure.

7. Item 4(b): the allowance for the costs incurred by local authorities in collecting the non-domestic rates from ratepayers.

8. Item 5(a): adjustments based on estimated mandatory reliefs for empty property in 1992-93 and earlier years not taken into account in the calculation of the Distributable Amount for 1992-93.

9. Item 6(a) and (b): the contribution from central government to offset the amount of the Secretary of State's estimate of income foregone arising from the provisions of the Non-Domestic Rating Act 1992.

10. Item 6(c): estimated additional sum for local authorities' costs of collection in 1992-93 and 1993-94 resulting from the provisions of the 1992 Act.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Fraud

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what action is being undertaken to deal with social security fraud in England.

Miss Widdecombe: The Government are determined to crack down on fraud and abuse of the benefits system. All staff are encouraged to be aware of possible fraudulent claims to benefit and of the need to safeguard public funds. Allegations of attempted fraud which appear to be well founded are investigated, and further action, including possible legal proceedings, is taken as considered appropriate.

We are building on the excellent performance of recent years when savings made by fraud investigators in the Benefits Agency throughout Great Britain have risen strongly. In 1990-91 they saved £341 million, last year the figure rose to £427 million, and in 1992-93 the final savings are expected to top £500 million.

In his statement to the House on 12 November, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced that a further £10 million would be invested to help step up the fight. He also announced plans to encourage local authorities to prevent housing benefit and council tax benefit fraud. The combined efforts of the Benefits Agency and the local authorities are expected to save nearly £1 billion in each of the next three financial years.

Order Books

Mr. Willetts: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of social security order books reported lost were subsequently cashed in the latest period for which figures are available.

Miss Widdecombe: The payment of benefits by order book is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to my hon. Friend with such information as is available and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. David Willets, dated 7 December 1992:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking what proportion of social security order books reported lost were subsequently cashed in the latest period for which figures are available.

In the quarter ending 30 June 1992, just over 62,000 Social Security order books were recorded as lost, stolen or destroyed, which represents approximately half of one per cent. of all order books issued. Information on the number of those order books which are subsequently cashed is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the Official Report. Copies are also being placed in the Library.

Disability Living Allowance

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when Mr. Robin Archer of 51 Ranscombe road, Brixham, will know the status of his application for disability living allowance submitted in March; and what is the reason for the time taken in reaching a decision.

Mr. Scott: The administration of disability living allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to my hon. Friend and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Mr. Michael Bichard to Mr. Anthony Steen, dated 7 December 1992:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security concerning the Disability Living Allowance (DLA) claim by your constituent Mr. Robin Archer of 51 Ranscombe Road, Brixham.

I should explain that action on Mr. Archer's claim was completed in August 1992 and notification sent to him. A duplicate notification was sent to him on 1 December 1992.

I offer my apologies to Mr. Archer for the delay in handling his claim. I have written to you separately, and in greater detail, about the case. You will be aware from my letter of 19 October 1992 to all MPs of the problems we have encountered since the successful launch of the new benefits and the positive steps taken to improve the situation.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the Official Report. Copies are also being placed in the Library.

Mortgage Interest Allowance

Mr. Ancram: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he intends to review the transaction charge payable by mortgage lenders as a contribution to the costs incurred by the Benefits Agency in providing direct payment to lenders of the mortgage interest allowance in income support.

Mr. Burt: My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State has today laid amendment regulations which will reduce the transaction charge levied under the mortgage interest direct payment scheme from £2·50 to £1 for each payment. The change takes effect from 1 April 1993. This reduction reflects the reduced costs of running the scheme, particularly the absence of the setting-up costs incurred in 1992-93, the first year of operation.

The scheme will continue to provide protection against repossession to many people in receipt of benefit.

Invalidity Benefit

Mrs. Jane Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what is his estimate of the costs of the research study into invalidity benefit launched in August 1991; who has been appointed to conduct the study; and on what criteria the research is based;

(2) on what date he expects completion of the research study into invalidity benefit which commenced in August 1991; and when he intends to publish the results already received.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Member to my replies to the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) on 19 October at column *171* and the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) on 27 October at column *632*.

Pensions

Ms. Estelle Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will introduce legislation to provide that persons who have opted out of employers' pension schemes should be entitled to receive financial compensation in lieu of pension enhancements offered to fellow employees to have not opted out, as part of a redundancy package.

Mr. McLoughlin: I have been asked to reply.

I have no plans to do so.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Coal Industry

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the coalfields producing coal in 1962; and if he will list for each year since 1962 and the current year to date, for each area, the number of mines, the tonnage of coal produced and the number of miners together with *(a)* the number of mines closed, *(b)* the number of miners who lost their jobs, *(c)* the number made compulsorily redundant and *(d)* the percentage level of unemployment among adult male workers for the relevant employment districts.

Mr. Eggar: British Coal has reorganised its group structure several times since 1962. The tables show the number of operating collieries, the tonnage of saleable output of coal, and the number of men on colliery books for each year since 1962 for British Coal's current operating groups.

There have been no compulsory redundancies since 1962. Information on unemployment rates is available from the NOMIS database in the House of Commons Library. I regret that the other information requested cannot readily be provided.

Number of Operating Collieries

	Scotland	North East	Yorkshire	Nottinghamshire	Midlands and West	Total
1962	117	153	105	49	245	669
1963	97	132	102	48	232	611
1964	87	122	102	47	218	576
1965	77	112	100	45	200	534
1966	67	96	100	43	177	483
1967	58	84	92	33	171	438
1968	47	69	83	30	147	376
1969	37	56	76	26	122	317
1970	32	50	73	26	116	299
1971	32	50	72	27	111	292
1972	32	48	70	27	110	289
1973	29	45	70	27	110	281
1974	24	38	66	27	104	259
1975	22	34	65	27	98	246
1976	21	33	65	27	96	241

	Scotland	North East	Yorkshire	Nottinghamshire	Midlands and West	Total
1977	20	31	66	27	94	238
1978	19	30	66	27	89	231
1979	16	28	64	27	88	223
1980	16	27	63	27	86	219
1981	15	24	62	26	84	211
1982	14	22	57	25	82	200
1983	13	18	56	25	79	191
1984	9	16	53	25	67	170
1985	9	15	53	25	67	169
1986	9	10	40	22	52	133
1987	6	8	36	20	40	110
1988	4	7	33	17	33	94
1989	2	7	32	16	29	86
1990	1	7	29	15	21	73
1991	1	7	26	15	16	65
1992	1	5	20	12	12	50

Saleable Output (m. tons/tonnes)

	Scotland	North East	Yorkshire	Nottinghamshire	Midlands and West	Total
Tons						
1962	17·5	34·7	42·2	31·0	62·2	187·6
1963	17·1	34·0	42·6	31·2	63·6	188·5
1964	16·5	32·5	43·1	31·3	63·8	187·2
1965	15·5	31·2	43·5	31·1	62·4	183·7
1966	14·9	29·7	41·2	29·6	58·7	174·1
1967	14·4	27·2	38·9	23·2	60·9	164·6
1968	13·7	26·1	40·2	22·8	59·9	162·7
1969	12·6	23·2	40·1	22·8	54·3	153·0
1970	11·1	20·5	35·9	22·9	49·4	139·8
1971	11·2	18·9	34·8	22·7	45·7	133·3
1972	10·4	15·5	29·6	18·0	35·7	109·2
1973	11·1	17·6	36·1	21·7	40·5	127·0
1974	8·8	13·5	27·4	16·9	30·5	97·1
1975	10·0	14·6	32·3	20·5	37·6	115·0
1976	9·7	14·4	31·4	20·2	36·9	112·6
1977	9·0	12·9	30·7	19·4	34·7	106·7
1978	8·3	12·6	30·4	19·7	33·6	104·6
Tonnes						
1979	8·1	12·9	30·1	19·6	34·7	105·4
1980	8·1	14·1	31·4	20·6	35·1	109·3
1981	7·8	14·2	31·6	20·9	35·8	110·3
1982	7·3	13·5	31·3	20·9	35·9	108·9
1983	6·7	12·5	31·0	20·7	34·0	104·9
1984	5·3	11·0	26·4	18·6	28·8	90·1
1985	0·3	0·4	0·6	14·8	11·6	27·7
1986	4·3	9·6	26·8	18·7	29·0	88·4
1987	3·4	10·2	27·3	18·1	29·0	88·0
1988	2·6	10·3	26·2	17·6	25·7	82·4
1989	1·9	10·3	29·4	17·2	26·2	85·0
1990	2·0	10·3	25·0	16·8	21·5	75·6
1991	2·2	9·0	25·0	16·9	19·2	72·3
1992	2·2	7·5	28·0	17·3	16·0	71·0

Men on Books (at year end)

(Thousands)

Year	Scotland	North East	Yorkshire	Nottinghamshire	Midlands and West	Total
1962	58·8	112·4	113·9	58·5	192·6	536·2
1963	57·4	107·3	113·9	58·6	195·3	532·5
1964	52·9	99·7	110·5	56·7	185·5	505·3
1965	49·6	93·5	106·0	54·5	173·7	477·3
1966	44·9	83·7	100·2	51·2	156·2	436·2
1967	41·9	75·5	96·1	40·4	155·8	409·7
1968	34·0	64·7	88·3	38·4	137·4	364·8
1969	31·5	54·5	79·6	35·6	117·5	318·7
1970	30·1	48·6	75·3	34·8	106·9	295·7
1971	30·1	48·1	72·6	35·4	100·2	286·4
1972	28·4	46·4	70·0	34·4	94·8	274·0
1973	26·7	42·7	68·6	34·0	91·6	263·6

Year	Scotland	North East	Yorkshire	Nottinghamshire	Midlands and West	Total
1974	24·3	38·2	64·4	32·0	83·6	242·5
1975	24·8	37·2	67·3	33·3	86·2	248·8
1976	23·6	35·8	66·6	33·3	84·4	243·7
1977	22·9	34·9	67·5	33·6	83·2	242·1
1978	21·9	35·0	66·5	33·9	82·0	239·3
1979	21·0	33·8	64·8	33·6	79·2	232·4
1980	21·0	33·4	65·6	34·5	78·7	233·2
1981	19·8	32·0	63·3	33·6	76·1	224·8
1982	17·4	29·0	60·7	33·0	72·7	212·8
1983	16·5	26·4	59·3	32·0	68·5	202·7
1984	13·1	22·9	53·9	29·2	62·0	181·1
1985	11·3	21·9	52·0	27·5	58·7	171·4
1986	7·7	17·9	38·1	26·2	48·6	138·5
1987	4·5	14·4	33·2	20·6	37·2	109·9
1988	3·5	11·8	27·2	16·6	29·9	89·0
1989	2·4	10·8	25·6	15·0	26·4	80·2
1990	1·5	9·5	21·2	13·5	19·7	65·4
1991	1·4	8·6	19·3	13·8	14·2	57·3
1992	1·3	6·1	15·3	11·2	9·8	43·7

Mr. Tipping: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what the cost and expenses were for the work which his Department commissioned into the future of the coal industry by Rothschilds and by Boyds.

Mr. Eggar: Fees paid to Government advisers are commercially confidential. Total expenditure on coal privatisation is reported to Parliament in the usual way through the publication of departmental estimates and the annual appropriation accounts.

Mr. Conway: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement about progress in the coal review.

Mr. Heseltine: I sent the Chairman of the Trade and Industry Select Committee a progress report on 7 December listing the main areas and options for consideration identified by evidence submitted to the coal review. Copies of the progress report have been placed in the Library.

Exports and Imports (Information)

Mr. Hutton: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what consideration he has given to the voluntary provision by the United Kingdom of information on the export and import of *(a)* nuclear material, *(b)* relevant equipment and *(c)* certain non-nuclear material to the International Atomic Energy Agency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Discussions in the Zangger committee are confidential to the parties involved. The next meeting is scheduled to take place in May 1993.

In an effort to strengthen the international safeguards system, the United Kingdom, along with European Community partners, has recently notified the International Atomic Energy Agency that EC member states intend to provide information on transfers of ore concentrates imported or exported from the European Community and information on the items listed in annex B to IAEA INFCIRC/254/Revl/Part 1, when a licence for whose export to a country outside the European Community has been approved. These new arrangements are expected to commence in the new year.

International Atomic Energy Agency

Mr. Hutton: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether there is an agreed amount of notice given to the state that is to be inspected when the International Atomic Energy Agency undertakes special inspections; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: There is no fixed period of notice for special inspections in the relevant safeguards agreements; these provide for prior consultation between the state and the IAEA in circumstances which may lead to a special inspection. In case action by the state is essential and urgent the IAEA board of governors may call upon the state to take the required action without delay.

Marine Protection

Mr. Richards: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what measures are being taken to ensure that test drillings for oil and gas will not damage marine life off the north Wales coast.

Mr. Eggar: As described in my answer to the hon. Member for Cardiff, Central (Mr. Jones) on 7 December, *Official Report*, col *497*, licences for oil and gas exploration drilling may be subject to special conditions designed to take account of the sensitivities of specific licensed blocks. In the block off the north Wales coast where drilling is currently in progress, environmental and local seabed surveys were carried out before drilling started. Water-based muds are being used, and cuttings may be discharged to the sea since tidal conditions in the area ensure their rapid dispersal. No other rig discharges are permitted, nor any fuel transfers while the rig is on site.

Export Credit Guarantees

Mr. Meacher: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how much has been expended in export credit guarantees in each of the last 10 years; and how much has been paid out in each of those years as a result of non-payment for exports.

Mr. Needham: Details of the volume of export credit business guaranteed over the previous 10 years, along with the related expenditure on interest rate support and the amount paid out under such guarantees by way of claims, are published each year in the annual report of the Export Credits Guarantee Department.

Copies of the annual report are placed in the Library.

East Sussex

Mr. Bowden: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the problems and needs of *(a)* Brighton and Hove and *(b)* the county of East Sussex while conducting the review of the assisted areas map.

Mr. Salisbury: We are currently considering points made by two deputations from the areas mentioned—one from Hastings and one from Brighton and Hove. We are also considering the written submissions that have been received from these and other areas.

Plutonium

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what current studies are being undertaken by the Harwell research laboratories into the risks of inhalation and ingestion of alpha radiation emitted from plutonium.

Mr. Eggar: My Department and the Department of Health contribute towards a range of research projects involving the inhalation and ingestion of various radionuclides. Details of these research studies are contained in AEA Technology's radiological protection research 1992 annual report. I am arranging for copies to be placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if, pursuant to his answer of 22 October, *Official Report*, columns *362-63*, he will make a further statement on the outcome of the analysis of the radioactive source.

Mr. Eggar: The sealed radioactive source contained an extremely small quantity—a few thousandths of a gram—of plutonium.

Export Companies (Wales)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how he proposes to assist Wales-based exporter companies.

Mr. Needham: All the excellent services to exporters provided by my Department, jointly with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, are available to exporters in Wales through the Welsh Office in Cardiff.

Non-fossil Fuel Obligation

Mr. Tipping: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what account was taken of articles 90 and 92 of the treaty of Rome in drawing up the non-fossil fuel obligation.

Mr. Eggar: The non-fossil fuel obligation was notified at the appropriate time to the European Commission for the necessary clearances.

Motor Cycles

Mr. Milburn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what were the export earnings of sales of motor cycles over 100 bhp for the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Needham: Details of the export earnings of sales of motor cycles by brake horsepower are not available.

Nuclear Review

Mr. Ingram: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to bring forward the 1994 nuclear review.

Mr. Eggar: It remains the Government's policy that the future prospects for nuclear power in the United Kingdom will be reviewed in 1994. However, the coal review currently being undertaken by my Department is looking at the implications of the non-fossil fuel obligation to purchase power from non-fossil sources including that from nuclear sources. It would be premature to decide detailed terms of reference for the 1994 review before the results of the coal review are known.

Energy Council

Mr. Conway: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on issues discussed and decisions taken at the meeting of the European Community's Council of Energy Ministers on 30 November.

Ms. Quin: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what discussions on differing levels of coal subsidy in the EC took place at the EC Energy Council on 30 November; what other matters were discussed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heseltine: The meeting was held under the United Kingdom presidency with my hon. Friend, the Member for Enfield, North (Mr. Eggar) in the chair.

Progress was made on the technical details of the draft directive for the harmonisaion of hydrocarbon licensing regimes, which the United Kingdom also supports. The Council agreed that the draft directive should go forward for decision under Denmark's presidency.

Political agreement was reached on the proposed directive on oil crisis measures. The related issue of the negotiating mandate for Community accession to the International Atomic Energy Agency was also discussed and remitted for further discussion by officials.

The Council considered the progress which was being made in the negotiations for a European energy charter, reaffirmed the importance which it attached to that process, and invited the charter conference to set a deadline for concluding negotiations on the basic agreement intended to put the political commitments of the charter into legally obligatory form.

The Council reached political agreement on the Commission's proposed programme for the promotion of renewable energies—ALTENER. ALTENER is one of four measures in the Commission's proposed CO_2 stabilization package. The Council discussed progress on the other three measures. In relation to the SAVE directive, it was agreed that officials should continue with their discussions.

The Council had a useful discussion on the European coal industry during which the Commission introduced its proposals for a new coal state aids regime to replace the existing one which expires at the end of 1993.

One of the main agenda items was the Commission's proposal for directives on the liberalisation of the electricity and gas markets. While the United Kingdom supports these measures, other member states continue to have concerns about them. The Council invited the

Commission to consider modifying its proposals in the light of member states' comments and the opinion of the European Parliament.

European Economic Area

Mr. Conway: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, what effect the Swiss referendum result will have on implementation of the European economic area.

Mr. Heseltine: The Swiss people voted on membership of the European economic area on 6 December. A majority of both the populace and of the cantons was required to enable Switzerland to ratify the EEA agreement. The results announced on 6 December were as follows: 50·3 per cent. of the populace voted against ratification, 49·7 per cent. in favour. Sixteen of the cantons voted against, with seven in favour. The proportion of the electorate that voted was 78·3 per cent.

The Government regret the Swiss decision not to join the EEA. The Foreign Affairs Council on 7 December took note of the result of the Swiss referendum. It also noted that the agreement provides arrangements to consider the situation in the event that a signatory of the agreement fails to ratify. It commented that, without Switzerland, the agreement will require modifications, which will have to be satisfactorily agreed. It expressed the hope that the agreement should be rapidly pursued. It therefore invited the Commission to have early contacts with the EFTA countries on the timing of the next steps, and to report back to the Council on 21 December.

It is the clear hope of the Community that the agreement should go ahead. It is too early to determine precisely when the agreement may now come into force. If the agreement is to be amended, a diplomatic conference will agree the necessary changes. The Government believe that every effort should be made to ensure that the agreement can be implemented as soon as possible, and we shall, in the remaining weeks of our presidency be working towards this objective.

The European Economic Area Bill was introduced in this House on 25 November, having passed through all its stages in another place. The Government will announce in due course how it proposes to proceed with the Bill when the impact of the Swiss vote on the Community and EFTA has been fully assessed.

Department of Energy Staff

Mr. Salmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many former Department of Energy personnel *(a)* have been placed on paid leave and *(b)* are currently on paid leave as a consequence of the incorporation of the former Department of Energy into his Department; what was the duration of paid leave which has been incurred in each case; and what is the total cost of the paid leave.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 18 November 1992]:* Three members of staff from the former Department of Energy were temporarily placed on paid leave as a consequence of the merger of the Department with DTI. One remains on leave pending retirement in January. As at 30 November the duration of the paid leave was 30 working days at a total cost of £6,149·15.

Energy Supplies

Mr. Churchill: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what has been the cost to the balance of payments over each of the past five years for which figures are available in respect of imported energy supplies of *(a)* oil, *(b)* gas, *(c)* coal, *(d)* electricity via the channel connector and *(e)* overall.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 4 December 1992]:* Figures on a balance of payments basis are not available in the detail requested.

Data in the "Overseas Trade Statistics" value imports on a "cif" basis, that is, including the cost of freight and insurance to a United Kingdom port, and exports on an "fob" basis, that is, free on board at a United Kingdom port. A comparison on these bases gives the following levels of net exports:

£ million

	Oil[1]	Gas	Coal[2]	Electricity	Total
1987	4,073	−878	−281	−242	2,673
1988	2,571	−692	−376	−268	1,235
1989	1,095	−615	−404	−305	−228
1990	1,167	−519	−511	−200	−86
1991	1,102	−472	−637	−343	−351

[1] Crude oil and petroleum products.
[2] Includes other solid fuels.
Source: Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom (CSO).

Deep-mining Equipment

Mr. Churchill: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what has been the net balance of trade in deep-mining equipment in each of the past five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 4 December 1992]:* The standard international trade classification, which governs the recording of trade data, does not provide for differentiation between machinery for deep mining and that for other types of coal mining, rock cutting or tunnelling. However, based on the various categories within the classification relating to this type of equipment, of which a major part will have been for coal mining, the trade surpluses in the last four years were as follows:

	£ million
1988	24·5
1989	38·5
1990	34·2
1991	47·2

Source: Overseas Trade Statistics.

It is not possible to provide compatible data for 1987, as the classification in operation at that time was less detailed than the current one.

Export Credits Guarantee Department

Mr. Michael: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his oral answer of 2 December, *Official Report*, column 253, what is the specific number of jobs that he intends to cut in the Export Credits Guarantee Department in Cardiff.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 7 December 1992]:* Following the privatisation of ECGD's insurance services

business the number of posts remaining in Cardiff was projected in the 1992 public expenditure survey to fall from 196 to 165 over three years. The recent review of the distribution of BCOD's functions will lead to a further net reduction of 10 posts over that period. Efficiency improvements are likely to lead to further reductions in both London and Cardiff, but these have yet to be determined and will depend on the level of business.

Brazilian Mahogany

Mr. Meacher: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how much Brazilian mahogany, by volume and by value, was imported into Britain in 1991.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 7 December 1992]:* The only information that relates to mahogany imported from Brazil is that which has been sawn or chipped lengthwise, sliced or peeled, of a thickness exceeding 6mm, defined as code 440723901 of the standard international trade classification, revision 3. Under this heading there were 45,762 cu m of mahogany, valued at £22 million, imported into the United Kingdom from Brazil in 1991.

Single Market

Mr. Steen: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will provide a breakdown of the cost of each of the five editions of "The single market: A Guide to Public Purchasing"; how many copies were produced for each edition; and what guidance on public purchasing has been produced by every other EC member state in accordance with community guidelines.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 7 December 1992]:* The costs of the five editions of DTI's 'The Single Market: Guide to Public Purchasing' are as follows:

	£	Copies
1st edition, September 1989	20,850	25,000
2nd edition, June 1990	25,520	23,000
3rd edition, February 1991	13,740	15,000
4th edition, September 1991	18,446	20,000
5th edition, March 1992	17,970	26,000

There are no Community guidelines regarding the guidance on public purchasing to be produced by other member states. We are aware of written guidance published by France, Ireland, Italy and Portugal. Information from every member state could not be obtained in the time available and would be available only at disproportionate cost.

Bronchitis and Emphysema

Dr. Wright: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has received on the report by the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council on the recognition of bronchitis and emphysema as an industrial injury; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 10 November 1992]:* The report by the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council on bronchitis and emphysema is a matter for the Secretary of State for Social Security.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Northern Ireland Legal System

Mr. A. Cecil Walker: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, how many qualified lawyers are employed on a full-time basis in the Northern Ireland court service.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The staff of the Northern Ireland court service presently includes four qualified lawyers. It is expected that an additional lawyer will take up employment early next year, bringing the total to five.

Mr. A. Cecil Walker: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, how many qualified lawyers are employed in the Northern Ireland legal aid department.

Mr. John M. Taylor: I understand that the legal aid department of the Law Society of Northern Ireland currently employs five professional lawyers.

Mr. A. Cecil Walker: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, what has been the cost of the Windsor house branch of the Northern Ireland court service in each of the last three years.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The costs of the Northern Ireland court service branches located in Windsor house were £2·4 million in 1989-90, £2·2 million in 1990-91 and £2·4 million in 1991-92.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Questions

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Lord President of the Council how many *(a)* oral and *(b)* written questions were asked in the last Session of Parliament; and what was the estimated total cost to Her Majesty's Government of answering them.

Mr. Newton: The number of questions appearing on the Order Paper in Session 1991-92 for oral answer was 2,383 and for written answer was 16,050. The estimated cost to Departments of preparing answers was £481,366 for oral questions and £1,396,350 for written questions.

Crown Immunity

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will now introduce legislation to remove Crown immunity in the Houses of Parliament in respect of staff working conditions and public health provision.

Mr. Newton: I have no plans to do so.

Philippines Delegation

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will make a statement on his meeting with a parliamentary delegation from the Philippines on 2 December.

Mr. Newton: I received a delegation of parliamentarians from the Philippines at the request of the British group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. The meeting, which lasted 40 minutes, focused almost exclusively on

comparisons between our different parliamentary traditions. Speaker de Venecia, who led the delegation, thanked the United Kingdom Government for their assistance in the current discussions on debt rescheduling.

Ministerial Statements

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Lord President of the Council how many ministerial statements have been made by each Department of State since Session 1989-90.

Mr. Newton *[holding answer 27 November 1992]:* From the beginning of Session 1989-90 to 4 December 1992, the following number of statements have been made in the House by each Department of State.

	Number
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food	10
Office of Arts and Libraries	2
Legal Secretariat to the Law Officers (Attorney General)	1
Ministry of Defence	19
Department of Education and Science	6
Department of Employment	7
Department of Energy	4
Department of the Environment	14
Foreign and Commonwealth Office	24
Department of Health	9
Home Office	22
Lord President's Office	2
Office of Public Services and Science	1
Department of National Heritage	1
Northern Ireland Office	10
Scottish Office	15
Department of Social Security	10
Department of Trade and Industry	18
Department of Transport	13
Her Majesty's Treasury	11
Welsh Office	11

In addition, the Prime Minister has made 22 statements to the House in the same period.

TRANSPORT

Red Star Parcels

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects the completion of the privatisation of Red Star.

Mr. Freeman: The Secretary of State for Transport gave the British Railways Board approval in principle on 7 October to proceed to the sale of Red Star. The timing of the sale itself is the responsibility of the Board.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what estimate he has made of the effect on employment of the privatisation of Red Star Parcels.

Mr. Freeman: The manner of the disposal of Red Star Parcels is a commercial matter for the British Railways Board. Red Star has been loss-making for a number of years. Action will be necessary to return the business to profitability, whether in public or private ownership.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many bids or expressions of interest for Red Star Parcels have been received since his announcement in October that it was to be sold off.

Mr. Freeman: The British Railways Board is handling the sale of Red Star Parcels, and will be issuing invitations to tender in due course. All expressions of interest in Red Star directed to the Department of Transport have been referred to the British Railways Board.

Blackburn-Burnley Railway Line

Mr. Pope: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what investment over the last three financial years has been made on improvements to stations and ticketing arrangements on the line between Blackburn and Burnley; and what investment is planned for the financial year 1993-94.

Mr. Freeman: My Department does not hold the information requested. Investment at this level is a matter for the British Railways Board. Over £1 billion will be available for investment in the channel tunnel and the existing railway in 1993-94.

British Rail

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport which British Rail services do not face competition from other transport modes.

Mr. Freeman: All British Rail services face competition to some degree from other modes of transport.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list for each major part of British Rail the levels of capital spending for each year from 1984; and if he will list British Rail income, separating assets, sales and grants for each year from 1984.

Mr. Freeman: (i) The information for 1991-92 is as follows:

British Rail capital spending

	£ million
Network SouthEast	355
InterCity	94
Regional Railways	147
Trainload Freight	86
Railfreight Distribution	75
Parcels	2
European Passenger Services	205
Corporate/Subsidiary	41
Total	1,005

Figures for earlier years are not available.

(ii) The information for asset sales, grants and new income is in the table:

British Rail income 1984-85—1991-92

£ million 1991-92 prices

	Asset sales	*Grants*	*Other income*	*Total income*
1984-85	176	1,142	2,892	4,210
1985-86	105	1,302	3,232	4,639
1986-87	141	1,074	3,338	4,553
1987-88	232	1,122	3,405	4,759
1988-89	326	770	3,431	4,527
1989-90	382	704	3,346	4,432
1990-91	130	780	3,290	4,200
1991-92	54	1,035	3,151	4,240

Notes:

1984-85 was a 15-month year; 12-month equivalent given.

Grants comprise public service obligation (PSO) grant, level crossing grant and passenger transport executive (PTE) grant.

Wyre Piddle Bypass

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received about the proposed Wyre Piddle bypass on the B4084 and its possible extension to include the village of Upper Moor and transport supplementary grant; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: My Department has received a number of representations about this proposal. However, the extent of the bypass and the priority given to its construction are matters for Hereford and Worcester county council, which is responsible for the B4084. We shall consider the case for transport supplementary grant when a detailed proposal is put to us by the county council.

Railways White Paper

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the names of those who have responded to his White Paper on new opportunities for the railways, distinguishing those who responded favourably.

Mr. Freeman: Many individuals and organisations have responded to the White Paper. A wide variety of views have been expressed.

Motor Cycles

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what percentage of accidents involving motor cycles were not caused by the riders themselves in each year from 1981.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: My Department's injury accident statistics do not include an allocation of responsibility for the accident. The table shows motor cycle accidents and casualties in relation to total accidents and casualties.

Motor cycle accidents statistics 1981 to 1991

Year	*Accidents*	*Accidents involving motor cycles*	*Casualties*	*Casualties in accidents involving motor cyclists*		
				Motor cyclist	*Other*	*All*
1991	235,798	31,206	311,269	30,736	5,153	35,889
1990	258,441	39,704	341,141	39,048	6,303	45,351
1989	260,759	43,280	341,592	42,630	6,970	49,600
1988	246,994	43,583	322,305	42,836	6,807	49,643
1987	239,063	46,257	311,473	45,801	7,375	53,176
1986	247,854	52,623	321,451	52,280	8,471	60,751
1985	245,645	56,754	317,524	56,591	9,251	65,842
1984	253,183	63,958	324,314	63,821	n/a	n/a
1983	242,876	64,552	308,584	64,494	11,407	75,901
1982	255,980	71,267	334,296	71,920	13,338	85,258
1981	248,276	68,859	324,840	69,129	n/a	n/a

Note: Data on other casualties involved in motor cycle accidents are not available for the years 1984 and 1981.

EC Rail Networks

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he intends to lay regulations to implement EC directive 91/440 on the development of the Community's railways.

Mr. Freeman: I have today laid regulations to implement EC directive 91/440 which provides for a right of access to EC rail networks for certain international rail services.

Speed Limit, Rutland

Mr. Duncan: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will authorise Rutland council to paint large white roundels on its village roads drawing attention to the existence of a 30 mph limit on the lines of the current experiment in the Bovingdon area of Hertfordshire.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The experiments to determine the effectiveness of painting speed limit roundels on the road surface, as a way of influencing driver choice of speed, are not yet complete. If they are shown to improve road safety, we will authorise local highway authorities to instal them where appropriate.

Nuclear Material (Transport)

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if his Department will obtain a copy of the report prepared by the Japanese Government's Central Research Institute of Electric Power Industries on the sea transport of plutonium.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 7 December 1992]:* The Department has no information about this report.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what account he has taken of the vote in the European Parliament in Strasbourg in November based on documents B3-0868/92, 0-163/92 and B3-0869/92, 0-164/92 on the international transport of plutonium; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 7 December 1992]:* The international transport of plutonium by all modes is governed by the regulations of the International Atomic Energy Agency, which are kept under continuous review.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what kinds of vessels or other kinds of transport are used for the maritime transport of irradiated nuclear fuel, plutonium and high-level radioactive waste to and from, or by, the United Kingdom; and what monitoring his Department carries out of the transport patterns for the movement of such materials.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 7 December 1992]:* Ships complying fully with international convention standards for safety and pollution prevention are used for the transport of irradiated nuclear fuel. No plutonium or high-level radioactive wastes have been transported to or from the United Kingdom except for small quantities of plutonium used for life-support systems such as energy sources for heart pacemakers. Transport patterns are not monitored by the Department.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will place in the Library the full text of the governmental studies of analyses of the transport of irradiated nuclear fuel, plutonium or high-level radioactive waste produced since December 1991.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 7 December 1992]:* No such studies have been carried out.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the submissions made by the United Kingdom to the joint International Atomic Energy Agency—International Maritime Organisation—United Nations Environment Programme working group have been placed in the Library.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 7 December 1992]:* There were no United Kingdom Government submissions.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the standard operations of maritime transport carrying irradiated nuclear fuel, plutonium or high-level radioactive waste to and from, or by, the United Kingdom; and what accident rate for such operations has been recorded in each year since 1982.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 7 December 1992]:* Of the United Kingdom-registered ships known to carry such cargo there was one incident recorded in 1991 which directly concerned handling operations and which falls within the scope of the Merchant Shipping (Accident Investigation) Regulations 1989. Records of incidents prior to the establishment of the marine accident investigation branch in July 1989 are not fully comprehensive. However, there are no known cases of serious incidents involving such cargo and operations between 1982 and mid-1989.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Scotch Street, Armagh

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the distance between Nos. 1 and 74 Scotch street, Armagh city; how many street lights there are along this length of public street; what proposals he has to improve street lighting at Scotch street; and if he will make a statement.

Mr Atkins: The distance between Nos. 1 and 74 Scotch street, Armagh is approximately 265 m. There are currently six street lights along this length of public road and the provision of a further light is being pursued.

Bomb Damage

Mr. Clifford Forsythe: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many owner occupiers in the Antrim road area, Glengormley, agreed to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive's offer to carry out repairs arising from bomb damage on 30 October; and how many such owner-occupiers have agreed to compensation for such damage being a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

Mr. Atkins: I am advised by the chief executive of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive that at 3 December, 17 owner-occupiers in the Glengormley area had taken up the executive's offer to carry out repairs on the basis that they will assign their compensation rights to the executive.

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many owner occupiers in Newtownbreda/Belvoir estate have agreed to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive offer to carry out repairs arising from bomb damage on 23 September; how many owner-occupiers have agreed to compensation for such damage being a matter for the Housing Executive; and how many privately owned homes were damaged as a result of the IRA bomb at the Forensic Science Laboratory.

Mr. Atkins: I am advised by the Chief Executive of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive that at 3 December no owner-occupiers in the Newtownbreda/Belvoir estate had taken up the executive's offer to carry out repairs and consequently no householders had assigned their compensation rights.

A total of 428 privately owned homes were damaged.

Public Expenditure

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the allocation to individual programmes in Northern Ireland of the public expenditure totals announced on 12 November.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: In his autumn statement on 12 November, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced total public expenditure planning figures for the Northern Ireland programme. I have now decided on the allocations to individual programmes as shown in the table. Copies of a more detailed statement have been placed in the Library. These allocations reflect my assessment of how best to distribute the Northern Ireland public expenditure totals in response to local needs and circumstances.

Programme	*£ Million 1993-94*	*1994-95*	*1995-96*
Northern Ireland Office:			
Law, Order, Protective and Miscellaneous Services	902	910	930
Northern Ireland Departments:			
Northern Ireland Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Service and Support	124	130	130
Industry, Trade and Employment	466	450	440
Energy	6	10	10
Roads and Transport	174	170	170
Housing	244	250	260
Environmental and Miscellaneous Services	238	250	250
Law, Order and Protective Services (Fire Service)	39	40	40
Education, Arts and Libraries	1,234	1,300	1,360
Health and Personal Social Services	1,318	1,410	1,500

Programme	£ Million 1993-94	1994-95	1995-96
Social Security Administration	146	140	140
Other Public Services	93	100	100
Total NI Block (excluding Social Security Benefits)	4,984	5,160	5,320
Social Security Benefits	2,353	2,390	2,470
Total NI Block	7,338	7,550	7,790
National Agricultural and Fishery Support	122	140	150
Total Northern Ireland Programme	7,460	7,690	7,940

Notes:
1. Figures are rounded to the nearest £1 million for 1993-94 and to the nearest £10 million for 1994-95 and 1995-96. Figures may not sum to totals due to roundings.
2. The health and personal social services programme includes a transfer of £25 million, £65 million and £100 million from social security benefits for community care.
3. The 1993-94 figures will form the basis for preparation of the Northern Ireland Office and Northern Ireland Departments' main estimates. These will be presented to Parliament in due course.

EC Funding

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much money has been received by Northern Ireland under each of the European Community initiatives to date; and how much of the money received in each financial year up to 31 December 1991 from EC sources has been paid into the Northern Ireland Consolidated Fund.

Mr. Mates: Under the current structural funds allocation, Northern Ireland has nine approved Community initiatives. Of these initiatives, four were not approved until December 1991 and three until February 1992. The amounts received in Northern Ireland up to 31 December 1991 under the two remaining initiatives, Interreg and Envireg, were £4·67 million and £1·51 million respectively. The total forecast amounts received under each initiative up to 31 December 1992 are:

Initiative	Forecast receipts to 31 December 1992 £ million
Interreg (assistance to border areas)	13·10
Stride (research and technological development)	3·75
Envireg (environmental improvement)	1·94
Prisma (assistance to firms)	0·80
Telematique (promotion of telecommunications service)	1·65
Euroform (qualifications for women)	0·32
NOW (employment opportunities for women)	0·35
Horizon (handicapped and certain disadvantaged groups)	0·18
Leader (rural development)	0·26

All money received from EC sources is paid into the Northern Ireland Consolidated Fund.

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much of the receipts which Northern Ireland has received from the European regional development fund since 1973 has been earned by *(a)* infrastructure projects undertaken by non-central government bodies, *(b)* infrastructure projects undertaken by central Government and *(c)* industrial projects.

Mr. Mates: The following amounts have been received from the European regional development fund to 31 December 1991:

Infrastructure	£ million
Non-central Government	120·5
Central Government	78·3
Industry	91·8
Programmes[1]	97·3
Total[2]	387·9

[1] These programmes combine elements of both industry and infrastructure.
[2] Includes estimated receipts for the first nine months of the 1991-92 financial year.

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much of the receipts which Northern Ireland has received from the European regional development fund since 1973 has been earned by *(a)* the private sector, *(b)* non-central government public sector bodies and *(c)* central Government.

Mr. Mates: The following amounts have been received from the European regional development fund to 31 December 1991:

	£ million
Private Sector	30·9
Non-central Government Public Sector Bodies	174·6
Central Government	182·4
TOTAL	387·9

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much was Northern Ireland's share of the United Kingdom's payments into the European Economic Community from 1 January 1973 to 31 December 1991; how much was Northern Ireland's share of the receipts for the same period; and how much of those receipts was used to offset Government expenditure on Northern Ireland.

Mr. Mates: It is not possible to determine Northern Ireland's actual share of the United Kingdom's contribution to the European Community because payments are made on a national and not a regional basis. Similarly it is not possible to identify the full extent of receipts from the Community. However, a Northern Ireland attributed share of the contribution to the EC is calculated as an accounting mechanism necessary because of the operation of a separate Northern Ireland Consolidated Fund. This notional attributed share does not count as an item of expenditure within the Northern Ireland public expenditure programme and has therefore no bearing on the level of public expenditure in the Province.

Figures for the notional attribution of part of Northern Ireland's share of the United Kingdom's payments and for those areas where the receipts from the European Community's structural funds can be separately identified are as follows:

Financial Year	Attributed Share (part)	Identified Receipts[2]
1973-74	1	0
1974-75	6	4
1975-76	8	4
1976-77	13	16
1977-78	16	14
1978-79	24	19
1979-80	28	31
1980-81	28	44
1981-82	50	41
1982-83	66	53
1983-84	66	51
1984-85	68	58
1985-86	74	44
1986-87	62	77
1987-88	91	111
1988-89	85	96
1989-90	104	95
1990-91	[1]126	110
1991-92	[1]100	132
TOTAL	1,016	1,000

[1] Attributed share figures for the last two years are provisional estimates which will be revised when final details of tax revenues are determined.
[2] This comprises total identified EC structural funds receipts in Northern Ireland.

All receipts represent cash additions to the recipients and are subject to normal European Community audit arrangements.

The overall level of receipts is taken into account in the Government's decisions on public expenditure allocations and their availability enables public expenditure to be maintained at a higher level than would otherwise be feasible.

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much money Northern Ireland has received in each financial year up to 31 December 1991 from the European agricultural guidance and guarantee fund, guidance section; how much of those receipts were paid to the private sector and how much to the public sector; how much of these receipts represented a cash addition to the Northern Ireland economy; and how much was used each year to offset Government expenditure on Northern Ireland.

Mr. Mates: The following amounts were received from the European agricultural guidance and guarantee fund, guidance section:

£ million

	Individual capital projects		Other guidance schemes		
Financial year	Private sector	Public sector[1]	Private sector[2]	Public sector	Total
1974-75	—	—	0·25	—	0·25
1975-76	0·45	—	0·21	—	0·66
1976-77	1·87	0·31	0·27	—	2·45
1977-78	1·28	0·31	1·28	—	2·87
1978-79	0·70	0·24	2·46	—	3·40
1979-80	1·27	0·20	3·21	—	4·68
1980-81	1·91	1·05	3·35	—	6·31
1981-82	1·43	0·13	4·69	—	6·25
1982-83	2·47	0·99	3·30	—	6·76
1983-84	1·59	0·38	14·63	—	16·61
1984-85	0·95	0·28	13·29	—	14·52
1985-86	3·56	0·03	11·83	—	15·42
1986-87	2·58	0·11	5·96	—	8·65
1987-88	3·29	—	5·99	—	9·28
1988-89	2·31	0·51	10·05	—	12·87
1989-90	2·84	—	6·60	—	9·44
1990-91	3·35	—	6·25	—	9·60
[4]1991-92	0·43	—	13·62	3·06	[3]17·11
Total	32·28	4·54	107·26	3·06	147·13

[1] Includes the Milk Marketing Board, which is not financed from public funds although it is a statutory body.
[2] Includes reference to the approximate share in Northern Ireland on various structural schemes which were applied throughout the United Kingdom.
[3] Provisional outturn to December 1991.
[4] To December 1991.

All these receipts present cash additions to the recipients and are subject to normal European Community audit arrangements. The overall level of receipts is taken into account in the Government's decision on public expenditure allocations and their availability enables public expenditure to be maintained at a higher level than would otherwise be feasible.

New Opportunities for Women

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State of Northern Ireland what moneys have been deployed by way of the European Community's new opportunities for women initiative under article 11 of Council Regulation (EEC) No. 4253/88 in *(a)* 1991 and *(b)* so far this year; what kind of employment and training programmes were funded in this way; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: Responsibility for the subject in question has been delegated to the Training and Employment Agency under its chief executive, Mr. J. Crozier. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from J. S. Crozier to Dr. Norman A. Godman, dated 7 December 1992:

You asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what monies have been deployed by way of the European Community's NOW initiative under Article 11 of Council Regulation (EEC) No. 4253/88 in:

(a) 1991; and

(b) so far this year;

what kind of employment and training programmes were funded in this way; and if he will make a statement.

The Training and Employment Agency (T&EA) has responsibility for the administration of the NOW initiative in Northern Ireland. As Chief Executive of the T&EA, I have been asked by the Secretary of State to reply on his behalf.

To date no money has been paid to promoters of projects under the NOW initiative in Northern Ireland apart from preliminary technical assistance to help promoters establish links with their transnational partners and jointly develop their projects. Technical assistance amounting to £20,000 has been committed and £14,500 paid.

Letters offering assistance totalling £226,000 have issued; and the first tranche of payments, amounting to £43,000 should be made shortly. Further Letters of Offer in respect of assistance totalling some £600,000 are in the process of being prepared.

Projects for assistance under the NOW initiative have been put forward by a wide range of bodies including rural and inner-city women's groups, training organisations and institutions of further and higher education. These projects all seek to enhance the skill levels and employment prospects of women and include pre-vocational training, training in new technologies and training in relation to business creation.

In administering the NOW initiative in Northern Ireland, the T&EA has sought to enable as many groups as possible to

benefit despite the relatively small amount of EC assistance available (our original allocation was some £700,000). This has involved encouraging promoters of similar projects to establish networks within Northern Ireland enabling them to share resources, expertise and transnational contacts.

WALES

Students

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of Clwyd schoolchildren of GCSE age have taken the exams; and what proportion of Clwyd students carry on from GCSE to A-level.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Information on the proportion of pupils who carry on to A level from GCSE is not collected. In 1991-92, 93 per cent. of Clwyd schoolchildren aged 15 sat GCSE examinations. In 1991-92, 1,476 students were following A level courses in Clwyd (in year 12 at school, or at college aged 16). This represents 39 per cent. of pupils aged 15 who sat GCSE the previous year.

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of students in Wales carry on from GCSE to A level.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Information on the proportion of pupils who carry on from GCSE to A level is not collected. In 1991-92, 29,660 students were following A level courses in Wales (in year 12 at school, or at college aged 16). This represents 39 per cent. of pupils aged 15 who sat GCSE the previous year.

Drug Addiction (Pregnancy)

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many children were born in Wales suffering from drug addiction in 1991-92 as a result of the mother's usage during pregnancy.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: None in 1990-91, the latest year for which information is available.

Small Businesses

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures are being taken to help small businesses in Wales develop closer ties with Europe.

Sir Wyn Roberts: A wide range of measures are available. Among the more significant are:

Overseas trade services

The Welsh Office is part of a United Kingdom-wide network established to encourage businesses to take advantage of opportunities abroad. Advice is given to businesses on both how to enter new export markets and provide overseas trade services. Assistance is available particularly for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) which are entering overseas markets for the first time.

The Welsh Office also promotes awareness of the availability of assistance for exporting at trade fairs and through sales missions to overseas markets. Over the last five years missions have visited Spain, Portugal, France, the Netherlands and Italy. Next year missions are planned to Germany, Switzerland and Belgium.

EC relay centre network

A Welsh centre is planned for January 1993 as part of a network being established throughout the European Community, to encourage SMEs to participate in and exploit the results of the Community's research and development programmes.

The development agencies

The Welsh Development Agency (WDA) participates in various initiatives designed to help Welsh companies seek new business opportunities in Europe. These initiatives include the Wales European centre, Eurolink, Europartenariat, Wales Euro Info centres and Fit for Europe reviews.

The Development Board for Rural Wales (DBRW) provides core funding for mid-Wales Export Association Ltd based at Welshpool. All of the board's export activities are channelled through this specialist organisation which in turn provides a full range of export advice and services to businesses in rural mid-Wales. In recent years the Export Association has given particular emphasis to the opportunities that might be presented to companies in mid-Wales through the advent of the single European market.

Links with the Four Motors

Links have been established between Wales and four of the most economically advanced regions of Europe—Baden-Wurttemberg, Lombardy, Catalonia and Rhone-Alpes, known together as the Four Motors. Through these links SMEs are offered various opportunities in these regions including technology transfer, joint ventures and for trade.

Local enterprise agencies

With the advent of the single European market several of Wales's enterprise agencies, including those which have received core-funding from the WDA, have developed a service for businesses wishing to obtain adsvice and counselling about Europe.

Urban programme

Urbane programme support has been made available for projects which encourage the development of links between Welsh businesses and Europe.

Inward Investment

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the inward investment projects in Wales since 1979 and the jobs created or safeguarded by each project.

Mr. David Hunt: Information is not available for projects recorded before 1 April 1983. Since that time over 1,000 projects have been recorded and a list of the companies concerned, other than those who have requested confidentiality, has been placed in the Library of the House. For reasons of commercial confidentiality, individual details of jobs are not disclosed.

Drug Abuse

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people in Wales in 1991-92 died *(a)* as an indirect result and *(b)* as a direct result of drug abuse.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: In the calendar year 1991, the latest year for which data is available, there were six deaths directly attributable to drug misuse in Wales.

Data on deaths as an indirect result of drug misuse are not collected centrally.

European Community Grants

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much Wales has received in European Community grants in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. David Hunt: The European regional development fund is the only one of the main stream structural funds for which expenditure can be identified on an annual basis. The total commitments to eligible Welsh bodies from the fund in each of the past 10 years are shown in the following table:

	£ million
1982	46·7
1983	48·9
1984	63·0
1985	54·9
1986	49·7
1987	57·8
1988	63·3
1989	38·8
1990	27·4
1991	89·0

The European social fund (ESF) element of objectives 2 and 5(b) of the structural funds was administered directly by the European Commission prior to 1990 and figures for Wales are not readily available. However commitment figures for subsequent years are as follows:

	£ million
1990	11·38
1991	11·96

Objectives 3 and 4 of the structural fund which are also supported by ESF monies are administered on a GB basis and figures for Wales are not separately identifiable.

Figures for FEOGA grant are not available on a comparable basis to the ERDF.

Welsh Museum School Service

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what provision will be made to fund the Welsh museum's school service centrally.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) on 5 November at col. *388*.

Radiation

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the most recently recorded levels of radiation off the north coast of Wales; and by what amount they differ from background levels.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Details of the latest recorded levels of radiation off the north Wales coast can be found in the "Aquatic Environment Monitoring Report" (No. 29) 1990, published by the Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food. A copy of the report is available in the Library of the House.

The major radionuclide in the Irish sea is Caesium 137, and levels of this have decreased markedly in recent years. The extent of this decrease can be seen in figure 4.4 of the "Environmental Digest for Wales" No. 6 1991, copies of which are also kept in the Library of the House.

Adult Training

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what policy initiatives he is taking to enhance the retraining of unemployed men and women over the age of 21 years.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the statement made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment on 12 November 1992 at column 903.

Education White Paper

Mr. Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many of the consultations on the White Paper, "Choice and Diversity and the Education Bill", supported the proposals and how many were opposed.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I refer the hon. Gentleman to my reply of 13 November to the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) at column *993*.

Local Government Reform

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he proposes to publish his proposals for the reform of local government in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: I will announce my decisions as soon as possible.

Hearing Impairment

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what resources he has provided to each county council in Wales in each of the past five years *(a)* in respect of children statemented for hearing impairment as having special educational needs and *(b)* in respect of children with hearing impairment who have not been statemented.

Sir Wyn Roberts: It is for local authorities to determine what resources should be directed to education services, including those for children with hearing impairments.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what salaries are being paid to chairmen and ordinary members of NHS trusts; how many hours per week members of the trusts are contractually required to work; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Chairmen receive a remuneration of between £15,125 and £19,285 per annum dpending on the turnover of the trust. Members receive £5,000 per annum for an expected time commitment of at least the equivalent of two days per month.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a list of the chairmen and members of the national health service trusts in Wales, together with their known political affiliations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: The chairman of the NHS trusts in Wales are as follows:

Mr. Anthony J. G. Bowen, Pembrokeshire NHS Trust.
Mr. John H. Button, Swansea NHS Trust.
Mr. John Curtis, South and East Wales Ambulance NHS Trust.
Mr. Colin Hughes Davies, Glan Hafren NHS Trust.
Mr. Edmund Francis Lloyd Fitzhugh, Gofal Cymuned Clwydian Community Care NHS Trust.
Mr. E. Michael W. Griffith, Glan Clwyd District General Hospital NHS Trust.
Brigadier Ronald Edward Lewis Jenkins, Llanelli Dinefwr NHS Trust.
Mr. Derek W. C. Morgan, Bridgend and District NHS Trust.
Mrs. Fiona Natalie Peel, Gwent Community Health NHS Trust.
The Hon. Mrs. Rosalind (Lindy) Helen Penrose Price, Powys Health Care NHS Trust.
Mr. Aldham Roberts, Wrexham Maelor Hospital NHS Trust.
Mr. Brian Thompson, Carmarthen and District NHS Trust.
Sir Donald Walters, Llandough Hospital NHS Trust.
Mrs. Sally Williams, Ceredigion and Mid Wales NHS Trust.

The non-executive directors of the Pembrokeshire NHS Trust are as follows:

Mr. Richard A. Collins
Mr. David L. Hughes
Mr. Glyn T. Noakes
Mr. Thomas S. Smedley
Mrs. Margaret Thomas

Appointments are made irrespective of political affiliation and such information is not held centrally.

Training Providers

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether it is his policy that training and enterprise councils in Wales shall pass on to training providers the cash to pay allowances to trainees in advance of the relevant pay day or within seven days of those costs falling on the training providers.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Training and enterprise councils (TECs) are responsible for the funding arrangements which they have with their providers. It is for these two parties to agree such arrangements.

Students (Accommodation)

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will amend the regulations to enable housing associations to let accommodation to students more easily; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The Government have already taken steps to maintain and encourage turnover in student lettings through the Assured and Protected Tenancies (Lettings to Students) Regulations 1988, as amended, which added all registered housing associations to the list of bodies able to offer non-assured tenancies to students in Wales and England.

Land Liming

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has to increase subsidies to encourage liming the land near rivers and streams in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: I have no plans to extend grant aid for routine applications of lime. Farmers with improvement plans under the Farm and Conservation Grant Regulations can obtain grant assistance towards the cost of liming land where this is part of a programme of reseeding and regeneration. In the less favoured areas, lime treatment alone is eligible for grant where it can be demonstrated to be genuine restoration and not routine treatment.

Broadleaf Trees

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has to increase subsidies to encourage the growing of broadleaf trees in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The Government have no plans to increase the subsidies which are already available to encourage the planting of broadleaved trees. Higher rates of grant are paid under the woodland grant scheme for the establishment and management of broadleaved woodlands, and these have been successful in encouraging an increased amount of broadleaved planting in Wales.

River Acidification

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has to combat river acidification in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The Welsh Office is currently considering river acidification as part of its wider work and research on acid deposition in Wales.

Health Authorities

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales in which circumstances a senior officer of a health authority in Wales might fulfil both purchaser and provider roles at the same time.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave him on 7 December at column *509*.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether it is his policy that the purchaser and provider funding shall be clearly defined and separated within a health authority in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: District health authorities in Wales are funded to purchase health care for their resident populations. They are expected to plan and monitor this expenditure and at the same time take into account—both in their overall financial plans and their in-year financial management—the provider income and expenditure of their directly-managed units. The outturn income and expenditure of both the purchaser and provider functions are recorded in the health authority's annual accounts.

Hospital Beds

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list for every district health authority in Wales *(a)* the number of acute beds and *(b)* the total number of hospital beds at 31 March 1991.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The requested information is given in the table.

Staffed beds allocated as at 31 March 1991

	Acute[1]	Total
Clwyd	1,276	2,335
East Dyfed	680	1,568
Gwent	1,400	3,044

	Acute[1]	Total
Gwynedd	656	1,534
Mid Glamorgan	1,840	4,081
Pembrokeshire	258	461
Powys	196	900
South Glamorgan	1,665	3,234
West Glamorgan	1,310	2,377

[1] Excluding geriatrics, obstetrics, GP maternity and psychiatric specialties.

Examination Results

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) when he intends to collate and publish the examination results of *(a)* grant-maintained and *(b)* independent schools in Wales;

(2) when he will publish the examination results and league tables for schools in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: School performance data relating to examination achievements of secondary schools will be published very soon.

The data will include all LEA and grant-maintained schools and those independent schools which have agreed to participate.

Tourism

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the amount of revenue from tourism to Wales in 1980, 1990 and 1991; what proposals he has to facilitate increased tourism in 1992-93: and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts *[pursuant to his answer, 11 November 1992, c. 820]:* Unfortunately an incorrect figure was given, the correct answer is as follows:

Estimates of expenditure by overnight visitors to Wales are given in the following table. Since 1989, information on United Kingdom visitors to Wales has been obtained from the United Kingdom tourism survey. It is not possible to make a direct comparison between the results of this and earlier surveys. Information on overseas visitors is not available prior to 1981.

Estimates of expenditure by day visitors are available only for the financial year ending on 31 March 1989 when an estimated £229 million was spent in Wales.

Expenditure by overnight visitors to Wales[1]

£ million

Year	United Kingdom visitors	Overseas visitors
1980	[2]	[3]
1981	[2]	50
1990	900	130
1991	900	130

Sources: United Kingdom Travel Survey, International Passenger Survey.

[1] These estimates, derived from sample surveys and thus subject to potential random sampling errors, have been rounded to the nearest £5 million.
[2] Not available on a comparable basis.
[3] Not available prior to 1981.

In order further to promote tourism in Wales, the Government uplifted support for the Wales tourist board by 20 per cent. in 1992-93 to a record £13·529 million.

DEFENCE

Civil Servants

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many civil servants from his Department have been relocated from London to other parts of the United Kingdom *(a)* in the last five years and *(b)* in the last 10 years; and to where they were relocated.

Mr. Aitken: Over the last five years the MOD, under the Government's relocation initiative, has relocated 836 posts from London to other parts of the United Kingdom. Details are as follows:

Location	Posts
Bath	196
Yeovilton	54
Swindon	210
Sutton Coldfield	250
Cranwell	9
Harrogate	65
Llangennech	32
Andover	10
Portsmouth	10
TOTAL	836

In the preceding five years, 743 posts were moved from London to Glasgow under the central dispersal programme, with a final tranche of 23 posts moving to Glasgow in 1989.

The MOD is already a well-dispersed Department, with 60 per cent. of its civilian staff already based outside London and the south east. As a result of moves already planned and reductions in staff numbers, only about 30 per cent. of Ministry of Defence civilians will be left in London by the mid-1990s.

Weir Group plc

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 25 November to the hon. Member for Gloucester (Mr. [illegible]), *Official Report*, column *700*, if he will identify the principal equipment projects concerned in the payments of over £250 million to the Weir Group plc in the financial year 1990-91, as recorded in table 1.17 of "1992 Defence Statistics".

Mr. Aitken: Payments shown against the Weir Group in table 1.17 of the "1992 Defence Statistics" include those to Devonport Management Ltd. by virtue of the fact that Weir Group was by a narrow margin the largest shareholder in the DML consortium. Some 97 per cent. of payments relate to DML's activity as the term contract holder for managing the Devonport dockyard licensed area and associated refitting and defect rectification of ships, submarines and other vessels, and other work required by the authority. Contracts placed with companies in the Weir Group, mainly for pumps, compressors and ancillary equipment, account for the remaining 3 per cent. of payments.

For clarity of presentation, DML will be shown separately in the "1993 Defence Statistics".

Royal Ordnance, Radway Green

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will meet workers' representatives from British Aerospace Defence—Royal Ordnance, Radway Green to discuss procurement policy.

Mr. Aitken: If the hon. Member would like to lead such a delegation, I would be willing to meet it.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps he is taking to negotiate a successor agreement to the explosives, propellants and related products agreement with Royal Ordnance, Radway Green; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: We do not intend to negotiate a successor agreement to the explosives, propellants and related products agreement which expires in March 1993. This was always intended to be an interim arrangement. Our defence procurement policy is to seek the best long-term value for money through the use of competition wherever possible.

Channel Islands (War Records)

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what documents his Department holds relating to the wartime Nazi crimes in the camps on Alderney in the Channel islands; and which such records have been given to the former Soviet authorities.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Ministry of Defence does not hold any relevant papers. Detailed records of the British investigations into world war 2 war crimes in the Channel islands are available for public examination at the Public Record Office.

Copies of records relating to the investigations into the incidents on Alderney and Jersey were passed to the former Soviet authorities in October 1945.

Bosnia-Herzegovina

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 1 December, *Official Report*, column *166*, what consultations there are between Bosnian military commanders and *(a)* United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *(b)* Bosnia-Herzegovina command and *(c)* the national contingents of the United Nations protection force prior to the departure of each convoy; and if he will make a statements.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Consultation between Bosnian military commanders and United Nations agencies to ensure that humanitarian aid convoys are able to proceed to their destination takes place in a workingg group, chaired by Major General Morillon, Commander Bosnia-Herzegovina Command. Additionally, negotiations between the United Nations convoy commanders and local Bosnian military commanders, to take account of specific local conditions, take place if required as the convoy proceeds towards its destination.

Boards of Inquiry

Mrs. Angela Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to release military board of inquiry reports to next of kin.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Service board of inquiry reports are internal documents relating to inquiries held in private. Their content is often technical and complex, and is likely to include specific description of the conduct of named service personnel in the incident under investigation including that of the deceased where the board of inquiry investigates a fatal accident.

In view of our obligations to the deceased and to their families, it would not be appropriate to make such documents widely available. We do, however, recognise the special position of next of kin and in future there will be a general presumption that, subject to the essential minimum of security requirements, such reports will be made available to them wherever possible, should they so request. This change of practice is in line with the Government's general policy towards greater openness. It also reflects our genuine concern to ensure that next of kin are treated in as sympathetic and helpful a manner as possible.

EMPLOYMENT

Deaths (Building Sites)

Dr. Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the average fine imposed on negligent employers in respect of deaths occurring on building sites over the last five years for which records have been maintained.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information requested is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Dr. Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many deaths have occurred on building and construction sites over the last five years; and how many custodial sentences have been given to negligent employers in respect of these deaths.

Mr. McLoughlin: The available information for Great Britain is provided in the table. Data for the latest year commencing 1 April 1991 is not yet available.

Table: Fatal injuries in the construction industry reported to enforcement authorities 1986-87—1990-91[1]

Year	*Employees*	*Self-employed*	*Members of public*	*Total*
1986-87	99	26	14	139
1987-88	103	40	15	158
1988-89	101	36	14	151
1989-90	100	54	11	165
1990-91	96	28	9	133
Total	499	184	63	746

[1] Years commencing 1 April.

The courts can impose a custodial sentence for a range of offences under the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974. The offence need not have resulted in a fatality or injury; the penalty of imprisonment is available regardless of the outcome. However, only one custodial sentence has been given within the last five years. It was not connected with the construction industry.

Health and Safety Executive

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list the number of *(a)* factory inspectors, *(b)* agricultural inspectors, *(c)* doctors and *(d)* nurses in the Health and Safety Executive area offices in (i) the Wales and south-west region and (ii) the home counties region in each year since 1978.

Mr. McLoughlin: *(a)* The number of Health and Safety (HSE) factory inspectors employed in Wales and the south-west region and home counties region in each year since 1978 was as follows:

	(i) Wales and South-West	(ii) Home Counties
1978	61	70·0
1979	67	79·0
1980	65	80·5
1981	61	74·5
1982	57	74·0
1983	50	72·0
1984	49	73·0
1985	49	72·5
1986	50	75·5
1987	53	73·5
1988	50	66·5
1989	50	67·0
1990	57	69·5
1991	58	70·5
1992	65	83·5

(b) The information available for the number of agricultural inspectors employed by HSE is as follows:

	(i) Wales and South-West region	(ii) Home Counties region
1985	33	31·0
1986	30	34·0
1987	30	29·0
1988	28	27·0
1989	28	27·0
1990	28	27·0
1991	28	28·5
1992	29	33·0

Note: Comparable figures are not available by these regions for earlier years because of changes in the basis of compiling staffing statistics for the occupational group.

(c) The information available for the number of doctors employed by HSE is as follows:

	(i) Wales and South-West region	(ii) Home Counties region
1985	8·5	5·0
1986	10·0	4·5
1987	9·5	5·5
1988	8·5	5·0
1989	7·0	6·0
1990	7·0	6·5
1991	6·0	8·0
1992	5·0	6·5

Note: Comparable figures are not available for earlier years by these regions because of changes in the basis of compiling staffing statistics for the occupational group.

(d) The information available for the number of nurses employed by HSE is as follows:

	(i) Wales and South-west region	(ii) Home Counties region
1985	5·5	4·0
1986	6·0	4·0
1987	5·0	2·0
1988	6·0	4·0
1989	6·0	4·0
1990	8·0	2·5
1991	7·0	3·5
1992	7·0	4·0

Notes:
Comparable figures are not available for earlier years by these regions because of changes in the basis of compiling staffing statistics for the occupational group.
Figures are for 1 April each year and show full-time equivalent staff.

Radiological Emergencies

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) if she will provide regular updated information using non-technical language to the general public on the hazards of a potential radiological emergency in the United Kingdom;

(2) if she will target information on the hazards of a potential radiological emergency to *(a)* pregnant women and *(b)* emergency service personnel.

Mr. McLoughlin: The "Public Information for Radiation Emergencies Regulations", which transpose the requirements of EC directive 89/618/Euratom into national legislation, was laid before the House on 8 December 1992. These regulations will require employers who conduct undertakings from which a radiation emergency is reasonably foreseeable to provide prescribed items of information to members of the public likely to be affected by any such emergency. This information needs to cover the likely emergencies that could arise, their consequences and the planned health protection measures for members of the public. The information also needs to be made publicly available and regularly updated.

The Health and Safety Executive is producing guidance on the regulations, particularly aimed at assisting those with duties under them. In addition to this, the Health and Safety Executive produced guidance in 1991 which gave advice to emergency services personnel on the control of radiation exposure in the event of a radiation emergency.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will make it her policy to promote a standard national warning system to be operated during peacetime radiological emergencies.

Mr. McLoughlin: No. In the event of an accident at a civil licenced nuclear site having potential radiological effects off-site, the emergency plan prepared by the site's operator and approved by the Health and Safety Executive requires the operator to alert and inform the police. They will inform people in the vicinity of the site. Others at a greater distance from the site will be kept informed by special announcements on local radio and television.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will make it her policy to extend the detailed planning arrangements for reference accidents for the different stages of the nuclear fuel cycle to cover larger accidents.

Mr. Eggar: I have been asked to reply

No. I consider that the present arrangements are adequate. At each major installation, detailed emergency planning is based on the worst nuclear accident that is reasonably foreseeable, known as the reference accident. These plans form the basis for an extended response in the very unlikely event that a more severe accident should occur.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Garnier: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people were employed in the textile industry, the clothing industry and the mining industry in the east midlands in each year since 1980.

Mr. McLoughlin: The available information on regional employment for the industries requested is from the censuses of employment taken in 1981, 1984, 1987 and 1989. Data for the east midlands can be obtained from the NOMIS database in the Library, subject to the confidentiality restrictions of the Statistics of Trade Act 1947.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list the highest level of unemployment recorded in each of the three travel-to-work areas covered by the Selby district for each year since 1986.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information requested can be obtained from the NOMIS database in the Library.

Mr. Maclean: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to her answer of 1 December, *Official Report*, column *173*, how many people aged 16 and 17 years in the Carlisle travel-to-work area are not in employment, not on a youth training scheme and not in full-time education.

Mr. McLoughlin: In October 1992, there were 18 unemployed claimants aged 16 and 17 years in Carlisle travel-to-work area.

Changes to the benefit regulations in September 1988 coincided with the extension of a guaranteed youth training scheme (now youth training) place to all those aged under 18 not in full-time education or employment, which meant that those who declined an offer of a YTS place were no longer entitled to benefit. However, there are still a small number of under 18-year-olds entitled to benefit due to special circumstances, such as severe hardship or by virtue of their being orphans.

Training

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the latest information she has about the operating surplus which has been accumulated for each training and enterprise council for each region and for Great Britain as a whole on *(a)* youth training including training credits, *(b)* employment training, *(c)* employment action, and *(d)* business start up; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is unable to respond on behalf of my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and for Wales who now have responsibility for the delivery of programmes through local enterprise councils in Scotland and training and enterprise councils in Wales.

Training and enterprise councils in England are required, under the terms of the training and enterprise council operating agreement, to produce audited accounts within four months of the end of the financial year.

These accounts reveal the total operating surplus as at the end of the financial year and on a cumulative basis; however, this information is not published by programme block.

The accounts for the financial year ending 31 March 1992 are now in the public domain and available from individual training and enterprise councils.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether it is her policy that training and enterprise councils shall pass on to training providers the cash to pay allowances to trainees in advance of the relevant pay day or within seven days of those costs falling on the training providers.

Mr. McLoughlin: Training and enterprise councils (TECs) are responsible for the funding arrangements which they have with their providers. It is for these two parties to agree such arrangements.

Disabled Trainees

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will make it her policy to allow training and enterprise councils to utilise a wider range of performance indicators for disabled trainees than those currently suggested within the output-relating funding arrangements.

Mr. McLoughlin: Training and enterprise councils already have the flexibility to recognise in their contracts with providers outputs additional to those for which they receive funding from the Department.

Wages Councils

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to her answer of 1 December to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short), *Official Report*, column *172*, if she will list those organisations or individuals whose representations she has received supporting abolition of the wages councils, and those who oppose the proposal.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: No. Representations are treated on the basis that they have been offered "in confidence".

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what estimates her Department has made of changes in wage levels in industries covered by wages councils as a result of their abolition.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The abolition of the wages councils will allow wages to reflect labour market conditions and the ability of companies to pay. Since 1986, when young people were removed from the minimum rates set by wages councils, their average earnings have continued to rise in real terms.

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to her answer of 30 November, *Official Report*, column *54*, if she will list the wages councils in whose areas of competence a prosecution was brought for each of the lowest levels of payment in each region in each year since 1986.

Mr Michael Forsyth: The information is listed in the table.

Divisions	1986 £	1987 £	1988 £	1989 £	1990 £	1991 £	1992 £
London	—	—	—	—	—	2·48 RF	—
South East	0·88 NF	1·60 RF	1·29 HU	1·50 RF	1·42 HU	—	—
Eastern	1·15 HU	—	1·23 RF	—	—	—	—
South West	—	—	1·55 RF	1·60 UPR	1·74 RF	2·18 HU	1·87 RF
Midlands	—	1·375 NF	1·20 RF	2·04 RF	—	—	2·30 LR
North West	—	1·60 RF	1·75 RF	—	—	1·50 RF	—
Yorkshire and Humberside	—	—	1·92 RF	2·19 RF	2·00 RF	1·50 RF	1·70 RF
Northern	—	—	—	1·91 NF	not available RF	1·25 RF	2·00 RF
Scotland	—	—	—	—	—	2·48 RF	1·60 LR

Key to Wages Council names.
HU = Hairdressing Undertaking.
LR = Licensed Residential Establishment and Licensed Restaurants.
NF = Retail Trades (Non-food).
RF = Retail Food and Allied Trades.
UPR = Unlicensed Place of Refreshement.

New Opportunities for Women Initiative

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what moneys have been deployed by way of the European Community's new opportunities for women initiative under article 11 of Council regulation (EEC) No. 4253/88 *(a)* Strathclyde and *(b)* Scotland as a whole in (i) 1991 and (ii) so far this year; what kind of employment and training programmes were funded in this way; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: A total of £6,369,996 has been made available to Great Britain under the European Community initiative NOW for the period 1991 to 1993. The amount committed to successful Scottish projects was £999,411, with one project in Strathclyde of £142,336. The allocation of funds has been made over the life of the programme, rather than on a calendar-year basis.

All the projects aim to help women to take full advantage on equal terms of economic growth and technological development through the funding of transnational partnerships between organisations in two or more member states.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what moneys have been deployed by way of the European Community's NOW initiative under article 11 of Council regulation (EEC) No. 4253/88 in England and Wales in *(a)* 1991 and *(b)* so far this year; what kind of employment and training programmes were funded in this way; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: A total of £6,369,996 has been made available to Great Britain under the European Community initiative NOW for the period 1991 to 1993. The amount committed to successful projects in England and Wales was £5,260,435. The allocation of funds has been made over the life of the programme, rather than on a calendar-year basis.

All the projects aim to help women to take full advantage on equal terms of economic growth and technological development through the funding of transnational partnerships between organisations in two or more member states.

Social Affairs Council

Mr. Duncan-Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the outcome of the meeting on 3 December of the Social Affairs Council in Brussels; and if she will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The Social Affairs Council had a useful meeting on 3 December, adapting a number of instruments and making good progress on others.

The Council adopted a wide-ranging resolution concerned with the serious and deteriorating problem of unemployment throughout the Community. The resolution emphasised the importance of achieving sound economic growth and the conditions necessary for the creation and growth of businesses. The resolution underlined the importance of effective labour market measures—in particular, quality employment services for those looking for a job and training which is geared to the needs of the labour market. The resolution identified various ways in which the Council and European Commission would continue to give high priority to the issue of unemployment, including in the forthcoming review of the European social fund. This resolution flows from the employment initiative launched by the United Kingdom presidency and was warmly welcomed by the Council.

Other useful measures agreed at the Council include a health and safety directive concerned with extractive industries, a resolution to promote the acceptance of vocational qualifications across the Community, and conclusions on the importance of ensuring timely and fully effective implementation and enforcement of EC social directives throughout the Community.

In discussion, progress was made on a range of further proposals in the social area including the HELIOS programme for disabled people, the directive on subcontracted workers, and instruments concerned with the free movement of labour and with health and safety at work.

The working time directive was also discussed. However, the directive continues to pose significant difficulties for a number of member states and it was not possible for progress to be made on this instrument.

This meeting of the Council formed an important part of the aim of the United Kingdom presidency to make

sensible progress on the EC social dimension, in ways which directly affect for the better the lives of individual citizens in the Community.

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will make a statement on the outcome of the EC Social Affairs Council on 3 December; and if she will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Duncan-Smith) today.

SCOTLAND

Health Spending

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much of the planned spending on health for 1993-94 will come from savings not yet specified.

Mr. Stewart: The expenditure plans for health announced recently by my right hon. Friend represents the cash resources he has made available to the NHS in Scotland. However, we encourage health boards to seek to finance further improvements to patient services from efficiency savings.

Ozone Depletion

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many portable halon fire extinguishers are contained within his Department's buildings; and what measures are being taken to ensure their recycling and replacement;

(2) what measures have been taken to ensure that ozone-destroying substances in use by his Department identified as controlled waste under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 do not reach the atmosphere;

(3) how many chlorofluorocarbon domestic fridges are contained within his Department's buildings;

(4) what targets have been set for the recycling of ozone-depleting chemicals within his Department's buildings;

(5) what is the quantity of ozone-depleting substances recycled within his Department and returned to the manufacturer;

(6) by what date his Department's use of ozone-depleting chemicals will conform to EC regulations on limits on these chemicals;

(7) how much funding has been allocated or spent to deal specifically with measures to reduce his Department's consumption of ozone-depleting substances;

(8) what action has been taken to ensure that ozone-destroying substances consumed by his Department are identified as controlled wastes when they are no longer in use;

(9) if he will provide details from the maintenance and servicing record of the quantity and type of ozone-destroying chemicals used annually in his Department's refrigeration and air conditioning equipment for servicing and in leakages; and what proportion is removed for recycling;

(10) how many chlorofluorocarbon and hydrochlorofluorocarbon installations are contained within his Department's buildings;

(11) how many refrigeration and air conditioning systems in his Department are equipped with automatic leak detection systems;

(12) what proportion of his Department's consumption of ozone-depleting substances becomes controlled waste in terms of section 33 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990;

(13) what guidance has been sought and received on alternatives or substitutes to the ozone-destroying chemicals in use by his Department;

(14) which current uses of ozone-depleting chemicals by his Department are considered essential.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 19 November]:* I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as the necessary information has been collated.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the latest available figures for his Department's total purchase of CFCs and HCFCs.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 19 November]:* The information required could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Civil Servants

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many civil servants are employed by his Department *(a)* in London, *(b)* in Edinburgh and *(c)* elsewhere.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 7 December 1992]:* At 30 November 1992 the number of civil servants employed by the Scottish Office, excluding the Scottish prison service, was 6,427 of whom 39 were located in London, 4,850 in the Edinburgh area and 1,538 elsewhere.

Schools (Disciplinary Proceedings)

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what role his Department has in any disciplinary proceedings in locally or directly managed schools.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 7 December 1992]:* Responsibility for teacher discipline in Scotland lies with education authorities, the managers of grant-aided and independent schools and, in respect of professional misconduct, the General Teaching Council for Scotland.

Prisons

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what expenditure has been incurred to date by the Scottish Office in undertaking the review of the prison estate announced in 1990; and when he expects a report to be published.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 7 December 1992]:* The review of the prisons estate in Scotland, which was completed earlier this year, was undertaken by officials from the Scottish Office and the Scottish prison service. It would be impractical to separate and quantify this part of their duties in expenditure terms. The results of this work are not intended to be published, but they will be of assistance in developing a strategy for the prisons estate which will make the most effective use of the increased level of funding for the Scottish prison service announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on 2 December.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many qualified prison staff were employed at each Scottish prison at the latest available date; and if he will show this as a percentage of the recommended complement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 7 December 1992]:* The complements and staff in post on 1 December 1992 for each establishment in the Scottish prison service are given in the table.

Establishment	*Complement 1992-93*	*Staff in post*	*Percentage*
Aberdeen	130	137	105·4
Barlinnie	532	543	102·1
Barlinnie Special Unit	19	19	100·0
Castle Huntly	76	74	97·4
Cornton Vale	190	193	101·6
Dumfries	144	147	102·1
Dungavel	73	70	95·9
Edinburgh	415	407	98·1
Friarton	53	53	100·0
Glenochil	439	429	97·7
Greenock	162	160	98·8
Inverness	84	89	106·0
Longriggend	159	162	101·9
Low Moss	147	142	96·6
Noranside	73	72	98·6
Penninghame	38	37	97·4
Perth	392	384	98·0
Peterhead	255	250	98·0
Polmont	309	307	99·4
Shotts	402	396	98·5
Shotts Unit	26	26	100·0
TOTAL	4,118	4,097	99·5

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what expenditure has been incurred to date by the Scottish Office in connection with proposals for privatisation, market testing and contracting-out in the Scottish prison service.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 7 December]:* The best estimate of cost to date, including staff time and consultancy fees, in connection with the market-testing programme for 1992-93 in the Scottish prison service is approximately £50,000.

Skye Bridge

Mr. Charles Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what impact the securing of objective 1 status for the highlands and islands to EC structural funding would have upon the funding package of the bridge to Skye; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 7 December]:* The level and scope of future structural fund support for the highlands and islands will be dependent on the outcome of negotiations on the future of the Community and the reform of the structural funds dues to be implemented on 1 January 1994. I cannot anticipate what view might be taken under the revised regulations of an application for assistance towards the cost of constructing the bridge to Skye.

Mr. Charles Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his policy towards the application to other potential commercial operators of a prohibition similar to that imposed upon Caledonian MacBrayne in running a vehicle-carrying ferry in competition with the Skye bridge once complete; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 7 December]:* My right hon. Friend has no power to prevent a private operator from providing such a service. Any private operator would, of course, require to satisfy the appropriate certification requirements for ferry operators.

Mr. Charles Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations or advice he has received from the European Commission concerning sanctuaries in the vicinity of Kyle of Lochalsh, in the light of the construction of the bridge to Skye; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 7 December]:* There have been no representations or advice received by my right hon. Friend from the European Commission concerning sanctuaries in the vicinity of Kyle of Lochalsh.

Lockerbie

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many police officers are now involved in detective work relating to Lockerbie and Pan AM 103.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 7 December 1992]:* There are currently five officers of the Dumfries and Galloway constabulary engaged in work relating to the Lockerbie investigation.

Defence Initiative

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the progress of the Scottish defence initiative with specific regard to the funds available for this purpose to Scottish Enterprise and the local enterprise companies.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 3 December 1992]:* Scottish Enterprise announced on 3 September this year details of a three-year strategy to help companies adjust to falling defence orders, diversify into other markets and compete more effectively with other European contractors for remaining defence work. Based on an in-depth analysis of the Scottish defence sector, the strategy represents a significant step forward in helping companies respond to rapidly changing defence markets.

It is for Scottish Enterprise and the local enterprise companies to determine the priority and resources to be allocated to measures arising out of the initiative. Scottish Enterprise, however, attaches high priority to the initiative and measures associated with it; and it is likely, therefore, that proposals arising out of the initiative included in local enterprise companies' business plans will be given favourable consideration by Scottish Enterprise in reaching its decisions about funding support.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Scrapie

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether, in considering the application by Dr. Narang and Professor Gxford to

investigate the single-stranded DNA of scrapie, he will make it his policy that persons involved in doing similar research within his own Department do not form part of the application evaluation team.

Mr. Soames: No, but the normal requirements of confidentiality and impartiality will be followed in this case as in all other proposals for ministry support.

Canthaxanthin

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects to receive reports from departmental advisory committees relating to canthaxanthin; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: This matter is not under consideration by departmental committees. The position is that the latest scientific data are currently being evaluated by the EC Scientific Committee for Food. I have instructed officials to keep in touch with developments.

Orchards

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will state, in tabular form, the amount granted for the grubbing-up of apple orchards in each of the last five years under the apple orchard grubbing-up scheme; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what proportion of the orchards grubbed-up, aided by his Department's apple orchard grubbing-up scheme, were *(a)* culinary and dessert apples and *(b)* cider apples; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what assessment of landscape and wildlife is made before the granting of aid under his Department's apple orchard grubbing-up scheme; and if he will make a statement;

(4) what mechanisms are in place to avoid conflicts of interest between his Department's apple orchard grubbing-up scheme and the Countryside Commission funded scheme providing incentives for replanting of traditional orchards in Somerset; and if he will make a statement;

(5) if he will conduct a departmental inquiry into the provision of grant aid for the grubbing-up of apple orchards; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: The apple orchard grubbing-up grant scheme opened to growers in February 1991. The final date for submission of applications was, 1 December 1992. To the end of September 1992, the latest date for which figures are available, grant of £1·6 million had been paid. All orchards grubbed-up under the scheme were of culinary and dessert apples. Cider apple orchards are not eligible for grant. The EC rules for the scheme do not permit member states to make eligibility for grant conditional upon an assessment of landscape and wildlife but applicants whose orchards are in a site of special scientific interest must consult the Nature Conservancy Council before grubbing-up. Applicants with orchards in nitrate sensitive areas or environmentally sensitive areas are recommended to seek the advice of the NSA or ESA project officer before making an application for grant. It is standard MAFF practice for policies such as this to be evaluated.

There is no conflict between this scheme and the Countryside Commission's scheme which have quite different objectives. The apple orchard grubbing-up scheme is aimed at reducing over production of culinary and dessert apples in the Community. Grant is therefore limited to young, productive, commercial orchards with a 15-year restriction on replanting. The Countryside Commission's scheme is concerned with encouraging the conservation of old, traditional orchards and apple varieties.

Civil Servants

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many civil servants from his Department have been relocated from London to other parts of the United Kingdom *(a)* in the last five years and *(b)* in the last 10 years; and to where they were relocated.

Mr. Curry: Apart from staff movements that occur routinely within any Department with a large regional organisation, over the past five years some 202 departmental posts have been relocated from London, of which 44 went to Guildford, 42 to Exeter, 19 to Norwich, 14 to Gloucester, 14 to Alnwick and 69 to Oxford. In the preceding five years, four London posts were moved to Alnwick.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to extend the protection and designation of environmentally sensitive areas to less favoured areas.

Mr. Curry: Environmentally sensitive areas (ESAs) have already been designated in four parts of the English less favoured areas: the north Peak, Pennine dales, Shropshire borders (Clun) and west Penwith. In January of next year we plan to launch new ESAs in the less favoured areas of Exmoor, the Lake district and south west Peak. We also plan to hold consultations on further new ESAs for Dartmoor and the Shropshire hills, which we hope to introduce in the following winter.

Fish

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the quota for each species of fish in each of the British fishing grounds for each of the last four years.

Mr. Gummer: The information requested, reflecting all quota exchanges made during each year, is set out in the following tables.

North sea: quotas for the United Kingdom

Stock	Area	1989	1990	1991	1992
Herring	IIa,IVa,IVb	75,989	67,150	65,930	61,090
Herring	IVc,VIId	2,000	2,050	4,230	3,980
Sprat[1]	IIa,IV	n/a	1,500	1,500	1,500
Cod	IIa,IV	55,800	45,857	43,570	43,220

Stock	Area	1989	1990	1991	1992
Cod	IIb	1,480	670	910	1,270
Haddock	IIa,IV	55,541	36,480	37,115	42,640
Saithe	IIa,III,IV	14,910	12,136	11,836	9,820
Whiting	IIa,IV	44,040	29,260	34,452	31,370
Hake	IIa,IV	380	420	420	430
Mackerel	IIa,III,IV	710	1,000	1,530	1,750
Plaice	IIa,IV	26,479	31,597	31,430	48,030
Sole	IIa,IV	825	1,670	1,830	1,070

[1]No allocation between Member States of EC availability in 1989. In 1990-92 United Kingdom fishermen had access to quota and also to EC availability not allocated specifically to Member States.

West of Scotland: Quotas for the United Kingdom

Stock	Area	1989	1990	1991	1992
Herring	Vb, VIa(N), VI	40,430	40,430	33,320	33,320
Herring	VIa (Clyde)	3,200	2,600	2,900	2,300
Cod	Vb, VI	9,700	8,375	8,330	6,915
Haddock	Vb, VI	28,210	19,385	12,250	9,985
Saithe	Vb, VI	5,310	5,130	4,405	3,965
Pollack	Vb, VI	840	400	400	400
Whiting	Vb, VI	9,400	6,775	5,550	4,835
Mackerel	II, Vb, VI, VII	189,581	191,030	197,630	234,950
Plaice	Vb, VI	1,210	1,210	1,460	1,460
Sole	Vb, VI	20	25	30	30
Megrim	Vb, VI	1,678	1,618	1,520	1,520
Anglerfish	Vb, VI	3,370	3,335	3,230	2,650
Nephrops	Vb, VI	15,620	15,620	13,185	12,000

Area VII (Channel and Irish Sea): quotas for the United Kingdom

Stock	Area	1989	1990	1991	1992
Herring	VIIa	4,440	5,180	4,440	5,180
Herring	VIIef	250	250	250	500
Herring	VIIg-k	20	20	0	30
Sprat	VIIde	7,140	7,140	7,140	6,300
Cod	VII (ex VIIa)	2,250	2,290	1,960	1,660
Cod	VIIa	6,500	7,330	3,765	3,355
Haddock	VII	600	730	600	600
Saithe	VII	2,150	2,150	2,150	2,150
Pollack	VII	2,390	2,440	2,440	2,440
Whiting	VII (ex VIIa)	2,160	2,700	2,700	2,360
Whiting	VIIa	9,330	7,395	4,185	3,865
Hake	Vb, VI, VII	6,260	6,671	7,150	6,960
Plaice	VIIa	3,050	2,613	2,370	1,840
Plaice	VIIde	3,400	3,110	3,110	2,790
Plaice	VIIfg	590	450	450	350
Plaice	VIIhjk	435	435	435	170
Sole	VIIa	625	589	612	295
Sole	VIId	780	740	820	675
Sole	VIIe	590	530	473	470
Sole	VIIfg	590	450	450	350
Sole	VIIhjk	240	215	235	120
Megrim	VII	2,240	2,280	2,280	2,280
Anglerfish	VII	6,340	6,340	6,280	5,950
Nephrops	VII	8,530	8,530	6,785	6,565

Area = zones used by the International Council of the Exploration of the Seas. A map of these is attached to the Explanatory Memorandum dated 10 December 1991 setting out the TACs and Quota proposals for 1992.

Slaughterhouses

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what forms of grant aiding of abattoirs are permitted under EC regulatory requirements.

Mr. Soames: The long-standing system of EC grants for projects for the marketing and processing of agricultural produce, which did not apply to slaughterhouses, closed on 30 September 1992. There is currently no replacement EC scheme.

Compliance with EC slaughterhouse standards has never brought with it any guarantee of help to defray the costs involved. Nor, though it is quite common for new statutory standards to be introduced, is it usual for grant aid to be provided to enable them to be achieved. The provision of such aid would be quite unfair on those who have already made the commitment of there own funds to come up to standard or those who have maintained their premises to comply with existing GB legislation and will have to do little to comply with the new rules.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his estimate of *(a)* the capacity of slaughtering facilities in the United Kingdom, *(b)* the extent to which the capacity of slaughtering facilities in the United Kingdom meets the demand for such activities and *(c)* the extent to which the capacity for slaughtering in the United Kingdom meets the requirements of small butchers to select livestock for slaughter.

Mr. Soames: The Meat and Livestock Commission estimates the theoretical Great Britain slaughter capacity after 1992 will be nearly 300,000 livestock units a week, compared with average weekly slaughterings in 1990-91 of fewer than 200,000 livestock units.

Where demand exists for particular types of slaughtering facilities, the market will no doubt ensure that this is met.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what EC mechanisms exist to ensure that all EC countries apply the regulations relating to abattoirs consistently; and what differences he has identified between the United Kingdom's approach to the use of veterinary personnel for inspection in abattoirs and that adopted by other EC countries.

Mr. Soames: All member states have to notify the Commission when and how they have implemented EC directives. In the red meat sector the Commission has a veterinary inspectorate which visits each member state regularly to ensure that the EC legislation is being properly applied.

The United Kingdom has traditionally made less use of veterinary personnel for food hygiene work than most other member states. The Government consider that veterinary surgeons have an important role at abattoirs in the protection of human and animal health, and therefore accepted the requirements in the EC Fresh Meat Directive 91/497 for all abattoirs to be supervised by a veterinary surgeon and for all animals to undergo veterinary ante-mortem inspection. This is already the position in

most other member states, many of which also use qualified veterinary surgeons for post-mortem inspection which will normally continue to be done by meat inspectors in this country.

The United Kingdom has successfully resisted EC proposals for compulsory veterinary supervision of meat products plants.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) to what extent the welfare of casualty livestock being transported is taken into account in the implementation of EC regulations on abattoir standards;

(2) to what extent animal welfare considerations have been taken into account in determining implementation of EC regulations relating to abattoir standards.

Mr. Soames: The structural and handling requirements of the Fresh Meat (Hygiene and Inspection) Regulations 1992 take account of the need to protect the welfare of animals. The requirement for veterinary ante-mortem inspection of all animals post-1992 will provide further safeguards.

Casualty animals must receive speedy and compassionate treatment. No sick or injured animal should be transported at all if to do so would cause it unnecessary pain or suffering. Under the Fresh Meat Regulations all slaughterhouses have to have facilities to isolate animals which are diseased or injured or suspected of being diseased or injured. I am aware, however, that some large slaughterhouses may be reluctant to take in casualties and I will monitor the situation closely next year.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has made to the European Commission on derogation for small abattoirs to be permitted to slaughter increased numbers of livestock.

Mr. Soames: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply my right hon. Friend the Minister gave regarding safeguarding small traditional slaughterhouses on Wednesday, 3 December, *Official Report*, columns 223-24.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what estimates he has made of the need for the increased movement of animals for slaughter arising out of EC requirements on slaughterhouse specifications.

Mr. Soames: None. There is no evidence that farmers always send animals to the nearest slaughterhouse and, of course, many animals go for slaughter via livestock markets.

Sheep Dips

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a further statement on the action he is taking to avoid damage to health through the use of certain organo-phosphorus sheep dips.

Mr. McLoughlin: I have been asked to reply.

The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 1988 (COSHH) apply to sheep dipping operations. They are enforced on farms by Health and Safety Executive (HSE) inspectors. During visits to farms, HSE inspectors draw attention to specific legal requirements and give advice and guidance on the precautions to be taken to prevent risks to health. Enforcement action is taken where necessary.

HSE has published a leaflet entitled "Sheep dipping: Protect your health". The leaflet provides guidance to farmers on compliance with COSHH when engaged in sheep dipping operations. It warns of the hazards of sheep dips and sets out the precautions to be taken before, during and after dipping.

HEALTH

Local Community Hospitals

12. **Mr. Ancram:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what encouragement she can give to purchasers and providers within the health service to promote and sustain local community hospitals in rural areas.

Mr. Sackville: Both purchasers and providers now have an unprecedented opportunity to tailor health services to meet local needs. National health service trusts, in particular, have a greater freedom over day-to-day operational matters and can be more responsive to patients. Health authorities are in a better position to focus on assessing the health needs and preferences of the local population and securing services to meet those needs and preferences.

Smoking

13. **Mr. Peter Bottomley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many death certificates mentioned smoking in 1979 and in the most recent year.

Dr. Mawhinney: Reliable information on this has not been available but, from next year, we hope that new procedures on death certification may produce more usable information.

Waiting Lists

14. **Mr. Bayley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on patients' waiting times between referral and initial out-patient consultations.

Mr. Sackville: Under the patients charter, health authorities are required to publish information on the local standards for first out-patient appointments and on performance against standards. Regional health authorities have been asked to set targets to build on this progress for 1993-94.

18. **Mr. Bates:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress she expects to make in reducing waiting times under the patients charter.

Mr. Sackville: From April 1993, there will be a new and additional patients charter guarantee of a maximum wait of 18 months for a hip or knee replacement or a cataract operation. In addition, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State recently announced that regions would be asked to set targets for waiting time for first out-patient appointments.

19. **Mr. Hain:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement about the latest figure for waiting lists.

Mr. Sackville: On 11 November, I announced provisional waiting time figures for September which showed that the number of patients waiting over a year fell by 3·6 per cent. over the previous quarter.

NHS Trusts

15. **Ms. Quin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what changes she is considering to the consultation procedure relating to the creation of NHS trusts.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The procedure for consulting community health councils and other appropriate bodies about establishing a national health service trust is laid down in the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990. I am not considering any changes to that procedure.

16. **Dr. Goodson-Wickes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what level of interest she has received in the fourth wave of NHS trusts.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I have given permission to 121 units to prepare national health service trust applications in the fourth wave. If they are successful, then 95 per cent. of the hospital and community health services budget will be spent through national health service trusts from April 1994. A list of 121 units has been placed in the Library.

Addiction and Alcoholism

17. **Mr. David Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on her policy on addiction and alcoholism.

Dr. Mawhinney: Our policies for preventing and reducing the damage which the misuse of alcohol and drugs can inflict are carried through in a series of co-ordinated programmes which include those being developed under "The Health of the Nation" and "Caring for People", and initiatives such as the highly successful European drug prevention week.

"The Health of the Nation"

20. **Mr. John Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what nutritional recommendations her Department will make in order to meet the targets set out in "The Health of the Nation".

Dr. Mawhinney: As promised in the Government's White Paper, we have set up a nutrition task force, under the chairmanship of Dame Barbara Clayton, to recommend a co-ordinated action programme for meeting the nutrition targets.

The task force will meet for the first time on 16 December.

Fund-holding Practices

21. **Mr. Ashby:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the number of complementary therapists employed in *(a)* fund-holding general practitioner practices and *(b)* non-fund-holding general practitioner practices.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not held centrally. However, my hon. Friend will wish to know that it is open to all general practitioners to employ a wide range of staff, including complementary therapists, where appropriate, to assist them in the provision of general medical services.

26. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on progress being made by fund-holding practices.

Dr. Mawhinney: It is clear that fund-holding practices are delivering real benefits to patients. This is reflected in the growing number of practices joining the scheme, which we expect will cover one in four of the population from April 1993.

Prescription Charges

22. **Mr. Gunnell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to increase prescription charges; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: Judgments are made each year about how finite health resources can be best targeted for maximum health gain. Prescription charges are one aspect of these considerations. Any announcements will be made at the appropriate time.

Elderly Population

23. **Mr. Miller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give her best estimates of the impact of the increase in the elderly population on health expenditure; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Milburn) earlier today.

London's Health Services

24. **Ms. Hoey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made in her consideration of the Tomlinson proposals of the effects on the waiting lists in south London if either St. Thomas's or Guy's hospital is closed.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Tomlinson report notes that significant progress has been made in reducing waiting times in London. We shall ensure that the proposals arising from the report continue this trend.

25. **Ms. Jowell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give an undertaking that no beds will be closed in London as a result of the Tomlinson inquiry before steps have been taken to improve community health services.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Ms. Jackson) on 26 November, at column *811*.

Dentistry

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the current situation in Greenwich and Bexley regarding the processing of formal complaints regarding NHS dental treatment.

Dr. Mawhinney: Greenwich and Bexley local dental committee has decided to withdraw its co-operation from dental service committees which are the statutory local bodies set up to investigate complaints alleging that a dentist has breached his or her terms of service. The National Health Service (Service Committees and Tribunal) Regulations require that dental servic

committees include dental practitioners nominated by the local dental committee. Therefore, for the present, dental service committee investigations cannot be conducted for this family health services authority and three complaints are awaiting investigation. I very much regret that some dentists have decided to take action which disrupts this service to patients. I hope they will agree to resume co-operation.

Mr. Dover: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will ensure that the service of salaried dentists will be made available throughout the family health services authority covering the Chorley constituency.

Dr. Mawhinney: An application for approval to appoint a salaried dentist to provide treatment in the Chorley and South Ribble area was received on 1 December. We are dealing with the application as a matter of priority.

Mr. Dover: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the pay review body for dentists is due to commence and complete its investigations.

Dr. Mawhinney: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced on 9 July 1992 that Sir Kenneth Bloomfield had been appointed to carry out a fundamental review of the dental remuneration system. Sir Kenneth has been asked to report before the end of the year.

Patient Statistics

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the number of patients being treated as out-patients and in-patients in *(a)* England and *(b)* the north-west in 1975 and 1991.

Mr. Sackville: The information requested is given in the table.

	In-patients[1]	*Out-patients*
England		
1975	4,975,750	30,947,482
1990-91	7,524,192	36,130,499
North western region		
1975	453,481	2,737,230
1990-91	733,809	3,482,235

[1] For 1975, the information refers to finished hospital stays (discharges and deaths). For 1990-91, the information refers to finished consultant episodes.

A finished hospital stay is a discharge from a hospital—or a death in a hospital—or transfer to another hospital.

A finished consultant episode is a completed period of care of a patient using a bed under the care of one consultant in a particular health authority, and will therefore tend to record a higher count. Finished consultant episodes includes a count of healthy live-born babies who were not counted as finished hospital stays.

Osteopathy

Mr. Tredinnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what recent consideration she has given to the regulation of osteopathy; and if she will make a statement;

(2) if she will make it her policy that patients who consult an osteopath should have a guarantee that their practitioner is trained to minimum standards of competence and is regulated by a governing body capable of enforcing an appropriate code of practice.

Mr. Sackville: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Sevenoaks (Mr. Wolfson) on 3 December at column 320.

Natural Medicines

Mr. Tredinnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps are being taken to ensure that the cost-effectiveness and value of natural medicines are known to health authorities, hospitals, doctors and community health organisations.

Mr. Sackville: The Department sponsors work on cost-effectiveness of interventions in various universities and is currently funding a team of researchers from York and Leeds universities to produce a series of "effectiveness bulletins" to provide information for the national health service. Information bulletins are also produced by the medicines resources centre which provide data on the clinical impact of various pharmaceuticals and their costs of administration. This work is of recent origin and currently covers only a small proportion of interventions. So far, there has been no work on natural medicines, but it is not ruled out in the future.

Mr. Tredinnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how natural medicines will be incorporated into the strategy behind the Government White Paper, "The Health of the Nation".

Mr. Sackville: The national health service, in partnership with voluntary and other organisations, may adopt a variety of approaches in meeting the targets set in the five key areas selected initially for development of "The Health of the Nation" strategy. Natural therapies may be incorporated in local programmes where they are considered appropriate and cost-effective.

Unlicensed Medicines

Mr. Tredinnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to strengthen laws relating to those who supply products that are not licensed as medicines but are advertised or labelled as such.

Dr. Mawhinney: The enforcement unit of the Medicines Control Agency investigates all reports of an unlicensed product being supplied or promoted as a medicinal product, and appropriate action is taken to prevent the supply of such products.

Magnetic Resonance Imaging

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the hospitals in the west midlands region, indicating in respect of each *(a)* whether they provide neurosurgery and neurology and *(b)* whether they have the provision of magnetic resonance imaging.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not collected centrally. The hon. Member may wish to contact Sir James Ackers, the chairman of West Midlands regional health authority, for details.

Regional Health Authorities

Mr. David Martin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the revenue and capital allocations for regional health authorities in 1993-94.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Main revenue allocations for resident population are set out in table 1. These are provisional until Parliament has approved the relevant Supply estimate.

Regions are to receive an average cash increase of 2·7 per cent., and I have decided that all regions should get a minimum increase of 0·4 per cent. above forecast inflation for the hospital and community health services of 1·9 per cent.

This is mainly to enable all regions to make further progress towards resource equalisation between districts.

I will announce capital cash limits for regional health authorities and the external financing limits of national health service trusts at a later date. Table 2 sets out the planning totals for each region. Regional health authorities and NHS Management Executive outposts will be giving me agreed proposals for the deployment of these planning totals between the regional capital programme and NHS trusts within each region.

Table 1
Regional Health Authority Allocations: 1993-94
Revenue Allocations for Resident Populations

	Allocation for Resident Populations (£000s)	*Percentage Increase Over Inflation*
Northern	1,159,723	1·03
Yorkshire	1,334,886	0·67
Trent	1,672,751	1·16
East Anglia	704,794	1·18
North West Thames	1,320,749	0·40
North East Thames	1,490,187	0·40
South East Thames	1,439,276	0·40
South West Thames	1,116,107	0·40
Wessex	1,033,656	1·48
Oxford	794,779	0·86
South Western	1,185,708	1·16
West Midlands	1,855,142	1·60
Mersey	890,032	0·58
North Western	1,505,427	0·70
England	17,503,217	0·80

Table 2
NHS regional main capital planning totals for 1993-94

Region (both NHS trusts' and health authorities' main capital expenditure)	*Regional capital planning total (£ millions)*
Northern	105
Yorkshire	122
Trent	154
East Anglian	67
North West Thames	102
North East Thames	115
South East Thames	119
South West Thames	91
Wessex	97
Oxford	75
South Western	111
West Midlands	170
Mersey	80
North Western	135
Total	1,543

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish a table showing the financial allocation for each regional health authority for 1992-93 and 1993-94.

Mr. Sackville: The table shows the 1992-93 revenue allocation for resident population of each regional health authority as announced on 5 December 1991 by the then Secretary of State, my right hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave), at columns 262-63.

In addition to initial allocations for resident population, regions are given cash limit additions for specific purposes throughout the year.

For details of the regional allocation for 1993-94, I refer the hon. Member to the reply my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State gave my hon. Friend the Member for Portsmouth, South (Mr. Martin) today.

Region	*1992-93 Allocation for resident population £ million*
Northern	1,106·7
Yorkshire	1,276·4
Trent	1,593·6
East Anglian	669·2
North West Thames	1,260·0
North East Thames	1,448·2
South East Thames	1,383·1
South West Thames	1,078·2
Wessex	980·9
Oxford	758·2
South Western	1,128·0
West Midlands	1,766·6
Mersey	856·7
North Western	1,439·6
All regions	16,745·4

Low Birth Weight

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment her Department has made of the factors which result in low birth weight of children born to mothers resident in bed-and-breakfast accommodation in receipt of income support.

Mr. Sackville: Studies have shown that there are many factors associated with low birth weight. It is difficult to identify individual risk factors which may be significant in particular circumstances, for instance, women living in bed-and-breakfast accommodation. However, the importance of a balanced diet for the general health and well-being of pregnant women and their children has long been recognised and for that reason, pregnant women receiving income support are entitled to free milk and supplementary vitamins. Other important considerations are timely access to antenatal care and advice from relevant health professionals and reducing smoking in pregnancy, the latter being a significant factor in weight differences between babies. As a priority for 1992-93, the chief executive of the National Health Service Management Executive has asked all health authorities to focus on measures to reduce smoking in pregnancy and to improve women's access to maternity services. A number of innovative schemes have been introduced by health authorities across the country to improve access to maternity care for women living in the inner city. A scheme in Mersey region, based at the Princes Park health centre in Toxteth, is directing services specifically at women living in bed-and-breakfast and hostel accommodation.

Audit Commission

Mr. Hawksley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the work of the Audit Commission in respect of the national health service.

Mr. Sackville: The National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990 extended the remit of the Audit Commission to include the external audit of health bodies. This encompasses the audit of financial regularity and studies aimed at improving the economy, efficiency and effectiveness with which services are provided. The work of the commission is described more fully in its annual report, copies of which are available in the Library.

NHS Chairmen

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what criteria she uses in selecting and appointing chairmen of national health service trusts and health authorities.

Dr. Mawhinney: Chairmen and members are appointed to national health service trusts and health authorities for the personal qualities, knowledge and skills they can bring to the post.

NHS Pay

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance will be issued to enforce the 1·5 per cent. pay rise ceiling she has set for NHS staff; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo) on 23 November at column *505*.

Medical Complaints

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will take measures to speed up medical complaints procedures and make them more patient-friendly.

Mr. Sackville: The patients charter has given people the right to have any complaint about national health service services—whoever provides them—investigated and to receive a full and prompt written reply from the chief executive or the general manager.

In addition, the recent extension of the patients charter into primary health care has set targets for family health services authorities to improve their performance in dealing with complaints about general medical services.

Hib Vaccine

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the arrangements for general practitioners to call in children aged seven to 11 months in order for them to be vaccinated with haemophilus influenzae type B vaccine.

Mr. Sackville: Haemophilus influenzae B (Hib) immunisation was launched on 1 October this year as a major addition to the Government's programme for the prevention of childhood diseases. General practitioners were sent an information pack at the end of July, which explained the need for a phased schedule of immunisation to ensure that those children most at risk from invasive haemophilus disease—aged up to 12 months—were immunised first. In accordance with the schedule children aged between seven and 11 months are being called in for immunisation between October 1992 and March 1993. The objective is to immunise all children aged under four years by September 1993.

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many children have been inoculated with haemophilus influenzae type B since it was introudced between the ages of seven and 11 months; and how many such children have been refused such inoculation in the current year.

Mr. Sackville: Information on the numbers of children immunised with Hib vaccine between the ages of seven and 11 months is not available. Arrangements have been made for all these children to be offered Hib vaccine in accordance with the call-up schedule provided for general practitioners and clinics. Two million doses of Hib vaccine had been made available nationally by the end of November.

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much has been spent publicising the dangers of haemophilus influenzae to children between the ages of seven and 11 months.

Mr. Sackville: The Department of Health and the Health Education Authority have worked together in preparing publicity about haemophilus influenzae b (Hib) immunisation. Publicity is being directed at parents with children aged under four years with special emphasis on children aged under one year because these children are more vulnerable to the disease. Expenditure on television advertising, local radio campaigns, display advertisements in the mother and baby press, leaflets and posters will amount to £1·4 million in the current financial year.

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much of the haemophilus influenzae type B vaccine has been made available to general practitioners in Devon; and if she will make a statement on the rationing arrangements for haemophilus influenzae type B vaccine to doctors in Devon for inoculation of children aged seven to 11 months.

Mr. Sackville: The distribution of the two brands of haemophilus influenzae type b (Hib) vaccine to the health districts in Devon for delivery to both general practitioners and clinics up to 30 November is set out. The number of doses of Act Hib required in each district were calculated according to a formula based on the local birth rate.

Health district	*Act Hib (mainly for children below 12 months of age. These children receive 3 doses each.)* Doses	*Hib TITER (for children between 1 and 4 years of age. These children receive 1 dose each.)* Doses
Exeter	4,240	1,350
North Devon	3,150	2,270
Plymouth	10,460	5,700
Torbay	3,860	2,870

A further delivery of the Act Hib vaccine, 3,000 doses for Exeter and 500 doses for Plymouth, was due to be made on 7 December.

The orders that have been fulfilled and the amount planned for delivery over the coming months will be enough to enable all children in Devon under the age of

four to be immunised by September 1993. It is the responsibility of local health authorities to arrange equitable distribution of the vaccine they receive, according to the requirements of clinics and general practitioners, and to make any adjustments to the supply arrangements considered necessary.

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement about the availability of haemophilus influenza type B vaccine; from where it is purchased; how much has been spent on it; and what problems have arisen in relation to distribution.

Mr. Sackville: The vaccine is supplied by two manufacturers, Merieux under the name "Act Hib", and Lederle/Praxis under the name "Hib TITER". In the first two months of the programme, 2 million doses were distributed. By March 1993, the number of doses distributed will have increased to 5 million—more than enough to cover all children aged under one year and to allow for the immunisation of many older children who would otherwise be called in at a later stage in the programme. The objective is to immunise all children under four years of age by September 1993. Expenditure so far has totalled £9 million, with further substantial payments to be made in this and future financial years. If there are any local problems on distribution, it is for the responsible health authority to take the necessary action to put matters right.

Wellbury House

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what advice has been given to Hertfordshire social services department in relation to future steps to regulate activities at Wellbury house;

(2) what assessment she has made of the suitability of conditions at Wellbury house for people under the age of 18 years to reside in the premises; and if she will make a statement;

(3) what steps have been taken to register Wellbury house in Hertfordshire as a voluntary children's home; when application forms were received; what action she has taken; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: It is the responsibility of Hertfordshire county council to judge whether conditions at Wellbury house are suitable for children accommodated there. General guidance on the protection of the welfare of children has been issued to all local authorities.

Ashworth Special Hospital

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on her plans to review conditions at Ashworth special hospital.

Mr. Yeo: The report of the committee of inquiry into complaints about Ashworth hospital, chaired by Sir Louis Blom-Cooper QC, was published on 5 August. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has made it clear that we and the Special Hospitals Service Authority (SHSA) accepted the great majority of the report's recommendations, and set out the action being taken on the issues it raised.

The finding of improper conduct and ill-treatment of patients by a number of staff were to be dealt with in accordance with the SHSA's disciplinary procedures. As a result of these two of the staff concerned have now been dismissed, one has been demoted, two given final written warnings and one a first written warning. In five cases no action was taken following the disciplinary hearing and one case was not proceeded with.

My right hon. Friend also stated that the SHSA were drawing up an action plan for implementing the agreed recommendations and that a task force was being formed at the hospital—with reinforcement from outside—to take immediate responsibility for carrying it out. We have approved the action plan which the SHSA submitted, as it was required to, at the end of August. The work of the task force is supervised by a steering committee comprising the chairman, vice-chairman and chief executive of the SHSA, which is submitting regular progress reports to me. We will be arranging an independent audit of the action taken on the Inquiry report during the course of next year.

The inquiry reported on unacceptable literature being circulated at the hospital and two former senior police officers have been appointed to investigate this. To date, two members of staff have been suspended as a result of these investigations.

My right hon. Friend also announced that we were forming a working group to consider the most effective provision of services for patients requiring psychiatric treatment in conditions of high security, and the relationship between such services and those provided within national health service regions and the prison service. This group, which is chaired by Dr. John Reed of the Department of Health, started work in October and is due to report by April next year.

My right hon. Friend's statement made clear our concern about the findings of the Inquiry report about a number of aspects of the care and treatment provided at Ashworth hospital. It also recognised the excellent work which is done at Ashworth by many dedicated staff. The action we have taken, and which is continuing, demonstrates our commitment to support and develop this work while tackling the deficiencies revealed by the report and their underlying causes.

Cancelled Operations

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list for every health authority in England *(a)* the total number and *(b)* the percentage of operating theatre sessions cancelled in 1991-92.

Mr. Sackville: Information at district health authority level for 1991-92 is not yet available. A summary booklet containing the information will be published early in the new year and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Hospital Consultations

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the cost of introducing job evaluation schemes for hospital consultations in the west midlands; and whether the work was awarded as a result of competitive tender.

Dr. Mawhinney: This is a matter for West Midlands regional health authority. The hon. Member may wish to contact Sir Hamza Aziz, the chairman of West Midlands RHA, for details.

Codex Alimentarius Commission

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the activities of the Codex Alimentarius Commission; and what discussions her Department has had with the commission.

Mr. Sackville: The Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) is a subsidiary body of the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations and the World Health Organisation. Membership is open to all member nations and associate members of the two organisations. The CAC aims to facilitate world food trade through agreed, harmonised standards with adequate protection for consumer health. CAC work is done through subsidiary committees which deal with particular commodities and general food issues, and through regional groupings for geographical areas.

This Department plays a full and active part in the Committee on Food Hygiene and is currently drafting a revised text on general principles of food hygiene for that committee.

The document "Introducing Codex Alimentarius" contains full details on the work of the CAC and I have arranged for a copy to be placed in the Library.

NHS Supplies Authority

Mr. Bluphett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the financial turnover for the National Health Service Supplies Authority in the last year for which figures are available; and if she will make a statement on its future operation.

Dr. Mawhinney: The National Health Service Supplies Authority was established in October 1991 but has only assumed full operational responsibility for all supply matters with effect from 1 October 1992. Its annualised turnover for the current financial year is expected to be £510 million, plus an additional £3,000 million for goods and services procured on behalf of customers which are delivered and invoiced directly to them.

NHS Supplies was set up:

- to provide a professional and responsive supplies service that meets both the present and future needs of its customers;
- to ensure the best value for money for every pound the NHS spends on goods and services; and
- to save its customers money that could be better spent on health care.

The performance of NHS Supplies against targets agreed with the authority will be subject to continuing scrutiny by the NHS Management Executive.

Nurses and Midwives

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give for each of the last five years for England and for each national health service region *(a)* the total number of whole-time equivalent nurses and midwives employed in the hospital and community health services on 30 September and *(b)* the total number of agency nurses and midwives working in the hospital and community health services on 30 September.

Mr. Sackville: The information is given in the tables.

Nursing and midwifery staff by geographical area England—September 1987 to 1991 (wte)
Excluding agency staff[1]

Regional health authorities	September 1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
Northern	27,540	27,770	27,800	27,310	27,270
Yorkshire	30,300	30,150	30,120	30,030	29,460
Trent	37,970	38,250	38,100	38,210	37,950
East Anglia	15,750	15,950	16,150	16,140	15,730
North West Thames	26,800	26,670	26,810	26,480	26,480
North East Thames	32,410	32,730	32,890	32,980	32,750
South East Thames	29,650	29,280	29,350	29,110	28,280
South West Thames	23,250	23,030	22,940	22,120	21,590
Wessex	23,160	23,620	23,360	23,690	23,570
Oxford	17,690	16,930	16,950	17,080	16,820
South Western	27,360	27,220	27,150	27,340	27,030
West Midlands	42,910	41,870	42,130	42,070	41,300
Mersey	21,950	22,110	21,960	21,090	20,100
North Western	37,190	37,490	37,510	36,990	36,480
London post graduate special health authorities	4,570	4,570	4,820	4,650	5,270
England total	397,910	397,650	398,030	395,360	[1]392,200

Source: Department of health HAP(STATS)B annual census of NHS non-medical manpower.
Note: All figures are independently rounded to the nearest 10 whole-time equivalents.
[1] The total for 1991 includes about 2,100 WTEs which are not included in the figures above. The corresponding shortfall for 1987-90 inclusive is much smaller.

Agency nursing and midwifery staff working in the NHS by geographical area 1987-91 England at 30 September each year
(wte)

Regional health authorities	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
Northern	—	—	—	—	—
Yorkshire	90	180	160	120	110
Trent	—	30	180	10	130
East Anglia	220	190	190	200	240
North West Thames	990	1,160	1,540	1,080	710
North East Thames	1,900	1,750	1,530	1,190	910
South East Thames	1,130	1,200	1,250	1,000	430
South West Thames	670	740	1,000	950	520
Wessex	—	60	40	—	10
Oxford	90	90	100	230	180
South Western	60	80	190	150	70
West Midlands	280	290	410	1,150	370
Mersey	60	80	70	90	70
North Western[1]	60	50	110	140	90
London Post Graduate Special Health Authorities	580	330	500	320	90
England Total	6,130	6,240	7,230	6,710	3,930

Source: Department of Health HAP(STATS)II annual census of NHS non-medical manpower.
Note: All figures independently rounded to nearest 10 whole-time equivalents.
[1] Figures are unreliable.
[2] Less than 5.
[3] Nil or negligible.

Limited List Prescribing

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her estimate of the savings which might accrue from the extensions to the limited list prescribing system which have been announced; and when it was made.

Dr. Mawhinney: Savings will depend on the recommendations of the Advisory Committee on National Health Service Drugs.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information the advisory committee which is to consider the new categories on the limited list has been given about the savings which it is hoped might be made by the Department through the extension of the limited list prescribing system.

Dr. Mawhinney: None.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether the advisory committee which is to consider the new categories relating to the limited list prescribing system is able to recommend a nil entry under one or more category heading.

Dr. Mawhinney: Yes.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whom she consulted about the definitions of the new categories which are to be considered in connection with the limited list prescribing system; and when that consultation took place.

Dr. Mawhinney: The new categories reflect those used in the British National Formulary which are generally recognised by doctors and dentists and pharmacists.

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what studies she conducted, and what criteria she used in assessing the results, in coming to an assessment on the impact on patients and other users of her decision to extend the limited list prescribing arrangements.

Dr. Mawhinney: No such studies were necessary. Extending the scope of the selected list scheme to ten new therapeutic categories will not affect patients' or other users' ability to receive the medicines they need when they need them and for as long as they need them. As now, decisions on individual drugs will be taken on the basis of advice from the independent Advisory Committee on NHS Drugs comprising doctors, dentists and pharmacists appointed after consultation with relevant professional organisations. The drugs necessary to meet all clinical needs will remain available on NHS prescription.

Community Care

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to ensure that education opportunities paid for by her Department for people returning to the community from long-stay institutions are not reduced when responsibility for funding further and continuing education is transferred from local authority control in April 1993; what plans she has in place to monitor such provision; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: The establishment of the further education funding councils, from April 1993, and the transfer to them of some of the local education authorities' statutory duties to secure the provision of further education, has not changed local authorities duties towards disabled people under section 2(1)(c) of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970. Local authorities have a clear duty under this Act to make arrangements for assisting a disabled person, who is ordinarily resident in their area, in taking advantage of educational opportunities available to him or her, if they are satisfied that it is necessary in order to meet that person's needs. Such assistance might, in appropriate cases, include the funding by the local authority of the personal care required to enable the student in question to pursue his or her studies. It is, of course, for the authority to decide in each case, what the individual's needs are, and how they are to be met.

Prime responsibility for monitoring the implementation of the Act rests with local authorities themselves, to ensure that their policies are compatible with their legal obligations. The Department receives regular returns on certain services provided by local authorities under the Act, as well as information from other sources including the social services inspectorate. We follow up specific cases, referred to the Department, where it is alleged that a local authority is in breech of its statutory duties.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received concerning her requirement for local authorities to spend a fixed percentage of community care funding on independent sector provision after April.

Mr. Yeo: We have consulted widely on our proposals for funding community care. I received a number of representations on this particular point, all of which were carefully considered before the final decision was reached.

Nutrition Task Force

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on *(a)* the establishment of her Department's nutritution task force, *(b)* its terms of reference, *(c)* its timetable for reporting and *(d)* the names of the members of the task force and their professional qualifications.

Dr. Mawhinney: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced the membership of the nutrition task force on 7 December 1992. The terms of reference are to be agreed at its first meeting on 16 December 1992. We anticipate receiving the nutrition task force's report on the proposed action programme by late spring 1993, details will then be published. Further details are available in the Library (Department of Health press notice H92/438).

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action she is taking to implement the existing guidelines of "The Health of the Nation" White Paper; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The nutrition task force will consider the opportunities for the promotion of healthy eating. This will include issuing voluntary nutritional guidelines for catering establishments.

NHS Surgery Costs

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the estimated average cost of NHS procedures for *(a)* total hip replacement, *(b)* total knee replacement, *(c)* coronary artery bypass grafting, *(d)* mitral/aortic valve replacement, *(e)* hernia repair, *(f)* stripping of varicose veins, *(g)* hysterectomy, *(h)* tonsillectomy, *(i)* cataract extraction/lens implant, *(j)* kidney transplant, *(k)* heart transplant and *(l)* heart/lung transplant.

Mr. Sackville: The information available is shown in the table. All estimates of average cost are at 1991-92 prices and inclusive of an allowance for capital charges. Estimates are not available for total knee replacement, stripping of varicose veins, and heart/lung transplant procedures.

NHS procedure	*Estimated average cost (£-1991-92 prices)*
Hip Replacement	3,810
Coronary Artery by-pass graft	5,870
Heart Valve Replacement	8,800
Inguinal Hernia	1,140
Hysterectomy	2,050
Tonsillectomy	590
Cataract Extraction	1,230
Kidney Transplant	13,050
Heart Transplant	26,400

NHS Expenditure

27. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many extra patients are expected to be treated as a result of the financial settlement for the NHS in 1993-94.

Mr. Sackville: We expect an increase of at least 2·5 per cent. in hospital and community health service activity in the national health service in 1993-94. This corresponds to about 190,000 acute in-patients and day cases and an extra 1 million community nursing contacts with equivalent increases in other areas.

28. **Mr. Moss:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much the Government plans to spend on the NHS in 1993-94; and what was spent in 1978-79.

Mr. Sackville: Government spending on the NHS in England is planned to be £29 billion in 1993-94, compared with £6·3 billion in 1978-79. This represents a real terms increase of over 59 per cent.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the level of current spending on the hospital and community health services for each NHS region and for the special health authorities, in each year since 1974-75 *(a)* in cash terms, *(b)* adjusted using the gross domestic product deflator and *(c)* adjusted using the NHS pay and prices index.

Mr. Sackville *[holding answer 11 November 1992]:* The information requested for the financial years 1974-75 to 1990-91 is shown in the table. Information for 1991-92 will be available shortly.

Total revenue expenditure on hospital and community health services (HCHS)

1974-75

£000

Regions	*Cash*	*Input volume terms*	*Real terms*
Northern	146,761	854,296	714,204
Yorkshire	166,145	967,130	808,535
Trent	182,483	1,062,245	888,052
East Anglian	77,289	449,899	376,122
North West Thames	212,895	1,239,262	1,036,041
North East Thames	231,944	1,350,146	1,128,742
South East Thames	208,755	1,215,163	1,015,894
South West Thames	171,278	997,009	833,514
Wessex	117,059	681,400	569,661
Oxford	98,613	574,026	479,894
South Western	143,467	835,121	698,174
West Midlands	224,244	1,305,324	1,091,270
Mersey	130,351	758,773	634,345
North Western	196,021	1,141,038	953,924
SHAs	43,821	255,082	213,252
Total	2,351,128	13,685,916	11,441,623

1975-76

£000

	Cash	*Input volume terms*	*Real terms*
Regions			
Northern	192,196	868,534	745,088
Yorkshire	216,894	980,144	840,835
Trent	244,361	1,104,267	947,317
East Anglian	103,253	466,600	400,282
North West Thames	276,796	1,250,841	1,073,058
North East Thames	298,422	1,348,569	1,156,896
South East Thames	279,572	1,263,386	1,083,820
South West Thames	220,010	994,225	852,915
Wessex	152,292	688,208	590,392
Oxford	129,757	586,372	503,030
South Western	188,419	851,465	730,446
West Midlands	297,457	1,344,208	1,153,155
Mersey	169,250	764,841	656,133
North Western	255,945	1,156,615	992,225
SHAs	56,548	255,540	219,220
Total	3,081,172	13,923,816	11,944,810

1976-77

£000

Regions	*Cash*	*Input volume terms*	*Real terms*
Northern	215,974	857,633	737,486
Yorkshire	249,753	991,769	852,832
Trent	283,301	1,124,988	967,388
East Anglian	119,672	475,218	408,644
North West Thames	308,533	1,225,185	1,053,548
North East Thames	338,128	1,342,706	1,154,606
South East Thames	321,373	1,276,172	1,097,392
South West Thames	247,062	981,083	843,643
Wessex	175,498	696,903	599,273
Oxford	148,581	590,015	507,360
South Western	215,618	856,219	736,271
West Midlands	339,911	1,349,787	1,160,694
Mersey	189,657	753,128	647,622
North Western	294,868	1,170,921	1,006,884
SHAs	64,423	255,834	219,983

Regions	Cash	Input volume terms	Real terms
Total	3,512,352	13,947,550	11,993,628

1977-78

£000

Regions	Cash	Input volume terms	Real terms
Northern	242,429	886,583	728,140
Yorkshire	279,253	1,021,228	838,742
Trent	321,868	1,177,071	966,737
East Anglian	136,202	498,091	409,085
North West Thames	345,017	1,261,727	1,036,265
North East Thames	372,460	1,362,088	1,118,691
South East Thames	356,258	1,302,836	1,070,028
South West Thames	271,952	994,528	816,813
Wessex	198,111	724,492	595,030
Oxford	163,895	599,364	492,262
South Western	241,844	884,424	726,383
West Midlands	380,897	1,392,940	1,144,032
Mersey	213,117	779,369	640,101
North Western	335,239	1,225,969	1,006,897
SHAs	72,560	265,352	217,935
Total	3,931,102	14,376,040	11,807,143

1978-79

£000

Regions	Cash	Input volume terms	Real terms
Northern	277,406	925,426	751,437
Yorkshire	313,533	1,045,945	849,298
Trent	369,227	1,231,741	1,000,162
East Anglian	154,459	515,275	418,399
North West Thames	380,010	1,267,713	1,029,371
North East Thames	413,284	1,378,715	1,119,504
South East Thames	395,880	1,320,656	1,072,360
South West Thames	303,176	1,011,395	821,243
Wessex	223,569	745,826	605,604
Oxford	184,427	615,248	499,576
South Western	272,319	908,456	737,658
West Midlands	432,881	1,444,091	1,172,588
Mersey	238,074	794,215	644,895
North Western	382,627	1,276,444	1,036,460
SHAs	80,619	268,945	218,381
Total	4,421,491	14,750,094	11,976,935

1979-80

£000

Regions	Cash	Input volume terms	Real terms
Northern	337,997	935,914	784,684
Yorkshire	380,746	1,054,286	883,928
Trent	449,348	1,244,245	1,043,193
East Anglian	188,939	523,172	438,633
North West Thames	450,636	1,247,816	1,046,183
North East Thames	488,198	1,351,820	1,133,305
South East Thames	471,151	1,304,617	1,093,810
South West Thames	361,292	1,000,418	838,765
Wessex	271,164	750,853	629,526
Oxford	223,651	619,290	519,231
South Western	332,138	919,690	771,082
West Midlands	532,172	1,473,584	1,235,475
Mersey	287,489	796,057	667,458

Regions	Cash	Input volume terms	Real terms
North Western	463,250	1,282,739	1,075,467
SHAs	94,751	262,366	219,971
Total	5,332,922	14,766,861	12,380,752

1980-81

£000

Regions	Cash	Input Volume Terms	Real Terms
Northern	437,025	945,285	857,417
Yorkshire	494,198	1,068,950	969,587
Trent	585,409	1,266,240	1,148,587
East Anglian	244,605	529,081	479,900
North West Thames	580,117	1,254,793	1,138,155
North East Thames	636,251	1,376,211	1,248,256
South East Thames	603,001	1,304,291	1,183,052
South West Thames	465,365	1,006,584	913,018
Wessex	349,377	755,702	685,457
Oxford	285,343	617,197	559,826
South Western	426,839	923,253	837,433
West Midlands	681,869	1,474,883	1,337,786
Mersey	368,928	797,991	723,815
North Western	603,630	1,305,652	1,184,286
SHAs	123,474	267,074	242,249
Total	6,885,431	14,893,187	13,508,802

1981-82

£000

Regions	Cash	Input volume terms	Real terms
Northern	482,670	964,857	863,632
Yorkshire	547,802	1,095,036	980,171
Trent	646,945	1,293,243	1,157,566
East Anglian	269,169	538,069	481,619
North West Thames	649,984	1,299,318	1,163,003
North East Thames	700,172	1,399,644	1,252,804
South East Thames	662,702	1,324,741	1,185,759
South West Thames	515,008	1,029,501	921,494
Wessex	389,027	777,665	696,078
Oxford	313,135	625,957	560,286
South Western	474,291	948,108	848,639
West Midlands	751,667	1,502,582	1,344,943
Mersey	407,417	814,427	728,983
North Western	679,828	1,358,976	1,216,403
SHAs	140,168	280,196	250,800
Total	7,629,985	15,252,540	13,652,180

1982-83

£000

Regions	Cash	Input volume terms	Real terms
Northern	520,838	977,613	869,982
Yorkshire	583,406	1,095,053	974,493
Trent	686,746	1,307,792	1,163,810
East Anglian	288,951	542,361	482,649
North West Thames	633,215	1,188,586	1,057,691
North East Thames	800,677	1,502,871	1,337,411
South East Thames	700,421	1,314,690	1,169,948
South West Thames	530,593	995,548	885,942
Wessex	418,407	785,350	698,688

Regions	Cash	Input volume terms	Real terms
Oxford	334,669	638,174	559,014
South Western	597,281	952,166	847,337
West Midlands	809,722	1,519,848	1,352,519
Mersey	436,241	818,824	728,675
North Western	729,550	1,369,265	1,218,684
HIAs	150,712	282,836	251,742
Total	8,141,229	15,281,687	13,598,702

1983-84

£000

Regions	Cash	Input volume terms	Real terms
Northern	553,996	989,437	884,416
Yorkshire	619,586	1,106,581	989,126
Trent	742,437	1,325,992	1,185,249
East Anglian	312,485	558,088	498,889
North West Thames	665,435	1,188,467	1,062,320
North East Thames	841,120	1,502,258	1,342,805
South East Thames	739,438	1,320,636	1,180,461
South West Thames	559,102	998,556	892,567
Wessex	449,145	802,173	717,029
Oxford	352,838	630,169	563,281
South Western	540,430	965,208	862,759
West Midlands	861,251	1,538,194	1,374,927
Mersey	456,590	815,470	728,914
North Western	769,183	1,373,761	1,227,947
HIAs	162,311	289,887	259,118
Total	8,625,357	15,404,888	13,769,779

1984-85

£000

Regions	Cash	Input volume terms	Real terms
Northern	586,852	990,606	892,256
Yorkshire	657,579	1,109,993	999,798
Trent	795,285	1,342,441	1,209,159
East Anglian	335,302	565,990	509,797
North West Thames	701,170	1,183,575	1,066,066
North East Thames	881,327	1,487,680	1,339,978
South East Thames	772,108	1,303,318	1,173,921
South West Thames	586,269	989,607	891,356
Wessex	482,636	814,690	733,803
Oxford	381,948	644,728	580,718
South Western	571,018	963,878	868,181
West Midlands	919,293	1,551,702	1,397,644
Mersey	483,314	815,834	734,835
North Western	814,690	1,374,859	1,238,359
HIAs	166,318	280,731	252,859
Total	9,134,854	15,419,634	13,888,723

1985-86

£000

Regions	Cash	Input volume terms	Real terms
Northern	930,085	995,236	893,468
Yorkshire	899,526	1,122,739	1,007,933
Trent	943,156	1,353,265	1,214,887
East Anglian	550,247	574,986	516,191

Regions	Cash	Input volume terms	Real terms
North West Thames	728,848	1,169,881	1,050,183
North East Thames	914,188	1,467,272	1,317,235
South East Thames	807,525	1,296,078	1,163,547
South West Thames	608,276	976,283	876,453
Wessex	506,941	813,640	730,441
Oxford	402,374	645,810	579,773
South Western	603,266	968,242	869,234
West Midlands	973,915	1,563,134	1,403,295
Mersey	507,924	815,218	731,858
North Western	860,336	1,380,839	1,239,641
HIAs	174,792	280,541	251,854
Total	9,609,399	15,433,085	13,845,991

1986-87

£000s

Regions	Cash	Input volume terms	Real terms
Northern	664,666	997,864	927,196
Yorkshire	748,109	1,122,912	1,043,597
Trent	914,488	1,372,646	1,275,692
East Anglian	389,423	584,524	543,237
North West Thames	777,781	1,167,449	1,084,989
North East Thames	976,100	1,465,126	1,361,640
South East Thames	857,088	1,286,489	1,195,621
South West Thames	650,071	975,757	906,836
Wessex	549,152	824,277	766,056
Oxford	433,809	651,147	605,155
South Western	650,026	975,689	906,773
West Midlands	1,049,734	1,575,651	1,464,358
Mersey	542,821	814,774	757,224
North Western	922,352	1,384,450	1,286,643
HIAs	191,546	287,511	267,203
Total	10,317,166	15,486,066	14,392,240

1987-88

£000

	Cash	Input volume terms	Real terms
Regions			
Northern	726,424	1,005,371	961,066
Yorkshire	817,426	1,131,318	1,081,463
Trent	1,009,393	1,397,000	1,335,437
East Anglian	431,278	596,889	570,585
North West Thames	832,773	1,152,561	1,101,770
North East Thames	1,048,946	1,451,741	1,387,766
South East Thames	928,872	1,285,559	1,228,907
South West Thames	744,435	1,030,298	984,895
Wessex	599,818	830,148	793,565
Oxford	478,889	662,782	633,575
South Western	710,039	982,694	939,389
West Midlands	1,149,328	1,590,670	1,520,572
Mersey	589,166	815,406	779,473
North Western	1,002,641	1,387,655	1,326,504
HIAs	287,381	286,877	274,235
Total	11,276,711	15,806,968	14,919,201

1988-89

£000

Regions	Cash	Input volume terms	Real terms
Northern	982,652	1,004,933	990,332
Yorkshire	901,280	1,128,483	1,112,008
Trent	1,121,344	1,403,923	1,383,525
East Anglian	487,695	609,843	600,983
North West Thames	945,712	1,184,031	1,166,829
North East Thames	1,178,457	1,475,428	1,453,992
South East Thames	1,039,270	1,301,166	1,282,262
South West Thames	829,204	1,038,163	1,023,089
Wessex	671,018	840,115	827,909
Oxford	537,279	672,673	662,900
South Western	788,652	987,392	973,047
West Midlands	1,266,424	1,585,563	1,562,527
Mersey	647,160	810,244	798,472
North Western	1,104,796	1,383,285	1,363,188
SHAs	234,692	293,834	289,565
Total	12,555,045	15,718,916	15,490,540

1989-90

£000

Regions	Cash	Input Volume Terms	Real Terms
Northern	862,403	1,008,149	998,344
Yorkshire	971,646	1,135,854	1,124,897
Trent	1,211,905	1,416,717	1,402,938
East Anglian	528,194	617,459	611,453
North West Thames	1,024,712	1,197,888	1,186,237
North East Thames	1,276,820	1,492,693	1,478,085
South East Thames	1,115,590	1,304,125	1,291,440
South West Thames	903,224	1,055,869	1,045,599
Wessex	724,776	847,263	839,022
Oxford	587,380	686,647	679,969
South Western	852,097	996,101	986,413
West Midlands	1,381,172	1,614,590	1,598,886
Mersey	699,483	817,696	809,743
North Western	1,174,578	1,373,082	1,359,727
SHAs	259,397	303,233	300,286
Total	13,573,577	15,867,278	15,712,948

1990-91

£000

Regions	Cash	Input volume terms	
Northern	931,401	1,014,296	996,599
Yorkshire	1,057,999	1,152,161	1,132,059
Trent	1,303,099	1,419,075	1,394,316
East Anglian	580,241	631,882	620,858
North West Thames	1,102,738	1,200,882	1,179,930
North East Thames	1,373,232	1,495,450	1,469,358
South East Thames	1,216,480	1,324,747	1,301,634
South West Thames	960,135	1,045,587	1,027,344
Wessex	796,069	866,919	851,794
Oxford	635,679	692,254	680,177
South Western	934,319	1,017,473	999,721
West Midlands	1,510,106	1,644,505	1,615,813
Mersey	753,635	820,709	806,389
North Western	1,267,169	1,379,947	1,355,871
SHAs	287,586	313,181	307,717
Total	14,709,888	16,019,068	15,739,580

Source: Annual accounts of regional and district health authorities in England and those of the special health authorities for the London postgraduate teaching hospitals. (Predecessor authorities prior to 1983-83)

Notes:

1. HCHS—covers all the services managed and/or accounted for by the authorities during the relevant financial years. It includes hospital, community health, patient transport (ie ambulance), blood transfusion and other services.

2. The figures have been expressed in input volume terms at 1991-92 prices by the use of the HCHS revenue pay and prices index—currently available to 1991-92, only—and in real terms at 1991-92 prices by the use of gross domestic product deflators. Some columns may not add up precisely because of roundings.

3. The figures for all regions prior to 1985-86 include an element for the administrative expenses of family practitioner committees, which prior to 1 April 1985 were associated with district health authorities, and such costs were not separately identified.

4. During the period a number of boundary changes occurred—most significantly between North East and North West Thames regions between 1981-82 and 1982-83.

5. Capital expenditure and all expenditure incurred by special health authorities providing central services to the NHS is excluded.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 9 December 1992

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will set out the new initiatives planned by Her Majesty's Government to stop the spread of nuclear weapons, mentioned in the pamphlet "Britain in Europe".

Mr. Garel-Jones: The Maastricht European Council agreed that nuclear non-proliferation was an area where member states might take joint action under the Maastricht treaty. Preparatory work by the Twelve has begun on specific initiatives that might be taken, to be completed by the entry into force of the treaty.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will set out the specific new measures taken by European political co-operation during the United Kingdom presidency of the European Council to strengthen nuclear non-proliferation policy of the European Community.

Mr. Garel-Jones: During the United Kingdom presidency, the European non-proliferation working group has met twice. In addition to its general discussions, it has specifically decided, in order to assist the International Atomic Energy Agency in the discharge of its safeguards obligations, that the Community and its member states will provide to the agency, on a voluntary basis, additional information on production inventories and international transfers of nuclear material and on exports of certain relevant equipment and non-nuclear material. The provision of this information will begin next year.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government with respect to adherence to the restrictions and guidelines set out in the series of International Atomic Energy Agency documents known as INFCIRC/209; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Garel-Jones: INFCIRC/209/Rev.1 was published in November 1990 and incorporates amendments made since the original document was released in 1974. The document has no status in international law, but the arrangements it contains are an important contribution to the non-proliferation regime and are fully adhered to by Her Majesty's Government, who insist on full-scope safeguards as a condition for the supply of nuclear materials and equipment listed in the document.

Albania

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will inform the Albanian Government that arms sales by Britain are conditional on the ending of public executions in that country.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) on 30 November, at column 4, concerning our policy on arms sales to Albania.

East Timor

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking to encourage the Indonesian Government to allow human rights groups and journalists access to East Timor.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Journalists and non-governmental organisations have been able to visit East Timor. In our regular contacts with the Indonesian Government, we encourage them to facilitate such access.

BBC World Service

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what criteria he uses to measure the efficiency and effectiveness of the BBC World Service.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the World Service regularly review the performance and cost-effectiveness of World Service broadcasts in meeting agreed objectives and targets. The main factors are the audibility of broadcasts, the size and profile of their audiences and the impact and influence of programmes.

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the benefits accruing to Britain from the introduction of the BBC World Service Television.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We welcome the success of BBC World Service Television in bringing high-quality British TV news reporting and other programmes to international audiences over an increasing area of the world. Reports from various sources, including our diplomatic missions, indicate that WSTV news and current affairs broadcasts are making a significant contribution to Britain's standing abroad.

United Nations Forces

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the total number of troops currently operating under the auspices of the United Nations, indicating the countries to which they have been sent, the countries that have supplied them, and the Security Council resolutions under which they operate.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The troops currently operating under the auspices of the United Nations, in the various peacekeeping operations, broken down by country of origin and by destination are shown in the tables.

Country of origin	*Number of troops*
Algeria	33
Argentina	920
Australia	486
Austria	913
Bangladesh	938
Belgium	416
Brazil	74

Country of origin	Number of troops
Bulgaria	779
Cameroon	14
Canada	3,438
Chile	109
China	488
Colombia	12
Congo	15
Czechoslovakia	533
Denmark	1,450
Ecuador	3
Egypt	427
Fiji	735
Finland	1,242
France	6,408
Germany	145
Ghana	1,735
Greece	7
Guinea	1
Guinea Bissau	15
Honduras	14
Hungary	13
India	1,387
Indonesia	1,783
Ireland	808
Italy	81
Japan	608
Jordan	885
Kenya	941
Luxembourg	40
Malaysia	931
Morocco	18
Nepal	1,693
Netherlands	1,858
New Zealand	114
Nigeria	919
Norway	1,096
Pakistan	1,618
Philippines	127
Poland	1,814
Portugal	30
Romania	6
Russian Federation	1,024
Senegal	24
Singapore	15
Spain	883
Sweden	691
Switzerland	66
Thailand	727
Tunisia	894
Turkey	6
Ukraine	396
United Kingdom	3,891
United States of America	534
Uruguay	942
Venezuela	38
Yugoslavia	11
Zimbabwe	20
TOTAL	48,822

United Nation Operations	Number of troops	Security Council resolutions
UNTSO (Middle East)	265	SCR 50 (1948)
UNMOGIP (India/Pakistan)	38	SCR 47 (1948)
UNFICYP (Cyprus)	2,159	SCR 186 (1964)
UNDOF (Lebanon)	1,126	SCR 350 (1974)
UNIFIL (Lebanon)	5,643	SCR 425 (1978)
UNAVEM (Angola)	296	SCR 696 (1991)
UNIKOM (Iraq/Kuwait)	416	SCR 689 (1991)
MINURSO (Western Sahara)	377	SCR 690 (1991)
ONUSAL (El Salvador)	235	SCR 693 (1991)
UNTAC (Cambodia)	15,621	SCR 745 (1992)
UNPROFOR (Croatia)	14,353	SCR 763 (1992)
UNPROFOR (Bosnia)	7,740	SCR 776 (1992)
UNOSOM (Somalia)	553	SCR 751 (1992)
Total	48,822	

[1] According to the latest United Nations figures.

Disabled Employees

Mr. Flintan: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many *(a)* physically disabled and *(b)* sensorily disabled people are employed in his Department; and what percentage they are of the total work force.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Foreign and Commonwealth office employs 53 registered disabled persons (RDPs): 27 in the diplomatic wing—0·4 per cent. of its total work force—and 26 in the Overseas Development Administration—1·38 per cent. of its total work force. Of the 26 RDPs employed by the ODA, 15 are physically disabled and 11 sensorily disabled. Details of individual's disabilities are not held centrally by the diplomatic wing.

The FCO holds no statistics on non-registered disabled staff, but it is likely that their numbers exceed those who have chosen to register.

World Decade for Cultural Development

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what contribution his Department is making to UNESCO World Decade for Cultural Development; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Carol-Jones: There are no plans at present to contribute.

United Nations Observers

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list those countries to which the United Nations has sent observers to monitor United Nations resolutions, indicating in each case the number of observers, the period of time for which they are appointed, and the number of observers from each European Community member state.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The number of military observers currently deployed with each United Nations peace-keeping operation and their country of origin are shown in the table. The standard length of tour for an individual observer is six months:

	Middle East	India/ Pakistan	Angola	Iraq/ Kuwait	Western Sahara	El Salvador	Cambodia	Yugoslavia	Somalia
Belgium	6	2	—	—	1	—	2	6	—
Denmark	11	6	—	6	—	—	—	7	—
France	17	—	—	15	29	—	47	6	—
Germany	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Greece	—	—	—	6	1	—	—	—	—
Ireland	20	—	2	6	6	2	12	7	—
Italy	8	6	—	5	6	—	—	—	—
Luxembourg	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Netherlands	15	—	15	—	—	—	—	—	—
Portugal	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	10	—
Spain	—	—	5	—	—	120	—	7	—
United Kingdom	—	—	—	15	13	—	37	8	—
Non-EC countries	188	24	263	195	163	105	470	199	50
TOTAL	265	38	285	248	219	227	468	258	50

Market-testing

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish a timetable showing when he plans to market-test those activities listed for testing before 30 September 1993.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The timetable for market-testing our departmental activities listed in CM 2101 has as its target completion of the programme by 30 September 1993. Planning is under way.

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to which of those of his Department's activities due to be market-tested by 30 September 1993 the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 and the EC acquired rights directive 77/189/EEC will apply.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Whether or not the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 and the EC acquired rights directive 77/189/EEC will apply to areas of work being market-tested depends on the circumstances of each case and the legal advice received by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office's market-testing programme has not reached the stage to enable definitive answers to be given in individual cases.

Azerbaijan

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his policy towards the export of *(a)* military equipment and *(b)* equipment with both a military and civilian application to Azerbaijan.

Mr. Garel-Jones: We have not approved licences for the export of any military equipment or equipment with military application to Azerbaijan: we adhere to the embargo called by the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) on 28 February 1992 on the supply of weapons to the region of the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute. We are pressing for a widening of the CSCE embargo to cover military assistance generally.

Defence Exports

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list each date when changes were made to the guidelines covering defence-related exports to *(a)* Iran and *(b)* Iraq since 1979.

Mr. Hurd *[holding answer 24 November 1992]:* Restrictions on Iran had been in force since the seizure of the American hostages in 1979, and on Iraq since the outbreak of the Iraq/Iran conflict in 1980. Guidelines applying to all deliveries of defence equipment to Iran and Iraq were introduced in December 1984 and announced on 29 October 1985. These were as follows:

(i) We should maintain our consistent refusal to supply any lethal equipment to either side.

(ii) Subject to that overriding consideration, we should attempt to fulfil existing contracts and obligations.

(iii) We should not, in future, approve orders for any defence equipment which, in our view, would significantly enhance the capability of either side to prolong or exacerbate the conflict.

(iv) In line with this policy, we should continue to scrutinise rigorously all applications for export licences for the supply of defence equipment to Iran and Iraq.

The development and application of the guidelines in relation to Iraq are within the terms of reference of the Scott inquiry.

Since 1991, guidelines for deliveries of defence equipment to Iran have been as follows:

(i) We should maintain our consistent refusal to supply any lethal equipment to either side.

(ii) Subject to that overriding consideration, we should attempt to fulfil existing contracts and obligations.

(iii) We should not in future approve orders for any equipment which, in our view, would significantly enhance Iran's military capability.

(iv) In line with this policy, we should continue to scrutinise rigorously all applications for export licences for the supply of defence equipment to Iran.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Market-testing

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will publish a timetable showing when he plans to market-test those activities listed for testing before 30 September 1993.

Mr. Waldegrave: The timetable for market-testing in my Department ensures that the whole programme listed in Cm. 2101 will be completed by 30 September 1993. Preparations to execute the programme are well in hand and the first market tests are expected to be completed early in the new year.

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to which of those of his Department's activities due to be market-tested by 30 September 1993 the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 and the EC acquired rights directive 77/189/EEC will apply.

Mr. Waldegrave: Whether or not the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 and the EC acquired rights directive 77/189/EEC will apply to an individual case depends on the facts of that case. Departments will seek advice of legal advisers about the relevance of TUPE on a case-by-case basis, as has been the case in the past.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Market-testing

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department to which of those of his Department's activities due to be market-tested by 30 September 1993 the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 and the EC acquired rights directive 77/189/EEC will apply.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The applicability of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 and the EC acquired rights directive 77/189/EEC will be considered on the facts of each individual case, and a number of tests will be applied. For example, it needs to be shown that an undertaking or part of an undertaking is actually being transferred. We are currently in the process of looking at the implications of TUPE and its applicability in relation to the areas being market-tested in the Lord Chancellor's Department, and are seeking the advice of our legal advisers about the relevance of TUPE on a case-by-case basis. No decisions have been made to date.

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will publish a timetable showing when he plans to market-test those activities listed for testing before 30 September 1993.

Mr. John M. Taylor: My aim is to have the market-testing exercises for those areas listed in my Department's programme completed by 30 September 1993. This does not include county court bailiffs, as the timetable for the review of enforcement agents is dependent upon the approach taken following the recent consultation paper.

Planning of the market-testing exercises is well under way, and initial action is already taking place in most of the areas being market-tested. Significant milestones have been identified in the timetable for each of the areas, examples being that the tender evaluation process for typing services in the Public Trust Office is due in April 1993, and completion of the contract documentation for the pay unit is due by the end of May 1993.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Juvenile Remand Prisoners

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what is the longest time spent in an adult prison on remand in England and Wales *(a)* by a 14-year-old, *(b)* by a 15-year-old and *(c)* by a 16-year-old in the current year so far and in each of the last five years;

(2) what is the longest time spent in an adult prison in England and Wales following conviction *(a)* by a 14-year-old, *(b)* by a 15-year-old and *(c)* by a 16-year-old in the current year to date and in each of the last five years.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested is not recorded centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Market-testing

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish a timetable showing when he plans to market-test those activities listed for testing before 30 September 1993.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Our aim is to complete all the planned market tests on the listed activities before 30 September 1993. A detailed timetable has yet to be settled for all areas to be market-tested but market tests have already begun in the following areas:

Computer IT services
Statistical services
Office services
Education services in prisons
Management of HMP Manchester
Warehousing and distribution

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department to which of those of his Department's activities due to be market-tested by 30 September 1993 the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 and/or the EC acquired rights directive 77/189/EEC will apply.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 (TUPE) is the legislation by which the Government implemented the acquired rights directive 77/189/EEC. Whether TUPE should apply is dependent on whether the activity constitutes a "Transfer of Undertaking" or merely a change of supplier. Legal advice will be sought on a case-by-case basis as part of the market-testing process.

President-elect Clinton

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about the circumstances surrounding the search in October through Home Office files in *(a)* the immigration and nationality department and *(b)* other Home Office departments in

respect of President-elect Clinton; in response to what requests such a search was made; what is the normal procedure for dealing with such requests; what was the procedure in this case; and when Ministers (i) were informed and (ii) authorised the search.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: In response to an inquiry by a journalist from the *Evening Standard* in October as to whether Mr. Clinton had applied for United Kingdom citizenship, the Home Office press office said that it was unable to discuss individual cases.

The press office then made inquiries of the nationality division to establish for itself the facts of the case. These revealed that there was no file in Mr. Clinton's name. The press office subsequently decided to brief newspapers off the record that there was no foundation to the story in order to bring ill-informed speculation about Mr. Clinton to an end.

No Minister was involved in any way or at any stage in the handling of the press inquiry. I have already announced that I shall be reviewing with my chief press officer the procedure for handling such inquiries in the future.

Immigration

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many individuals were held in prison department establishments under Immigration Act powers, in each month from July 1991 to June 1992 *(a)* by prison department establishment and *(b)* length of detention;

(2) how many individuals are currently held in prison department establishments under Immigration Act powers, in total *(a)* by prison department establishment and *(b)* by length of detention.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information about detainees held in prison service establishments in England and Wales under the Immigration Act 1971 is not readily available by period of detention on a monthly basis. The available information is shown in the tables.

Population of Persons Detained under the Immigration Act 1971 in Prison Service Establishments in England and Wales by Length of Detention[1]

	Length of Detention[1]					
	One day to one month	*Over one month to two months*	*Over two months to three months*	*Over three months to six months*	*Over six months*	*Total detainees*
30 September 1991	41	25	11	47	70	194
31 December 1991	56	28	17	30	79	210
31 March 1992	68	31	15	38	83	235
30 June 1992	63	53	32	51	61	260

[1] Time which had been served by the relevant date.

Population of persons detained under the Immigration Act 1971 in prison service establishments in England and Wales by establishment

Establishment	Number			
	September 1991	*December 1991*	*March 1992*	*June 1992*
Remand centres				
Brinsford	—	—	1	—
Glen Parva	—	—	—	1
Feltham	1	2	1	—
Haslar	99	98	99	100
Hindley	1	2	—	—
Low Newton	—	—	1	—
Prisons				
Bedford	1	2	1	3
Belmarsh	1	6	4	3
Birmingham	12	16	18	24
Bristol	2	1	1	1
Brixton	4	3	1	3
Bullingdon	—	—	—	3
Canterbury	6	7	2	6
Dorchester	—	—	5	9
Durham	2	1	—	1
Elmley	—	—	—	4
Exeter	—	—	8	2
Gloucester	—	—	1	1
Holloway	3	4	6	1
Hull	1	—	—	—
Leeds	1	1	5	3
Leicester	4	7	2	5
Lewes	1	3	1	4
Lincoln	1	1	—	—
Liverpool	—	1	—	—
Norwich	—	1	1	1
Pentonville	46	45	55	70
Preston	—	—	2	3
Pucklechurch	1	1	—	—

Establishment	Number September 1991	December 1991	March 1992	June 1992
Shrewsbury	—	—	2	2
Swansea	2	—	—	—
Wandsworth	1	1	1	—
Winchester	2	5	3	4
Wormwood Scrubs	2	2	14	6
All prison service establishments	194	210	235	260

Aggravated Vehicle Taking Act 1992

Mr. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce proposals to increase the penalties available under the Aggravated Vehicle Taking Act 1992.

Mr. Jack: It is not our present intention to change the sentencing provisions of the Act. We have, however, made clear our intention to raise the maximum penalty for causing death by dangerous or drink driving to 10 years, as soon as a suitable legislative opportunity is available.

Disabled Employees

Mr. Fletcher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* physically disabled and *(b)* sensorily disabled people are employed in his Department; and what percentage they are of the total work force.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: On 1 July 1992, 185 members of staff in the Home Office were registered disabled, representing 0·4 per cent of all staff. No record has been kept of staff's specific disabilities nor of staff with disabilities who have chosen not to register.

Drugs (Convictions)

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of convictions against people for (i) dealing in and (ii) possessing hard drugs in *(a)* Pendle and *(b)* Lancashire for each year since 1987.

Mr. Jack: The information requested with respect to Lancashire for the misuse of all drugs controlled under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 is given in table A2.6 of the Home Office statistical bulletin "Statistics of drugs seizures and offenders dealt with (area tables)", 1987-1991, copies of which are in the Library. Information with regard to the Pendle district is not held centrally.

Political Asylum

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications for political asylum in Britain have been made from British embassies since January; and how many such applications have been successful.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Information for 1992 is not available. For available information for 1991 and earlier years I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) on 9 November, columns *629-30*.

EC Immigration Ministers

Mr. Gerrard: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the outcome of the meeting of EC ministers with responsibility for immigration held in London on 30 November.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave on 7 December 1992, *Official Report*, column *481*, when I reported on the outcome of the Immigration Ministers' meeting on 30 November and Trevi Ministers' meeting on 1 December.

Convicted Teenagers

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department in respect of each probation department, how many 17 to 21-year-olds are on alternative-to-custody programmes run by the probation service and or voluntary organisations following conviction for a criminal offence in each case on the last date for which information is available.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 4 December 1992]*: The available information is shown in the table.

Persons aged 17 to 21 inclusive receiving probation, community service or Children and Young Persons Act 1969 supervision by the probation service on 31 December 1991 by probation area and type of supervision

Area	Probation total	Type of supervision: Probation with additional requirements under the Criminal Justice Act 1982	Community service order	Children and Young Persons Act 1969
Avon	318	126	181	41
Bedfordshire	129	30	101	18
Berkshire	270	79	127	7
Buckinghamshire	160	26	116	13
Cambridgeshire	158	34	107	4
Cheshire	245	14	197	4
Cleveland	307	56	175	36
Cornwall	65	13	67	—

Area	Probation total	Type of supervision: Probation with additional requirements under the Criminal Justice Act 1982	Community service order	Children and Young Persons Act 1969
Cumbria	161	45	119	19
Derbyshire	172	21	145	13
Devon	301	88	138	15
Dorset	189	62	117	10
Durham	172	48	159	25
Essex	383	78	209	12
Gloucestershire	171	58	95	20
Hampshire	444	150	254	28
Hereford and Worcester	189	25	110	15
Hertfordshire	220	36	130	10
Humberside	378	75	215	5
Kent	372	81	261	3
Lancashire	594	168	484	74
Leicestershire	247	36	187	17
Lincolnshire	187	75	108	14
Greater Manchester	1,020	190	771	101
Merseyside	683	116	436	40
Norfolk	161	29	103	12
Northamptonshire	195	51	54	1
Northumbria	611	85	299	57
Nottinghamshire	327	3	194	38
Oxfordshire	136	10	100	4
Shropshire	117	24	86	7
Somerset	188	76	68	13
Staffordshire	385	113	198	54
Suffolk	133	23	117	13
Surrey	199	58	87	9
East Sussex	128	44	122	9
West Sussex	119	13	80	16
Warwickshire	107	15	102	9
West Midlands	944	250	644	74
Wiltshire	159	39	126	20
North Yorkshire	142	29	92	12
South Yorkshire	513	80	435	37
West Yorkshire	794	186	756	101
Inner London	694	62	577	45
North East London	281	21	202	35
South East London	169	35	144	12
South West London	123	27	84	6
Middlesex	494	8	283	33
Dyfed	104	23	51	11
Gwent	110	38	122	23
North Wales	89	14	157	3
Powys	30	7	10	—
South of Glamorgan	193	58	91	35
Mid Glamorgan	232	70	116	12
West Glamorgan	139	51	95	1
England and Wales	15,551	3,274	10,604	1,246

PRIME MINISTER

Iraq

Mr. Hain: To ask the Prime Minister when he first became aware of the 1988 amendments to the 1985 Howe guidelines for defence-related exports to Iraq.

The Prime Minister: The development and application of the guidelines will be a matter for the Scott inquiry.

Ministerial Travel

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister what has been the total cost to the Exchequer of his travels within the European Communities to meet his counterparts since 1 July 1992.

The Prime Minister: The total cost is not yet available.

Ministerial Meetings

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list by date all meetings and telephone conversations he has had with his European Community counterparts during the United Kingdom presidency of the European Council.

The Prime Minister: I have had frequent contacts with my EC colleagues, most recently during a tour of EC capitals to prepare for the Edinburgh European Council.

Iraq and Iran

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make it his policy to discuss arms and nuclear exports to Iraq and Iran from European Community countries during the European summit of the European Council.

The Prime Minister: We are committed to strengthening nuclear non-proliferation regimes and to controlling arms exports. The United Kingdom presidency has taken forward work on nuclear non-proliferation and on the harmonisation of conventional arms export policies in European political co-operation. We have no plans to discuss EC arms and nuclear exports to Iraq and Iran at the Edinburgh summit.

Legal Expenses

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Prime Minister on what dates, in what circumstances and at what cost, contributions have been made, at public expense, towards the legal expenses of officers of Her Majesty's Government, officers of the House of Commons who are Members of the House, persons working in the private office of Ministers and accounting officers for Departments of state since 1979.

The Prime Minister: I have nothing further to add to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay) on 3 December, *Official Report*, column *307*.

WALES

South Glamorgan Health Authority

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many secretarial staff were assisting consultants in South Glamorgan health authority in *(a)* 1990, *(b)* 1991 and *(c)* the first half of 1992.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The requested information is not available centrally.

Unemployment Statistics

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the unemployment figures for *(a)* Wales and *(b)* Clwyd for men and for women and as a percentage for May 1979 and for the latest date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: The earliest month for which data comparable with present coverage are available for local areas is June 1983. The seasonally adjusted series, consistent between 1979 and 1992, is produced only for Wales as a whole. All available unemployment figures can be accessed from the NOMIS database, by House of Commons Library staff.

Local Government Reorganisation and Education

Mr. Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what considerations informed his decision in respect of whether to place in the Library the results of his consultation exercises in the case of *(a)* local government reorganisation and *(b)* "Choice and Diversity and the Education Bill".

Sir Wyn Roberts: Responses to the various consultative documents on local government reorganisation were placed in the Library of the House at the request of the local authority associations in Wales and others.

Our policy on the responses received in respect of the proposals contained in the Education White Paper "Choice and Diversity" was described in my reply of 26 November to the hon. Gentleman at column *794*.

Youth Training

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how he intends to improve the training within the youth training scheme.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Training and enterprise councils (TECs), which are responsible for the planning and delivery of youth training, operate under a performance-based contract. Each TEC has arrangements for quality assurance and has the flexibility to develop programmes to meet local needs.

Youth training is being made even more effective through the progressive extension of training credits which are designed to increase the motivation of young people, encourage more employers to train and promote an efficient training market.

Young People (Shotton)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many young people in the Shotton travel-to-work area are not in employment, not on a youth training scheme and not in full-time education.

Sir Wyn Roberts: In October 1992 there were 398 unemployed claimants aged between 16 and 18 years inclusive in the Shotton, Flint and Rhyl trave-to-work area. Information on other young people who are out of employment, not on a YT scheme nor in full-time education, is not available.

Assisted Area Status

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of when the review of assisted area status will be concluded; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given on 2 December to the hon. Member for Havant (Mr. Willetts) by my hon. Friend the Minister of Trade at columns *260-61*.

Education (Choice and Diversity)

Mr. Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many representations he has received on the White Paper, "Choice and Diversity and the Education Bill"; and how many representations were made from *(a)* local education authorities, *(b)* teaching organisations and *(c)* others;

(2) if he will list, with names and addresses, those organisations and individuals who submitted representations to him over the White Paper, "Choice and Diversity and the Education Bill".

Sir Wyn Roberts: We have received some 300 representations on the White Paper "Choice and Diversity". A list, setting out the details of 81 of these, has been placed in the Library of the House. The list includes local education authorities and teaching organisations but does not include those governing bodies, headteachers, teachers, parents and members of the public who responded. It would not be appropriate to list such respondents, some of whom may not wish their names to be disclosed.

The list does not include those organisations which responded to the separate consultations on special educational needs and the proposed transfer of responsibility for the development of Welsh language classroom materials to the Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales (Awdurdod Cwricwlwm ac Asesu Cymru).

Training

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how he proposes to improve the delivery of training by Training and enterprise councils.

Sir Wyn Roberts: TECs operate under a performance-based contract with the Department. Each TEC has arrangements for quality assuring the delivery of training by its training providers. Each TEC's performance is reviewed by officials.

Dolphins

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of state for Wales what representations he has received concerning the welfare of dolphins in the Irish sea and specifically Cardigan bay; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Forty-eight representations have been received since November 1991 from a number of sources including members of this House, members of the public and conservation bodies. Forty-four were in relation to the issuing of a licence by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to Hamilton Oil to undertake exploratory drilling in Cardigan bay; the other four were in relation to the seismic survey that was carried out in the bay in September of this year by the British Geological Survey.

Railway Privatisation

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what discussions he has had with the chairman of British Rail concerning the privatisation of the rail industry in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend last met Sir Bob Reid on 7 September. They discussed a wide range of topics including privatisation.

Disabled Trainees

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps are taken by his Department to monitor the effectiveness of policies employed by training and enterprise councils concerning the placement of disabled trainees.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Training and enterprise councils are required to set out in their business plans what steps they intend to take to ensure that appropriate training is provided for people with disabilities. Each TEC's performance is reviewed by officials.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much money was allocated as travel allowances to assist disabled trainees to take up training placements by each training and enterprise council in Wales in the latest year for which figures are available.

Sir Wyn Roberts: It is not possible to identify separately the amount for travel allowances for disabled trainees. In negotiating budgets with training and enterprise councils (TECs) the Department takes account of travel costs for all trainees and the TECs are under a "best endeavours" obligation in their contract to provide support costs, including reasonable travelling allowances, for disabled trainees.

Tourism

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish figures showing the total earnings from tourism in Wales in each year since 1981; and if he will break the figures down according to *(a)* earnings from United Kingdom staying visits, *(b)* overseas visitors and *(c)* day visitors.

Sir Wyn Roberts *[pursuant to his reply, 19 October 1992, columns 132-33]:* Unfortunately an incorrect figure was given, the correct answer is as follows: Estimates of expenditure by overnight visitors to Wales are given in the following table. Estimates of expenditure by day visitors are available only for the financial year ending on 31 March 1989 when an estimated £229 million was spent in Wales. (*Source:* The Leisure Day Visits survey 1988-89, conducted by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys on behalf of the Department of Employment and the British Tourist Authority.)

Expenditure by overnight visitors to Wales[1]

£ million

Year	*United Kingdom visitors*[2]	*Overseas visitors*
1981	n.a.	50
1982	n.a.	55
1983	n.a.	85
1984	n.a.	90
1985	n.a.	95
1986	n.a.	100
1987	n.a.	120
1988	n.a.	100
1989	985	120
1990	900	130
1991	900	130

Sources: United Kingdom Travel Survey, International Passenger Survey.

[1]These estimates, derived from sample surveys and thus subject to potential random sampling errors, have been rounded to the nearest £5 million.

[2]Since 1989 information has been obtained from the United Kingdom Tourism Survey (UKTS), sponsored jointly by the statutory tourist boards from: England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales. It is not possible to make a direct comparison between the results of this latter survey and those of earlier surveys.

Residential and Nursing Homes

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many private residential and nursing homes have been repossessed in Wales in each of the last three years; and how many beds have been lost each year through such repossessions.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: This information is not held centrally.

Urban Programme

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much has been allocated to the urban programme for Wales for each of the last five years.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Urban programme allocations for Wales for the last five years were:

	£ million
1988-89	24·6
1989-90	27·6
1990-91	32·6
1991-92	40·6
1992-93	31·4

Illegal Parking

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will convene a conference of police, county councillors, borough, district, community and town councillors to discuss ways of alleviating the ill effects of illegal itinerant encampments in the county of Clwyd; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: No. This would be a matter for Clwyd county council to consider.

Hearing-Impaired Children

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how he intends to ensure that the special needs of children with hearing impairment but who have not been statemented are protected in the future *(a)* in local education authority schools and *(b)* in opted-out schools.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Governors of both local education authority and grant-maintained schools have a responsibility to use their best endeavours to secure that, if any pupil has special educational needs, provision is made to meet those needs. The national curriculum applies to all children, including those with hearing impairments, and schools' special needs provision will be subject to inspection under the new system of school inspections by registered inspectors.

Market Testing

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales to which of those of his Department's activities due to be market tested by 30 September 1993, the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 and the EC Acquired Rights Directive 77/189/EEC will apply.

Mr. David Hunt: Whether or not the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 and the EC Acquired Rights Directive 77/189/EEC will apply to an individual case depends upon the facts of that case; and there are a number of tests to be applied. For example, it needs to be shown that an undertaking or part of an undertaking is actually being transferred.

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a timetable showing when he plans to market test those activities listed for testing before 30 September 1993.

Mr. David Hunt: The timetable for market testing my departmental activities listed in Cmnd 2101 indicates my aim that the whole programme is complete by 30 September 1995.

Regional Enterprise Grants

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will start paying regional enterprise grants to companies based in intermediate areas in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: On 11 May the Minister for Industry announced the extension of the coverage of regional enterprise grants. In Wales, companies in intermediate areas have accordingly been invited to apply for grants. Parliamentary approval to this new service will be sought in a spring supplementary estimate 1992-93 for the agricultural support services, fishing, regional and industrial development, Wales vote (class XVI, vote 2). Pending that approval, and to ensure that projects can go ahead without delay, urgent expenditure estimated at £150,000 will be met by repayable advances for the contingencies fund.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Developing Countries

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what commitments have already been made out of the planned provision for aid to developing countries for 1993-94, 1994-95 and 1995-96.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The bulk of multilateral aid spending over the next three years will arise from existing commitments and developments in the EC budget expenditure on aid. Within individual bilateral aid programmes a range of commitments have already been entered into for spending over the next three years. Details of individual commitments could be provided only at a disproportionate cost.

Tibet

Mr. Begg: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations Her Majesty's Government have made to the People's Republic of China relating to policies on compulsory abortion and sterilisation of women; and birth control policy in Tibet; and what assistance is given to China's health and social services under bilateral aid programmes.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We regularly raise with the Chinese authorities our concern about the situation in Tibet and human rights abuses there including allegations of forced abortion. The Chinese authorities deny that forced

abortion is official policy. Nevertheless there are reports that such practices occur in more isolated areas. Through the United Nations population fund (UNFPA) representations have been made to Chinese authorities about our concerns on these matters.

Our bilateral aid programme is focused on the environment, energy efficiency, economic reform and management, and public administration. We are not currently involved in either of the health or social services sectors.

Overseas Aid (Gross National Product)

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proportion of gross national product was dedicated by the United Kingdom in overseas aid in the periods October 1990 to October 1991 and October 1991 to October 1992.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Aid as a proportion of gross national product is calculated by calendar year. In 1990 the United Kingdom spent 0·27 per cent. of our GNP on overseas aid and in 1991 0·32 per cent.

Somalia

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs in which regions of Somalia the United Nations Secretary-General has proposed the use of force to ensure delivery of emergency food aid.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 7 December 1992]:* United Nations Security Council resolution 794 permits the use of all necessary measures by member states throughout Somalia. In practice, we expect use of force only to be necessary in those regions in the south and centre of the country, where the delivery of emergency food aid has been seriously impeded by looting and violence.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what reaction Her Majesty's Government have made to the proposal of the United Nations Secretary-General for the use of force to deliver emergency food aid to Somalia.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 7 December 1992]:* Increased security is the key to delivering relief to the starving in Somalia. We have therefore accepted the United Nations Secretary-General's judgment that a larger United Nations military operation by a coalition of member states is necessary to secure the delivery of emergency food aid. We co-sponsored United Nations Security Council resolution 794 of 3 December.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will request the United Nations Secretary-General to draw up proposals to enable leaders in the north of Somalia, Republic of Somaliland, to establish an effective system of administration and to consolidate the relative peace in that region.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 7 December 1992]:* The strategy proposed by the United Nations Secretary-General in July 1992 by the United Nations Security Council, envisages the re-building of institutions and the consolidation of peace throughout Somalia. The United Nations purposes to pursue those objectives on a regional basis. The north-west is one of the regions identified by the Secretary-General. We hope that the implementation of Security Council resolution 794, adopted on 3 December, will create the conditions in Somalia, not only for improved humanitarian relief operations but for effective implementation of the United Nations's plan for rehabilitation and institution rebuilding throughout the country.

Bosnia-Herzegovina

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many United Nations humanitarian aid convoys have travelled to their destinations in Bosnia-Herzegovina from *(a)* Belgrade, *(b)* Split and *(c)* by air from other points of departure.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 7 December 1992]:* Exact figures for how many convoys have travelled to their destinations in Bosnia-Herzegovina from various points of departure are not available from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees at present. However, there are 79 UNHCR trucks based at Belgrade with a capacity of 1,140 tonnes and 10 at Split with a capacity of 70 tonnes. A further 228 trucks with 2,343 tonnes capacity are based elsewhere in the former Yugoslavia. As of December, a total of 1,840 relief flights had been made, delivering 21,106 tonnes of humanitarian relief; all of these were to Sarajevo.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Pit Closures

Mr. Donald Anderson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what estimate he has made of the total job loss throughout the economy consequent upon the pit closure programme he announced last week;

(2) what is his working assuption of the consequential effects on British Rail manpower and finances of the pit closure programme which he announced last week.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his estimate of the knock-on effect of the closure of the 31 mines on employment in *(a)* transport, *(b)* the engineering industry, including belting etc., *(c)* other material suppliers, *(d)* the demand for electric power on base load, *(e)* the demand for consumer goods and *(f)* retail distribution; and if he will provide an approximate total for the total knock-on effect, including the second-round effects.

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the President of the Board of Trade by what formula he estimates the number of businesses which close consequent on the closure of a colliery.

Mr. Churchill: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will set in hand a study to estimate the overall number of job losses in the mining and related industries and in the mining communities likely to arise in the event of all 31 pits being closed, as announced by him in his statement of 13 October.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 6 November 1992]:* The Government's view of the employment consequences of pit closures is set out in the memorandum submitted to the Employment Select Committee of the House on 1 December 1992 by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment. With the agreement of the Committee, a copy has been placed in the Library of the House.

Personal Protective Equipment

Mr. Dowd: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his Department's assessment of the likely effect of its regulations arising from the PPE directive on firms employing *(a)* more than 50 people and *(b)* fewer than 50 people; and what action his Department proposes in order to minimise the disadvantages to small businesses in particular, arising from the directive.

Mr. Leigh: The Personal Protective Equipment Directive (89/686/EEC) removes technical barriers to trade arising from national regulations by creating a single regulatory regime. All firms in the sector, regardless of size, will be able to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the new rules. To minimise the difficulties which smaller businesses may face, in preparing for introduction of the provisions of this directive, the Government have decided that a period of 12 months will be allowed under the United Kingdom regulations before it will be necessary for them fully to comply with the new requirements.

Mr. Dowd: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations his Department has received concerning the EC directive on personal protective equipment; how these representations have affected his Department's policy on the directive; and what his Department estimates to be the average cost per employee of those businesses having to comply with the regulations.

Mr. Leigh: The Department has received many representations from industry and others on the Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Directive (89/686/EEC). These views have been taken into account in the drafting of the United Kingdom regulations.

The Department has not been able to obtain the necessary information to determine compliance costs per employee for businesses affected by this directive, but these should be comparable with the costs of such businesses throughout the EC. United Kingdom businesses will have access to new markets as a result of this directive.

Package Holidays Directive

Mr. Fraser: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he intends to lay regulations to implement the European Community package holidays directive.

Mr. Leigh: Regulations implementing the EC Directive on Package Travel, Package Holidays and Package Tours (90/314/EEC) were laid before Parliament on Monday 23 November. They were withdrawn in order to make a number of amendments to the drafting and re-laid on Tuesday 1 December. They will be subject to the affirmative resolution procedure.

999 Service

Mr. Spearing: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to the oral statement of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Technology of 27 November, *Official Report*, columns 1163-66, concerning the future of the 999 service, if he will investigate the technical feasibility of running the existing system of operator centres within a competitive system of telephone providers.

Mr. Leigh: Oftel has appointed independent consultants to advise on ways in which the current 999 arrangements might be improved in the light of the growing numbers of telecommunications operators. Once their report is complete, all the options will be reviewed by the parties concerned in the light of the consultants' findings. As I have made clear, the Government fully support the director general's commitment to ensuring that the quality of any new arrangements at least maintains, and preferably improves, the current high standard of 999 call handling arrangements.

Parcelforce and Red Star Parcels

Mr. Alton: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what action he is taking to ensure that management and employees of Parcelforce and Red Star Parcels are in a position to put together bids.

Mr. Leigh: As my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade anticipated in his statement to the House on 15 July, he has asked the Post Office Board to make available financial support to help Parcelforce management and employees in putting together a bid for the business, should they wish to do so, in competition with other potential bidders. Red Star Parcels is a division of the British Rail Parcels Group and questions arising from its privatisation are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport.

Parcelforce

Mr. Alton: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) when he expects to invite bids for Parcelforce;

(2) when he expects the privatisation of Parcelforce to be completed.

Mr. Leigh: The Government have not yet decided on the method and timing of the privatisation of Parcelforce. I can therefore forecast neither the launch date for the privatisation, nor when it is likely to be completed.

Mr. Alton: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what estimate he has made of the effect on employment of the privatisation of Parcelforce.

Mr. Leigh: The detailed work set in hand following my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade's announcement on 15 July of his intention to privatise Parcelforce will cover all matters relating to the sale.

Mr. Steel: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps he is taking to ensure that, in the event of the privatisation of Parcelforce, the future owner will make pension provisions for the employees which, when taken as a whole, will be no less favourable than those currently provided under the Post Office pension schemes.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 7 December 1992]*: There is extensive experience of protecting the accrued rights of public sector employees on privatisation; the same diligence will apply to the sale of Parcelforce. A potential purchaser's plans for future pension provision will in addition be carefully scrutinised at the time bids are sought.

Powergen

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what action he will take to compel PowerGen to adhere to their previous commitment to retrofit 4,000 megawatts of capacity with flue gas desulphurisation technology; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The retrofitting of 2GW of flue gas desulphurisation technology is already under way at PowerGen's Ratcliffe on Soar power station. PowerGen has also applied for consent under section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989 to fit a further 2GW at Ferrybridge C; I am considering this application. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has power to direct Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution to require the fitting of FGD in a particular case if he considers it appropriate.

Manufacturing Plant and Development

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assistance he has given for new manufacturing plant and development to *(a)* United Kingdom-owned companies and *(b)* foreign-based companies for each year since 1979.

Mr. Salisbury: Complete information has not been recorded in the form and over the period requested. However, since 1979, the following amounts have been paid under regional selective assistance and, from November 1984, the revised regional development grant scheme, to United Kingdom and foreign-owned companies respectively towards projects involving new manufacturing plant in Great Britain:

£ million

	UK-owned companies	*Foreign-owned companies*
1979-80	7·6	16·1
1980-81	9·6	5·1
1981-82	11·5	4·6
1982-83	14·7	10·6
1983-84	15·0	11·1
1984-85	18·5	12·5
1985-86	53·1	17·2
1986-87	133·2	19·6
1987-88	154·5	40·0
1988-89	227·1	58·2
1989-90	162·0	54·0
1990-91	116·6	41·4
1991-92	54·6	61·4

Notes:

(1) Payments towards new manufacturing plant under the original Regional Development Grant scheme could only be included at disproportionate cost.

(2) Excludes payments towards, (i) new manufacturing plant under Section 8 of the Industrial Development Act 1982 and (ii) development.

Computer Games

Mr. French: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will ask the Director General of Fair Trading to make an investigation into monopolistic behaviour by computer games manufacturers.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Investigation of anti-competitive practices or monopolistic behaviour is the responsibility of the Director General of Fair Trading. The director general makes references to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission where he considers it appropriate.

Disabled Employees

Mr. Flatman: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many *(a)* physically disabled and *(b)* sensorily disabled people are employed in his Department; and what percentage they are of the total work force.

Mr. Eggar: On 1 July 1992, the latest date for which information is readily available, the Department (including its executive agencies and the former Department of Energy) employed the following number of disabled staff.

	Number of Staff with Disabilities[1]	*Percentage of Total Workforce*
Registered	122·5	1·0
Non Registered	56·5	0·5
Total	179·0	1·5

[1] Full time equivalents.

Of these, 47·5 staff (0·4 per cent. of the total workforce) were known to have a sensory disability. Separate figures for physical disability are unavailable.

The above figures cover only staff who have chosen to declare their disability.

Market Testing

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the President of the Board of Trade to which of those of his Department's activities due to be market tested by 30 September 1993, the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 and the EC Acquired Rights Directive 77/189/EEC will apply.

Mr. Eggar: Whether or not the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 and the EC Acquired Rights Directive 77/189/EEC will apply to an individual case depends on the facts of that case; and there are a number of tests to be applied. For example, it needs to be shown that an undertaking or part of an undertaking is actually being transferred. We are seeking the advice of our legal advisers on a case by case basis.

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish a timetable showing when he plans to market test those activities listed for testing before 30 September 1993.

Mr. Eggar: It is my intention to mount market tests before September 1993 on all my Department's activities listed in Cmnd 2101. I am not publishing a timetable since detailed planning is still underway in some areas.

Microsoft Corporation

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will *(a)* investigate the proposed supply and charging practices of the Microsoft Corporation for MS-DOS and *(b)* refer this to the Director General of Fair Trading.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Investigation of allegedly anti-competitive or monopolistic behaviour is the responsibility of the Director General of Fair Trading. Allegations of such practices should be referred to his office for consideration.

Beer

Mr. Hardy: Top ask the President of the Board of Trade what account he has taken of the preparedness of the British glass-making industry for the proposed new requirements for beer measurement, in decisions on the timing of the introduction of the requirements.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 4 December 1992]:* The British Glass Manufacturers Confederation was consulted in January 1992. Following consultation the implementation date was set at 1 April 1994 allowing a gradual transition and giving glass manufacturers time to prepare for the new requirement.

Post Office

Mr. Hain: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he was consulted by Post Office Counters over its planned new reorganisation and job reduction programme as part of his review of the Post Office; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 7 December 1992]:* Internal management structure and levels of employment within Post Office Counters are operational matters for the Post Office Board. My Department was fully informed in advance about the proposed re-organisation of Post Office Counters. These operational matters do not form part of our current review of the Post Office.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Tourism

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage (1) if he will make it his policy that support for regional tourist boards will not be cut as a result of the tourism review;

(2) for what reason grant in aid support for the tourism industry is to be reduced over the next three years.

Mr. Key: I refer to the answer given to my hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn, Hatfield (Mr. Evans) on 13 November, *Official Report*, columns *997-98*. I believe that the case is now much less strong for central Government funding of the promotion of tourism in England. The English Tourist Board (ETB) has done a great deal over the years to raise standards, to improve access to information, and to show the industry how their products can be developed and marketed. As the industry matures, and the regional tourist boards develop, it is appropriate for other bodies to carry on many of the ETB's central activities. That is reflected in the allocations of Exchequer grants for tourism over the next three years.

However, I also believe that central Government support for the regional tourist boards should continue. I believe that this support should be targeted much more closely than at present on areas of need where tourism might be an instrument of economic regeneration. The English Tourist Board is currently working on proposals for support to the regional tourist boards.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage for what reason tourism has been excluded from the list of recipients of financial benefits that will be provided by the national lottery.

Mr. Key: The White Paper, "A National Lottery Raising Money for Good Causes", stated that proceeds from the national lottery would be distributed for the arts, sport, heritage and charities. Funds devoted to improving the heritage, arts and sports sectors will also benefit tourism.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make it his policy to re-establish the post of tourism Minister, with responsibility only for tourism, within his Department.

Mr. Key: My Department brings together for the first time a number of inter-related portfolios, all of which are important to tourism. Both my right hon. Friend and I cover the whole range of the Department's activities, including tourism itself. The industry will benefit from having two Ministers, including one at Cabinet level, whose interests are directly relevant to tourism.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what assessment has been made of the effect on the early summer tourist trade if the May day bank holiday were to be removed.

Mr. Key: There has been no direct assessment of this kind. However, the English Tourist Board (ETB) takes the view that the May day holiday is too close to the Easter and late spring bank holidays, and generates little extra tourism business. This view is backed by many sections of the tourism industry. The ETB considers that an autumn bank holiday would help to extend the tourist season and thereby promote greater employment opportunities.

Market Testing

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will publish a timetable showing when he plans to market-test those activities listed for testing before 30 September 1993.

Mr. Brooke: My Department intends that the market-testing of those activities listed in Cmnd 2101 will be complete by 30 September 1993 and planning is well under way. Tenders are currently being invited for the provision of office services in my Department's new headquarters building. Contracts will be in place before the move.

Tenders are currently being invited for building agent services for the royal parks with the intention that the managing contractor will be appointed by 1 April 1993 or shortly thereafter. The Historic Royal Palaces Agency will present a report to me on the market-testing of gardens maintenance by the end of this year.

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage to which of those of his Department's activities due to be market-tested by 30 September 1993 the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 and the EC acquired rights directive 77/189/EEC will apply.

Mr. Brooke: My Department intends to contract out a number of its central services when it moves to its new headquarters. The Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations are unlikely to apply in this case as none of my Department's staff are currently engaged in providing these services. In relation to other activities due to be market-tested, my Department will seek legal advice on the relevance of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations and the EC Acquired Rights Directive 77/189/EEC on a case by case basis.

Television Licences

Mr. Allason: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will announce the television licence fees which will take effect from 1 April 1993.

Mr. Brooke: On 14 January 1991, the then Secretary of State for the Home Department announced *(Official Report, col. 377-78)* that the fee increase for April 1991, which was set at 3 per cent. below the retail price index, would be followed by annual increases at RPI over the subsequent four years. The operation of this formula would, however, be reassessed in 1994.

Licence fee increases are based on the annual increase in RPI as at the preceding September, in the same way as rises in pensions and other state benefits. Application of this year's September RPI figure of 3·6 per cent. to the current unrounded fees produces new rounded totals of £83 for a colour licence and £27·50 for a monochrome licence. The necessary regulations to bring these fees into force next April will be laid before the House in due course.

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage (1) what representations he has received about the workings of the concessionary television licence scheme as it affects Severn house, Worcester; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether the consultations on the future structure and funding of the BBC will include an examination of the concessionary television licence scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: I have received representations about the workings of the concessionary television licence scheme as it affects Severn house, Worcester, only from the hon. Member. The concessionary scheme was the subject of long and careful scrutiny before the regulations were revised in 1988. The Government have repeatedly made it clear that they have no plans to amend or extend the regulations governing the scheme. The long-term future of the licence fee and the arrangements for paying it are issues to be considered in the debate about the renewal of the BBC's charter.

National Lottery

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what assessment he has made of revenue to the Treasury from the proposed national lottery.

Mr. Brooke: I refer to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Hall) on 7 December 1992 (*Official Report*, column *456*).

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what assessment he has made of the loss of revenue to the Treasury from the pools industry when the national lottery is introduced.

Mr. Brooke: I refer to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Knowsley, South (Mr. O'Hara) on 7 December 1992 (*Official Report*, column *455*).

Windsor Castle

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when English Heritage applied for access to inspect and survey rewiring and other works being carried out at Windsor castle; and what response was given on each occasion.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what information he has regarding applications by English Heritage to survey Windsor castle during the recent installations of new services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke *[holding answers 27 and 30 November 1992]:* English Heritage works closely with the royal household and has carried out several inspections and surveys in the royal palaces over the past few years. English Heritage experts were not generally involved during the rewiring work at Windsor castle because it was judged that it did not involve significant disturbance to the fabric. However, they were notified on a number of occasions in the course of the work of possible disturbance to the historic fabric and were allowed access on all but one occasion.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Income Support

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what the total cost would be of uprating the level of income support received by people aged 18 to 24 years to the level enjoyed by those of 25 years and over.

Mr. Burt: The estimated cost of increasing the rate of income support for 18 to 24-year-olds to that payable to those aged 25 and over is £360 million in a full year. This figure includes the consequential increases in housing benefit and community charge benefit.

Note:

The figure has been rounded to the nearest £5 million.

Source:

Modelled at 1992-93 prices and benefit levels using data drawn from the 1991 Annual Statistical Enquiry and the 1987-88-89 Family Expenditure Surveys.

Child Support Agency

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much his Department is spending on publicity and promotion for the Child Support Agency in 1992-93.

Mr. Burt: The new child support scheme will make a substantial change to both existing law and practice in this area, substituting an administratively-based system for the current courts system. Publicity is being aimed at a wide audience among the public, lawyers and advisers, recognising the major scale of this change. The total publicity budget for 1992-93 is £4,012,000, including TV, radio and press advertisements, leaflets and other information material, distribution of leaflets through a handling house, training presentations to legal and lay advisers, and the launch of the Child Support Agency.

Disability Living Allowance

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish the letter sent to the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North dated 30 October by Michael Bichard, chief executive of the Benefits Agency, relating to the resources to be made available for the urgent processing of outstanding disability living allowance from constituents in Stoke-on-Trent, North.

Mr. Burt: A copy will be placed in the Library.

Christmas Bonus

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what the current real value of the pensioners' Christmas bonus would be had it been upgraded in line with the retail prices index since the bonus introduction in 1972.

Miss Widdecombe: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) on 19 October 1992 at column *176*.

Occupational Diseases

Mr. Booth: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he will publish the report by the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council on bladder and lung cancer in relation to aluminium smelting; and if he will make a statement on this and the council's earlier reports on work-related upper limb disorders (Cm 1936) and lung cancer in relation to occupational exposure to silica (Cm 2043).

Mr. Scott: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has today laid before Parliament the council's report on bladder and lung cancer in relation to aluminium smelting (Cm 2104). We have accepted the council's recommendation that bladder cancer in relation to work in aluminium smelting involving the Soderberg process be added to the list of diseases prescribed for industrial disablement benefit purposes. The council found insufficient evidence to recommend that lung cancer in association with aluminium smelting be prescribed.

The Government also accept the council's recommendations in Cm 1936 and 2043 that both carpal tunnel syndrome associated with the use of hand-held vibrating tools, and lung cancer where there is accompanying evidence of silicosis in people in a prescribed list of occupations, be added to the list of prescribed diseases.

Regulations will be laid to implement the above recommendations from spring 1993.

The Government will be giving further consideration to the council's recommendation that other cases of carpal tunnel syndrome should be considered for benefit on a case by case basis.

Market Testing

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish a timetable showing when he plans to market-test those activities listed for testing before 30 September 1993.

Miss Widdecombe: The timetable listed in Cm 2101 shows the main activities which the Department aims to market-test by 30 September 1993. We also aim to test printing, microfilming, travel, video production, storage and distribution, and publishing services. Planning is well under way. Each project is setting its own specific timetable for the main milestone stages within the overall programme.

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security to which of those of his Department's activities due to be market tested by 30 September 1993, the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 and the EC Acquired Rights Directive 77/189/EEC will apply.

Miss Widdecombe: Whether or not the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 (TUPE) and the EC Acquired Rights Directive 77/189/EEC will apply to an individual case depends on the facts of that case; and there are a number of tests to be applied. For example, it needs to be shown that an undertaking or part of an undertaking is actually being transferred. We are seeking the advice of our legal advisers about the relevance of TUPE on a case by case basis.

Dependency Allowance

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to make it possible for a woman of pensionable age to claim a dependancy allowance for a man who is not.

Miss Widdecombe: It is already possible for a woman aged 60 or over to receive an increase of retirment pension for a husband who is under 65, provided she had entitlement to an increase of invalidity, sickness or unemployment benefit immediately prior to retirement. The Government will be looking at these rules in the context of their consideration of the equalisation of pension age.

Mrs. Jean Fox

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he expects to reply to the letter from the hon. Member for South Hams, dated 22 October, about Mrs. Jean Fox of 6 Mapledene close, Stoke Gabriel, South Devon.

Miss Widdecombe: I understand that Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency, replied to my hon. Friend on 1 December 1992.

HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION

Officers (Legal Expenses)

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, on what dates, in what circumstances and at what cost, contributions have been made from public funds towards the legal expenses of Officers of the House of Commons since 1979.

Mr. Beith: None since September 1987. A search of records before that date could be undertaken only at disproportionate cost.

Portrait Restoration

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chairman of the Accommodation and Works Committee what is the estimated cost of restoring the damaged portrait of Lady Thatcher in 1 Parliament street; and when he expects it to be returned to the House.

Mr. Ray Powell: The damaged portrait of Lady Thatcher has been restored without charge. I am advised that it was rehung in the 1 Parliament street building this morning.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Fishing Industry

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he approved the transfer of 50 tonnes of non-sector area VII hake to the Scottish Fishermen's Organisation; how he consulted the Northern Ireland Fish Producers' Organisation; what are the implications for the Northern Ireland fishing industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: It is not normal practice for quota swaps to be approved by Ministers. The Northern Ireland Fish Producers Organisation was not consulted as it was known that it did not have an allocation from which to offer the 500 tonnes of mackerel required to accommodate the needs of the mackerel handliners in the south west of England in return for hake. While the Northern Ireland industry would have benefited from an additional allocation of hake quota, the swap was approved in the overall interests of the non-sector fishery.

Newry Bypass

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give details of the current progress towards the completion of the Newry bypass, giving estimated start and completion dates for phases 2 and 3.

Mr. Atkins: The detailed design of stage 3 is well advanced. While the start dates will be dependant on the outcome of the current review of the Government's expenditure plans and the completion of the statutory processes, I hope to be in a position to make an early announcement.

Gamblers Anonymous

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what financial assistance has been made available by *(a)* the Department of Health and Social Services and *(b)* health boards, for Gamblers Anonymous in Northern Ireland; and what further funding arrangements are proposed.

Mr. Hanley: The Department of Health and Social Services provided grant aid of £250 to Gamblers Anonymous Belfast in the financial year 1987-88. The Department has no plans to provide further grant aid.

The Eastern health and social services board has provided grant aid to Gamblers Anonymous Belfast as follows:

Year	*Amount paid* £
1989-90	2,113
1990-91	10,170
1991-92	14,176

The Eastern board proposes to provide further grant aid of £80,250 in the current financial year.

The Northern, Southern and Western health and social services boards have not provided financial assistance to Gamblers Anonymous and have no plans to do so.

Market Testing

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a timetable showing when he plans to market-test those activities listed for testing before 30 September 1993.

Mr. Mates: The timetable for market testing the Northern Ireland activities listed in Cmd 2101 ensures that the whole programme will be completed by 30 September 1992. The market testing process is already well underway. The precise timing of the various steps in the process will vary from test to test.

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to which of those of his Department's activities due to be market-tested by 30 September 1993, the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 and the EC Acquired Rights Directive 77/189/EEC will apply.

Mr. Mates: Whether or not the Transfer of Undertakings Protection of Employment Regulations 1981 and the EC Acquired Rights Directive 77/189/EEC will apply to an individual case depends on the facts of that case; and there are a number of tests to be applied. For example, it needs to be shown that an undertaking or part of an undertaking is actually being transferred. Advice will be sought from our legal advisers about the relevance of TUPE on a case by case basis.

HEALTH

Complementary Medicine

Mr. Tredinnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many complementary medical practitioners are now receiving NHS payment via the family health services authority as full members of the primary care team;

(2) if she will indicate the number of complementary therapists employed in *(a)* fund-holding general practitioner practices and *(b)* non-fund-holding general practitioner practices;

(3) what steps she will take to draw doctors' and family health service authorities' attention to the new possibilities raised by the announcement of 3 December 1991 allowing doctors to delegate responsibilities to practitioners of complementary medicine provided the doctor retained clinical charge of a patient.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not held centrally. However, my hon. Friend will wish to know that it is open to all GPs to employ a wide range of staff including complementary therapists, where appropriate, to assist them in the provision of general medical services.

General practitioners are already aware that their terms of service allow them to employ a wide range of staff including complementary therapists. Family health services authorities who have management responsibility for the GP practice staff reimbursement scheme are similarly aware. The press release to which my hon. Friend refers simply clarified the existing position. We see no need therefore to issue further guidance.

Mr. Tredinnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what effects the proposed changes in health promotion clinic fee structure will have on counselling services in primary health care and on the availability of complementary therapies.

Mr. Sackville: It will remain open to practices, as now, to offer these services to patients if they so wish.

The arrangements for health promotion programmes, to be introduced from July 1993, will concentrate on action to address smoking, coronary heart disease and stroke. But there will also be transitional arrangements to help protect existing activity outside the scope of the main scheme, and we intend from 1994-95 to establish funding arrangements for action to address additional local priorities.

Community Care

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if, pursuant to her answer of 30 November, *Official Report*, column *82*, what is her Department's latest estimate of the annual shortfall between benefits and charges for residential or nursing care; and what account was taken of this in the announcement she made on 2 October concerning the funding of community care with effect from April 1993.

Mr. Yeo: As I said in my reply to the hon. Member on 30 November at column *82*, the £140 million additional finance for community care above the £399 million transfer from social security will ensure that all authorities will be able to purchase appropriate care for people under their new responsibilities. Any difference that exists currently between the level of benefits and charges should be substantially reduced after April 1993 when authorities negotiate fee levels with care homes or provide non-residential services for people who could be better cared for at home.

Magnetic Resonance Imaging

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make it her policy to ensure Magnetic Resonance Imaging provision in all health authorities the size of North-Staffordshire.

Mr. Sackville: Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) is a powerful imaging technique with the advantage that it does not involve ionising radiation. It has advantages over computerised tomography scanning in particular clinical situations but is expensive in terms of capital and running costs. Case-mix, amongst other things, will influence whether or not a provider unit will wish to have MRI facilities.

The national health service reforms as set out in the White Paper "Working for Patients" provide that hospitals and other units will be responsible for providing efficient and effective health services to meet the needs identified by health authorities. In this context, provider units will inevitably reach different decisions on whether MRI should form part of the services they provide.

Hospitals

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total number of hospitals in England in 1979, 1991 and 1992.

Mr. Sackville: In 1979 there were 2,023 hospitals in England making activity returns, and in 1990-91 there were 1,578. Over the same period the number of hospital in-patient cases treated rose by an estimated 25 per cent. to 7·5 million finished consultant episodes in 1990-91. From 1991-92 returns refer to national health service trusts (which may comprise more than one unit) and district health authorities (covering all directly managed units) and data on the number of individual units are not available.

Care in the Community

Mr. Pope: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her estimate of expenditure required in Hyndburn during the first year of the transfer of funds for care in the community from the Department of Social Security to Lancashire county council's social services department.

Mr. Yeo: It is the responsibility of Lancashire county council to estimate the expenditure required in Lancashire for the first year of the community care reforms. The indicative special transitional grant allocation for Lancashire for 1993-94 is £20·07 million.

Pharmaceuticals (Cost)

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the cost of pharmaceuticals to hospitals, prescribing doctors and normal general practitioner prescription costs for the past five years; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: Expenditure on drugs by the family health services (FHS) and health authorities in England is shown in the table. The FHS figures include the cost of prescriptions written by all family doctors.

£ million

	Family health services	Hospital and community health services	Total
1987-88	1,536	352	1,888
1988-89	1,744	380	2,124
1989-90	1,942	414	2,356
1990-91	2,080	460	2,540
1991-92	2,317	[1]—	—

[1] An equivalent figure for 1991-92 is not yet available.

Regional Health Authorities

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many visits her Department officials have made to each regional health authority during the last 12 months; and how many visits each regional health authority chairman has made in that period to her Department.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not collected centrally.

Ambulance Services

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the ambulance services which have applied for or have been granted status as self-governing trusts.

Dr. Mawhinney: Twenty four ambulance service units have been established as national health service trusts. They are as follows:

First wave

1. Northumbria Ambulance NHS Trust.
2. Lincolnshire Ambulance NHS Trust.
3. Norfolk Ambulance NHS Trust.
4. Cornwall Ambulance Service (part of Cornwall Community Healthcare Trust)

Second wave

5. Cleveland Ambulance NHS Trust.
6. South Yorkshire Metropolitan Ambulance and Paramedic Service NHS Trust.
7. Essex Ambulance Service NHS Trust.
8. Avon Ambulance Service NHS Trust.
9. Gloucestershire Ambulance Service NHS Trust.
10. Devon Ambulance Service NHS Trust.
11. Staffordshire Ambulance Service NHS Trust.
12. Mersey Regional Ambulance Service NHS Trust.

Third wave

13. Cumbria Ambulance Service NHS Trust.
14. Durham County Ambulance Service NHS Trust.
15. West Yorkshire Metropolitan Ambulance Service NHS Trust.
16. North Yorkshire Ambulance Service NHS Trust.
17. Humberside Ambulance Service NHS Trust.
18. Nottinghamshire Ambulance Service NHS Trust.
19. Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Ambulance Service NHS Trust.
20. The Two Shires—Northampton and Buckinghamshire Ambulance NHS Trust.
21. Royal Berkshire Ambulance NHS Trust.
22. Dorset Ambulance Service NHS Trust.
23. Hampshire Ambulance Service NHS Trust.
24. Wiltshire Ambulance Service NHS Trust.

Limited List Prescribing

Mr. Renton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much money has been saved annually by the national health service by the original selected list scheme on drugs; and what was the effect on the level of prescriptions in those catergories which were not on the selected list.

Dr. Mawhinney: In 1985-86 the selected list scheme saved £75 million on the drugs bill. It is not possible to make meaningful estimates for subsequent years, or to measure changes in the level of prescriptions which can be directly attributed to the scheme. We believe however that significant savings continue to be made.

Market Testing

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish a timetable showing when she plans to market-test those activities listed for testing before 30 September 1993.

Mr. Sackville: The activities to be market tested in the Department were listed in Cmd 2101. A timetable for market-testing these activities has been drawn up with the aim of making a recommendation on the outcome of each tender by 30 September 1993. The Department has already awarded contracts for office and building services at the Department's new building in London.

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for Health to which of those of her Department's activities due to be market tested by 30 September 1993, the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 and the EC acquired rights directive 77/189/EEC will apply.

Mr. Sackville: We will consider the application of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 and the EC Acquired Rights Directive 77/189/EEC to the Department's market-testing programme on a case-by-case basis.

Asbestos

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish a table showing *(a)* asbestos-related deaths and *(b)* asbestos-related disorders, by region for each year since 1979.

Mr. Sackville: I shall let the hon. Member have such information as is available without incurring disproportionate cost as soon as possible.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will list the chief executives of shadow trusts who have failed to become the chief executive in the subsequent self-governing trust;

(2) if she will list the chief executives of directly managed national health service units that have failed to be appointed to the post of chief executives in the subsequent shadow trust unit.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information is not held centrally. Chief executive appointments in shadow and operational national health service trusts are a matter for the chairman and non-executive directors of the trust concerned.

London Health Services

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will make a statement on the age structure, gender breakdown and specialty mix of the 680 consultants who are identified in the Tomlinson report as surplus to requirements;

(2) if she will make a statement on the current merit award allocation to the 680 consultants identified by the Tomlinson report as surplus to requirements; what is the total amount of these awards; and how much of this sum will be transferred to primary care provision.

Dr. Mawhinney: The figure of 680 consultants mentioned in the report is Sir Bernard Tomlinson's estimate of the number of surplus consultant posts, if patient inflows to inner London hospitals reduce to the maximum extent projected. We are still considering the proposals in the report, and will announce our response, including the staffing implications, in the new year.

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the funds allocated in the autumn statement for the implementation of the Tomlinson report proposals.

Dr. Mawhinney: We shall put forward our proposals for the future direction of London's health services, including the financial implications, in the new year.

GP Drug Budgets

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the total GP drug budget for 1989-90, 1990-91, 1991-92 and projected figure for 1992-93 and the proportion of that budget spent for all patients in relation to patient age by five-year intervals.

Dr. Mawhinney: Expenditure on drugs by the family health services in England amounted to £1,942 million in 1989-90, £2,080 million in 1990-91 and £2,317 million in 1991-92. The latest estimate for 1992-93 is £2,584 million. Information on the proportion of expenditure spent on patients in particular age groups is not available centrally.

Running Costs

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress she has made in achieving the target of a reduction of 1·5 per cent. in her Department's running costs for the present financial year, in the first half of this financial year; and what specifically has been saved, by what means and in what areas of her responsibility.

Mr. Sackville *[holding answer 1 December 1992]:* All parts of the Department are required to contribute towards the target for increased efficiency through measures aimed at cash-releasing savings or improved productivity. These are taken into account at the outset when budget allocations are made at the start of each year. For 1992-93 the Department plans to achieve efficiency gains totalling 1·4 per cent. Taken with the 1·7 per cent. gains achieved last year this more than meets the average target of 1·5 per cent. each year. The planned savings this year are made up of £1·2 million on manpower, £1·8 million on non-manpower costs and £0·6 million on the London paybill as a result of the first phase of the relocation to Leeds of the National Health Service Management Executive. Further savings of £1·9 million are expected to be realised in 1992-93 (including on capital expenditure) through improved purchasing policies.

The Department's agencies (NHS Estates and the Medicines Control Agency) work to separate targets. These are monitored through the respective departmental boards and the latest quarterly reports for the agencies show that they are both on course to achieve their targets by the end of the year. The NHS Estates Agency is working to an efficiency target of 4 per cent. in 1992-93 through reductions in manpower costs, improvements in procurement and increased use of video-conferencing. The target for the Medicines Control Agency is to achieve increased productivity of 3 per cent.

SCOTLAND

Market-Testing

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a timetable showing when he plans to market-test those activities listed for testing before 30 September 1993.

Mr. Lang: I announced the 1992-93 market-testing programme for my Departments on 28 August 1992. The market-testing of all 26 activities is due to be complete by 30 September 1993. The time taken to complete the market test will vary depending on the value of and complexity of the activity under consideration. Testing is now under way on several activities, including pay, leave and superannuation functions and the Scottish prison service works and store.

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland to which of those of his Department's activities due to be market-tested by 30 September 1993, the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 and the EC acquired knights directive 77/189/EEC will apply.

Mr. Lang: This will be determined for each activity in the light of the facts of the case and after considering legal advice.

Waivers of Disqualification

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many waivers of disqualification have been granted; and how many have been refused, for employees and trustees of charities since part 1 of the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Act 1990 came into force on 27 July.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: No waivers of disqualification have been granted and no waivers have been refused for employees and trustees of charities since the coming into force of the Act on 27 July.

EDUCATION

Market Testing

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will publish a timetable showing when he plans to market-test those activities listed for testing before 30 September 1993.

Mr. Forman: Work has already begun on each of the Department's areas for market testing listed in Cmnd 2101, with a view to completing the programme by 30 September 1993. In the largest test, that of support services in the Department's headquarters, the work of developing specifications and shortlisting potential contractors is well advanced.

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for Education to which of those of his Department's activities due to be market-tested by 30 September 1993 the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 and the EC Acquired Rights Directive 77/189/EEC will apply.

Mr. Forman: The relevance of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations and the Acquired Rights Directive to an area of work being market tested depends upon the facts of each case, since there are a number of factors to be taken into account. The Department will be taking legal advice on the application of the regulations for each of the areas to be market tested by 30 September 1993.

School Examination Results

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many secondary schools were entered in the recently published schools' examinations results tables; how many entries were incorrect and for what reason; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: A total of 4,622 schools were included in the school performance tables published on 18 November. All complaints of incorrect figures are being investigated on a case by case basis. To date, the entries for some 16 schools have been found to be incorrect due to error on the part of the Department or its contractor. In all these cases, erratum slips are being issued and letters of apology sent to the schools concerned.

Administration Costs

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how much in real terms his Department spent centrally on general administration in the last three years for which figures are available; what proportion of the total budget these figures represented; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: The figures are based on those set in table 1 of the departmental report, published in February this year (Cm 1911), and revalued to 1991-92 financial year prices. The figures are rounded to the nearest £1 million.

£ million

	1989-90	*1990-91*	*1991-92*
Administration, research and miscellaneous services	87	91	107
Total Department of Education and Science	6,659	7,102	7,345
	Per cent.	*Per cent.*	*Per cent.*
Administration expressed as a percentage of total	1·3	1·3	1·4

The figures include expenditure on civil science; responsibility for this work was transferred to the Office of Science and Technology on 6 July 1992.

Disabled Employees

Mr. Elletson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many *(a)* physically disabled and *(b)* sensorily disabled people are employed in his Department; and what percentage they are of the total work force.

Mr. Forman: The Department, including the Teachers Pensions Agency, has 69 staff (3 per cent. of the work force) who are registered disabled. This includes 19 (0·8 per cent.) with sensory disabilities and 30 (1·3 per cent.) with physical disabilities. There are other staff in the Department with disabilities who have chosen not to register and who are not included in the above figures.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many schools have declined to opt for grant-maintained status following ballots.

Mr. Forth: Of the 779 ballots for grant-maintained status which have been held to date, 172 (22 per cent.) have resulted in a vote against applying for grant-maintained status. Once a school has balloted in favour of applying for grant-maintained status, the governors have a statutory duty to proceed with the application by publishing proposals.

Education Courses (London)

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many courses of adult education were provided by the Inner London education authority at the time of its abolition; and what are the current corresponding figures for its successor authorities.

Mr. Forman: Information on the number of adult education courses is not collected by the Department, which collects only enrolment data from adult education centres.

Natural Medicines

Mr. Tredinnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what provision there is in the curricula of Government-funded medical establishments for the teaching and theory and practice of the schools of natural medicine.

Mr. Forman: I have been asked to reply.

It is for universities to determine the curriculum for medical education in the light of recommendations from the General Medical Council. The GMC is considering changes to its current recommendations. Its intention is that medical students should in future have a range of options from which to choose for part of their course. It will be for institutions to decide their own curricula taking account of the GMC's revised criteria.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mrs. Angela Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement on the recent survey into the operation of of grant-maintained schools undertaken by the grant-maintained schools centre.

Mr. Patten: A survey of 103 grant-maintained schools, undertaken by the grant-maintained schools centre, was

published on 27 November 1992. The survey demonstrated clearly the benefits of grant-maintained status, which enables schools to manage their own affairs and gives them the flexibility to target funding at classroom level.

The main findings of the survey were as follows:

more than 80 per cent. of the schools that responded reported increased pupil numbers at the beginning of the school year 1992-93;

more than three-quarters of schools reported an increase in teaching staff;

more than 90 per cent. of schools experienced no difficulty in recruiting or retaining governors;

57 per cent. of secondary comprehensive schools and 40 per cent. of primary schools reported an increase in their provision for Special Needs.

Copies of the survey are available in the Library.

LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Members' Pay

Mr. Page: To ask the Lord President of the Council when he expects to bring forward a resolution on the pay of hon. Members, as referred to in the Chancellor of the Exchequer's autumn statement.

Mr. Newton: The resolution on Members' Salaries was debated and approved by the House on Wednesday 25 November.

Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration Select Committee

Dr. Wright: To ask the Lord President of the Council when he expects to present nominations for the Select Committee on the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration.

Mr. Newton: Nominations for the Select Committee on Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration were approved on Wednesday 2 December.

TRANSPORT

Supply Vessels (Foreign Crews)

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what guidance his Department intends issuing to operators on the use of foreign crews on North sea supply vessels; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: The Department is proposing to establish a consultation group of offshore supply vessels, including representatives of shipowners, operators, unions and the Health and Safety Executive. Matters to be considered by the group are likely to include a code of practice for operators covering manning, among other matters.

Motorways

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on progress in the implementation of changes in motorway planning policy in relation to increasing the number of refreshment facilities.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Following a commitment in the citizens charter, we announced a new policy on the provision of motorway services on 6 August. Under the new arrangements it is for the private sector rather than the Department of Transport to identify sites for motorway service areas, seek planning permission and acquire the land. The Department has since received a number of approaches from commercial organisations interested in the opportunities generated by the new policy and we hope that these will develop into firm proposals in due course.

Market Testing

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish a timetable showing when he plans to market test those activities listed for testing before 30 September 1993.

Mr. Norris: The timetable for market testing my Department's activities listed in Cmnd 21001 provides for the programme to be substantially completed by 30 September 1993. The activities to be tested are diverse and separate timetables are being prepared for each case. In the case of the Register of Shipping and Seamen, tenders are due to be invited in April 1993 and contracts let in September 1993.

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport to which of those of his Department's activities due to be market tested by 30 September 1993, the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 and the EC Acquired Rights Directive 77/189/EEC will apply.

Mr. Norris: The application of TUPE and the EC Acquired Rights Directive 77/89/EEC will depend on the particular circumstances of each market testing case, and specific legal advice will be sought in each case.

Conservation

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action he intends to take to guard against the degradation of sites of special scientific interest and other areas requiring special conservation measures under the EC directive on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora, in the planning of new road networks including motorways.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Our long-established policy is that our road schemes should avoid protected areas wherever possible. We consult English Nature as individual proposals are developed and publish a comprehensive environmental assessment. Special measures to protect sites or relocate species may be agreed with English Nature.

We are already considering the implications of the EC Habitats Directive in the planning of our schemes and will observe its provisions when it is implemented.

Disabled People

Sir John Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has received the annual report of the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: I have received the sixth annual report of the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee and a copy has been placed in the Library of the House.

The report makes a number of detailed recommendations on three principal subjects; the introduction of basic

that are more easily accessible to disabled people, the need for further improvements in the pedestrian environment to remove obstacles to mobility and the need for more effective education and training on mobility issues as part of vocational and other qualifications within the transport industries.

The committee's recommendations are being studied in detail and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has already been in touch with the committee about them.

Bus Operators (Investigations)

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will say how many bus operators are currently under investigation by the traffic commissioners; and if he will give in each case the commencement date of the investigation.

Mr. Freeman: I regret that this information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

British Rail (Capital Spending)

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement for each main part of British Rail on the levels of capital spending necessary to maintain the capital stock and to avoid a deterioration of services.

Mr. Freeman: The distribution of capital and management resources amongst the different businesses of British Rail is a matter for the board. The additional funds announced for British Rail in the autumn statement will permit the board's total investment to continue at a level considerably higher in real terms than in the 1970s and 1980s.

Mercantile Marine (Manpower)

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what measures are being taken to restore manpower levels within the British mercantile marine.

Mr. Norris: It is for the industry to determine its manpower needs. The Government are encouraging school leavers to join the Merchant Navy by providing financial support for the training of British crews and crew relief. The availability of crewing to meet defence needs is being further reviewed.

Since the Merchant Shipping (Safe Manning Document) Regulations came into force on 28 July 1992 my Department has specified the minimum complement on all British registered ships of 500 gross tonnes and over.

Ilkley Bypass

Mr. Waller: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to announce the preferred route for the proposed A65 Ilkley bypass.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I hope to be able to do so very shortly.

Rail Services

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what action he has taken in response to the 1991 annual report of the Transport Users' Consultative Committee for Scotland; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what is his policy on the circumstances in which it is appropriate for the Government to intervene in the provision of rail services to rural communities;

(3) what assessment he has made of the effect of the decision to eliminate the rail service from Carstairs to Edinburgh in 1991 on the economy of the rural community of Clydesdale; and if he will make a statement;

(4) what action he has taken in response to the recommendation of the Transport Users' Consultative Committee for Scotland in its annual report that some InterCity trains should stop at Carstairs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: I take note of the views, reports and other representations of all Transport Users' Consultative committees. However, the precise level of service offered on individual lines is a matter for the British Railways Board to consider.

British Rail's InterCity business is required to operate on a commercial basis, just like its competitors. To do so, it must make the best use of available resources by tailoring its services to meet market circumstances. Uneconomic but socially necessary passenger services, where there is clear need for them, are provided by British Rail's regional railways sector. The Government provide substantial financial support through PSO grant towards the cost of such services. However, PSO is paid as a block grant to British Rail, and it is for it to allocate it on a line by line basis. Subsidy is not dependent on public ownership of the railways and we have made it clear that we intend to continue to provide subsidy where it is required following implementation of our privatisation proposals.

Greater Manchester Buses

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assurances were given to GM Buses and trade unions representing the work force of GM Buses about Government support for an employee buyout prior to 23 November.

Mr. Freeman: It has been made clear to the PTA, GMB and their work force that the Government are in favour of employee participation in companies, and would be happy to see an employee buy-out. We have also made it clear since June this year that we expect all new sales of public transport companies to be by open competition and that we expect bids for buy-outs to be put forward on this basis. This applies to Greater Manchester Buses, and the new smaller companies that are to be formed from it.

Disabled Employees

Mr. Elletson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many *(a)* physically disabled and *(b)* sensorily disabled people are employed in his Department; and what percentage they are of the total work force.

Mr. Freeman: The Department of Transport and its agencies had recorded 201 registered disabled staff at 1 July 1992, representing 1·3 per cent. of the total work force. Of these 170 were registered as physically disabled and 31 sensorily disabled.

Nuclear Material (Transport)

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to licence the channel tunnel for the transportation of plutonium; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: This is a matter for the concessionaire's commercial judgment. Eurotunnel has said that it does not intend to permit the transport of nuclear material through the channel tunnel.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what account he has taken of the recommendations contained in the report for the European Parliament's Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection, on the environmental and public health aspects of the storage, transport and reprocessing of spent nuclear fuels and plutonium, dated October 1992.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 7 December 1992]:* None.

The report is still in draft form, awaiting comments from the European Parliament.

Parking Offences

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will bring forward proposals for changes in the law to allow all local highways authorities to issue penalty charge notices for parking offences on the lines of the current system in London boroughs.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The necessary legislation is already in place. Section 43 of the Road Traffic Act 1991 enables new arrangements for parking enforcement, similar to those currently being introduced in London under sections 63-79 of the Act, to be extended by order to other areas. Preparations for the introduction of the new arrangements in London are well advanced, but we do not expect any of the London boroughs to be in a position to begin operating them before April next year at the earliest. In accordance with undertakings given during the passage of the Bill, we do not propose to make the new powers available generally until some experience has been gained of their operation in London.

Rail Franchises

Mr. Hawkins: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has decided which British Rail routes to include in the first passenger franchises; and whether this group will include the east coast main line.

Mr. Freeman: No decisions have yet been taken on which passenger rail services will be the first to be offered for franchising. We hope to take a decision on this shortly, taking into account the responses we have received to our consultation document on franchising, published in October.

Motor Cars

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to introduce a 100 bhp limit on motor cars sold in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 8 December 1992]:* I have no plans to introduce a power limit on motor cars.

Motor Cycles

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if the Government will oppose the Commission's proposal to impose a 74 kW/100 bhp power limit on all motor cycles sold in the EC; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 8 December 1992]:* The Government have made clear their view that the statistical evidence in support of the Commission's proposal is not entirely conclusive; but this is in order to encourage safe motor cycling and I believe this is a matter for qualified majority voting, we have decided not to stand in the way of the unanimous desire of other member states. We have therefore said that we would be prepared to accept the proposal. The EC Council of Ministers is currently awaiting the opinion on first reading of the European Parliament.

Traffic Calming, Rutland

Mr. Duncan: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will grant permission for Rutland to become an accepted area for the implementation of experimental traffic-calming measures.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 8 December 1992]:* Traffic calming is a relatively new approach to improving safety and environmental conditions. The Traffic Calming Act 1992 clarified the powers of highway authorities to undertake such works. We aim to bring forward regulations soon, covering a range of the better-known techniques. Where a highway authority wishes to use a measure not covered by regulations or clearly enabled under other legislation, it is open to that authority to seek a special authorisation from the Department.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Value Added Tax

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what arrangements have been agreed for the payment of VAT on exports under the single market.

Sir John Cope: Payment of VAT on goods despatched from the United Kingdom to other member states will not normally be required under single market arrangements.

Sales in such circumstances may be zero-rate provided that the supplier quotes the customer's VAT number on the sales invoice and holds satisfactory commercial evidence of removal of the goods from the United Kingdom. If the customer is not VAT registered, VAT will be chargeable in the United Kingdom unless the supplier is required to account for VAT in the member state of destination under distance selling arrangements such as mail order. Customs and Excise will be issuing more detailed guidance very shortly.

Exports to countries outside the European Community will continue to be zero-rated as at present.

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many VAT registered traders were penalised for late payment of VAT in each of the last eight quarters; and how much the Exchequer received in fines resulting from this.

Sir John Cope: The number of VAT registered taxpayers surcharged in the last eight quarters for which figures are available are as follows:

	Number of taxpayers surcharged
1 November 1991 to 31 January 1992	36,457
1 December 1991 to 29 February 1992	36,934
1 January to 31 March 1992	31,261
1 February to 30 April 1992	37,691
1 March to 31 May 1992	37,090
1 April to 30 June 1992	37,093
1 May to 31 July 1992	37,021
1 June to 31 August 1992	36,930

The total amount of surcharge payments received during the same period is approximately £51·2 million. This figure will include payments of some surcharge assessments issued prior to 1 November 1991.

Mr. Gale: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of how the administration of the transitional value added tax system from 1 January will affect subscription sales of magazines in EC member states *(a)* to customers who are not registered for value added tax, *(b)* to customers who are registered for value added tax, *(c)* if sales in the country of destination are over 35,000 ecu and *(d)* if sales to the country of destination are over 100,000 ecu.

Sir John Cope *[holding answer 7 December 1992]:* After 1 January 1993, the tax treatment of goods supplied by VAT-registered traders to customers in other member states under the distance selling arrangements—for example by mail order—will be dependent on thresholds. Each member state has the choice of adopting a threshold of either 35,000 ecu or 100,000 ecu. If sales to a member state are beneath that member state's threshold, then VAT in the member state of origin is chargeable; in the case of supplies of magazines from the United Kingdom, this would be zero. If sales exceed the threshold laid down by a member state, then all sales to that member state are chargeable at the appropriate rate of VAT in that member state and the trader will need to be registered for VAT or appoint a tax representative in that member state. Supplies to VAT-registered traders in other member states can continue to be zero-rated on "export" if the VAT registration number of the consignee is shown on a tax invoice.

It is not possible to estimate centrally how subscription sales of magazines will be affected. At present VAT is payable in most member states but the amount paid is not known to us. In future, traders beneath the appropriate thresholds will benefit by being able to apply our zero rate. Traders above the thresholds will need to be registered in other member states. The effect of the new arrangements on individual traders will therefore depend on their turnover in each member state.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list for each of the last five years up to 30 November *(a)* total VAT registrations and *(b)* total new registrations.

Sir John Cope *[holding answer 8 December 1992]:* The information requested is as follows:

At 31 March	*Total VAT registrations*	*Total new registrations*
1988-89	1,623,866	234,666
1989-90	1,710,106	266,094
1990-91	1,745,097	217,882
1991-92	1,677,829	194,070
[1]1992	1,643,679	124,371

[1]1 April to 30 November.

Figures from 1991 onwards reflect the effects of substantial increases in the registration and deregistration thresholds in the 1991 Budget.

Right to Buy

Mr. Rooney: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assumptions lay behind the estimate of the number of right-to-buy sales over the next two years included in the Chancellor of the Exchequer's autumn statement on 12 November.

Mr. Portillo: The estimate of capital receipts in the current financial year and in 1993-94 published in the autumn statement related to local authority asset sales generally in the United Kingdom; no specific figures were published for right-to-buy sales of council dwellings. The basis of the United Kingdom estimate was given in my written answer to the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) on 20 November 1992 col. *418-19*.

EC Budget

Mr. Jenkin: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what forecast the Government have made for the United Kingdom's net contribution per annum to the EC budget in each of the next seven years arising from the Government's current EC budget proposal to the EC Council;

(2) if he will make a statement on the reasons for proposed increases in the EC budget as a proportion of EC gross domestic product;

(3) what benefit he assesses will accrue to the United Kingdom from an expansion in the EC budget.

Sir John Cope *[holding answer 7 December 1992]:* The United Kingdom presidency tabled on 25 November a compromise proposal for negotiations on the future financing of the European Community; a copy has been placed in the Library. The implied annual addition to the United Kingdom's net public sector contribution arising from this proposal would be some £150 million in 1999 (at 1992 prices) above the forecast underlying cost of Community spending given the present ceiling on own resources, which would rise to £2,800 million in 1999 (at 1992 prices). The Government's aim is to achieve a settlement at Edinburgh which is affordable and consistent with the principles of budget discipline and sound public finance. Achieving agreement will assist progress on other issues, in particular enlargement.

ENVIRONMENT

Toxic Waste

18. Mr. Miller: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he intends to take to put into practice the agreements reached at Luxembourg on the treatment of toxic waste.

Mr. Maclean: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to him on 3 December 1992 at column *288*.

Council House Sales

19. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assumptions lay behind the estimate of the number of right-to-buy sales of council dwellings over the next two years published on 12 November.

Sir George Young: The estimate of capital receipts in my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer's autumn statement related to local authority asset sales generally in the United Kingdom; no specific figures were published for right-to-buy sales of council dwellings. The United Kingdom estimate was based on information about local authorities' recent asset sales and forecast outturn in the current year, taking account of the expected effect of the receipts measure announced in the autumn statement.

Council Tax

29. **Mr. Bayley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many appeals he expects against council tax valuations; and how many appeals he expects will be heard before 1 April 1993.

Mr. Redwood: It is fruitless to try to predict the number of appeals. As the final banding lists are not compiled until 1 April 1993, appeals are not possible before that date. However, anyone who wishes to correct a factual error in a draft list may approach the local listing officer, who will make any necessary amendments before 1 April.

31. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has to ensure that local authorities set their council tax at an affordable level.

Mr. Redwood: I am confident that the vast majority of local authorities will play their part in setting affordable council taxes by setting sensible budgets. I have made clear that I shall not hesitate to use my capping powers to protect council tax payers if authorities fail to do so.

34. **Mr. Hutton:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will introduce measures to reduce the level of council tax in those areas with an above-average proportion of houses in bands D and E.

Mr. Redwood: No. The council tax is a fair tax, which will take account of different individual circumstances and will be applied consistently across the country. The transitional reduction scheme will ensure that households in bands D and E will not face an increase of more than £2·50 and £2·75 a week respectively, if their councils spend at a reasonable level and have a good record on tax collection.

22. **Mr. Eastham:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what Government support is being provided to reduce the impact of the new council tax.

Mr. Robin Squire: We will be providing £340 million in transitional relief in 1993-94 to limit the initial increase between household community charge bills and the council tax.

Revenue Support Grant

20. **Mr. Robert Ainsworth:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the assumptions behind the recent revenue support grant settlement for local authorities, which he announced on 26 November.

Mr. Redwood: My right hon. and learned Friend gave a very full statement on 26 November. Consultation on his proposals for the settlement are now under way and he has nothing further to add at this stage.

South West Water (Capital Investment)

21. **Sir John Hannam:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to reduce the level of capital investment required by South West Water as a result of European legislation.

Mr. Maclean: Our obligations for the time being under European Community legislation must be met, though we seek to ensure that it is done at the lowest cost to consumers. We consider that revisions of certain features of both the drinking water and bathing waters directives are overdue, and impose unnecessary costs on European consumers.

Ozone Depletion

23. **Mr. Fabricant:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the extent of ozone level depletion in January 1992 over northern England; and if he will make a statement.

33. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the recent research findings relating to ozone depletion over the United Kingdom.

Mr. Maclean: The results from measurement sites in Northern Europe and from satellites indicate that ozone levels in January 1992 were the lowest ever recorded at about 20 per cent. below the long-term January mean. This is outside the previously recorded range of natural variability. However, exceptional meteorological conditions involving the lowest surface pressure recorded this century, are thought to have contributed to low ozone levels. Results from succeeding spring months were within the range of long-term variation.

Local Government Structure

24. **Sir Fergus Montgomery:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress he expects to have been made by the Local Government Commission in reviewing the structure of local government by the end of 1993.

Mr. Redwood: By the end of 1993 the Local Government Commission should have completed its reviews of local government structure, boundaries and electoral arrangements in the Isle of Wight, Derbyshire, and Cleveland and Durham; and have reached the final stage of its reviews of Avon, Gloucestershire and Somerset and Humberside, Lincolnshire and North Yorkshire. The Commission should also have begun some of the reviews in the second tranche of its work programme.

Nuclear Power

25. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which environmental groups he has met in the past year to discuss issues relating to the use of nuclear power in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Maclean: I met members of Greenpeace on 21 September and discussed a number of issues with them including ones relating to the use of nuclear power in the United Kingdom.

London Forum

26. **Mr. Gerst:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to make a further statement about the London Forum.

Sir George Young: My right hon. and learned Friend expects to make a further announcement about the London Forum shortly.

Water Quality

27. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has as President of the Council of Ministers for the Environment to ensure a higher level of compliance by member states with EC directives applying to water quality.

Mr. Maclean: We wish to see the establishment of a small community inspectorate to audit the performance of national enforcement agencies; and the harmonisation of reporting methods under the Standardised Reporting Directive. During our presidency, we have successfully encouraged the formation of a network of environmental enforcement agencies to encourage exchange of information on enforcement practice.

Urban Areas (Regeneration)

28. **Mr. Byers:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to assist the regeneration of urban areas.

Mr. Redwood: The Government remain strongly committed to the regeneration of urban areas. We have provided over £90 million more resources for my Department's urban group of programmes than previously planned for 1993-94. This will allow full funding for each of the 31 successful city challenge areas next year as part of their £37·5 million five-year programme. It will also allow the urban development corporations to continue to develop their areas. The Urban Regeneration Agency will build on UDC experience in regenerating land for the benefit of urban areas. We have enabled local authorities to make greater use of capital receipts, backed by £20 million of capital partnership resources from the urban programme. Next year we will also be opening four new inner city task forces, in Birmingham, Plymouth, Stockton and Haringey.

Caravan Sites Act 1968

30. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what responses he has received to his Department's consultative proposals for reform of the Caravan Sites Act 1968.

Mr. Baldry: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Clifton-Brown).

Council Rents

32. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what changes there have been in the average rent for *(a)* council houses and *(b)* council flats from 1979 to 1991 in England.

Sir George Young: My Department does not have separate estimates of average rents for local authority houses and flats. The estimated average weekly rents for council dwellings at April of each year in England from 1979 to 1991 are:

Year	*£ per week at April*
1979	6·41
1980	7·70
1981	11·42
1982	13·48
1983	13·97
1984	14·66
1985	15·54
1986	16·36
1987	17·70
1988	18·82
1989	20·70
1990	23·76
1991	27·28

The estimates for 1979 to 1990 are based on the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's annual survey of local authority housing rents. The estimate for 1991 is derived from local authorities' housing revenue account subsidy claim form returns to the Department.

Integrated Pollution Control

35. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on integrated pollution control.

Mr. Maclean: The Government introduced comprehensive new controls on industrial pollution in the Environmental Protection Act 1990, part I of which requires operators of processes with the greatest potential for pollution to seek prior authorisation from Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution (HMIP) under a system of integrated pollution control.

Integrated pollution control came into effect for all new processes on 1 April 1991, and the requirement for authorisation of existing processes will extend to all relevant industries by 1995. By the end of 1992-93 some 650 plants in 13 industrial groups will have become subject to IPC.

Housing Associations

38. **Mr. George Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to hold discussions with the National Federation of Housing Associations on the future of housing associations.

Sir George Young: My colleagues are in frequent contact with the National Federation of Housing Associations and discuss a wide range of issues of concern to housing associations. I last met them on 12 November, but I have no immediate plans for future discussions.

Repossessed Homes

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will cause an investigation to be made by the Building Societies Commission or otherwise into the issue of insider rings of solicitors and estate agents manipulating the market in repossessed homes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 30 November 1992]:* I have been asked to reply.

Following recent press reports, the Director General of Fair Trading has commenced inquiries with a view to the possibility of taking action against individuals under the Estate Agents Act 1979. Under the Act the director general may in certain circumstances prohibit individuals from engaging further in estate agency work.

Alerce Timber (Seizure)

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the Customs and Excise seizure of a quantity of alerce timber in Oxfordshire in May.

Sir John Cope: I have been asked to reply.

Customs and Excise seized a quantity of alerce timber banned from international trade under CITES—Conference on International Trade in Endangered Species. Decisions on whether to institute legal proceedings are a matter for the commissioners of Customs and Excise and I understand that the commissioners, on the basis of the evidence before them, do not feel that they would be justified in instituting criminal proceedings in this case. The timber is now held in safe storage and Customs are examining disposal options.

Local Authorities (Responsibilities)

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the statutory responsibilities currently in force specifically for local authorities in Northumberland at *(a)* district level and *(b)* county level which were enacted in the last 30 years.

Mr. Robin Squire: The only relevant statute of which I am aware is the Northumberland County Council Act 1970, in so far as it has not been repealed by the Tyne and Wear County Council Acts of 1976 and 1980. The hon. Member may wish to contact Northumberland county council for the information he is seeking.

EC Environment Policy

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made in achieving Her Majesty's Government's policy objectives for EC environmental protection policy during the presidency of the Council of Ministers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: The United Kingdom presidency has so far secured agreement to the regulation on the transboundary shipment of waste and made good progress on a number of other proposals. In addition we have highlighted the importance of integrating environmental concerns into other policy areas and carried forward work to follow up the Earth summit. We have secured a Commission commitment to report on implementation and enforcement of Community environmental legislation, and have established a network of EC environment enforcement authorities. We expect to make further progress on a number of proposals at the Environment Council on 15-16 December.

Flats Over Shops Initiative

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what was *(a)* the number of applications received for the flats over shops initiative in England and Wales for 1991-92 and *(b)* the total value of these applications;

(2) how many flats have become available for rent in England and Wales as a result of the flats over shops initiative.

Sir George Young: A total of 210 local authorities in England applied for resources totalling over £41 million in the first year (1992-93) of the flats over shops scheme, of which 57 received supplementary credit approvals totalling £5,047,500. Should all these proceed to plan, then it is likely that the number of additional units of accommodation raised will be in the region of 400. In addition, the Housing Corporation has a programme of its own. A number of other bodies—including some retailers—are seeking to bring vacant space above shops back into use, partly stimulated by the Government's initiative. Separate arrangements, which are not directly comparable, are operated in Wales by the Secretary of State for Wales.

Local Authority Receipts

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the total level of receipts likely to accrue to each local authority in England during the current financial year.

Mr. Robin Squire: Local authorities provide returns to the Department giving the capital receipts they received in 1991-92 and the receipts they are forecasting to receive in 1992-93. I have arranged for this information to be placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Pope: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimates he has made of the amount of capital receipts likely to be released in the Hyndburn constituency during the calendar year 1993 and the financial year 1993-94 from the sale of council-owned dwellings under the right-to-buy legislation.

Sir George Young: Projections of likely future right-to-buy receipts are not made for individual local authority areas.

Abandoned Mines

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consultations he has had with the National Rivers Authority concerning flooding and polluted water leaking contamination into rivers and streams from abandoned mines and proposed abandoned mines, including dates of meetings and sites under discussion.

Mr. Maclean: My right hon. Friend and I have referred to the topic from time to time in discussions with members of the National Rivers Authority's board, and there have

been discussions and exchanges of information between my officials and those of the NRA. I expect these contacts to continue as we give further consideration to policy on this issue.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if she will seek to amend section 89 of the Water Resources Act 1991 to make owners of abandoned workings liable for prosecution.

Mr. Maclean: The recent Environment White Paper confirmed that the Government are considering the framework of legal responsibility for pollution from abandoned mines. This will include consideration of section 89 of the 1991 Act.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if she will list all abandoned mines known to cause water pollution problems.

Mr. Maclean: This information is not available centrally. The National Rivers Authority has been reviewing data on water pollution from abandoned mines, and I expect its assessment to be published within the next few months.

Domestic Water Meters

36. **Mr. Madel:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will bring forward proposals for legislation to regulate the installation of domestic water meters in England; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: No. It is a matter for each water company to decide whether to install water meters in the light of the circumstances in its area. Provisions governing the installation and positioning of water meters are contained in the Water Industry Act 1991 and the Water (Meters) Regulations 1988.

Cetaceans

37. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what he expects the pilot study he has commissioned into cetaceans in the channel to report.

Mr. Maclean: The results of this joint European proposal to carry out a major trans-boundary survey of cetaceans in the North sea, Kattegat, Skaggerak and the channel will help to identify important habitat areas for these species and potential threats to them. The survey will also aid Community states in fulfilling their international nature conservation obligations and the results will provide a basis for the development of an integrated management plan for the region.

Right to Buy

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what was the number of right-to-buy applications received and registered by each local authority in England for *(a)* the year ended September 1991 and *(b)* the year ended September 1992;

(2) what was the number of sales completed by each local authority in England under right to buy for *(a)* the year ended September 1991 and *(b)* the year ended September 1992.

Sir George Young: Information on right-to-buy applications and completed sales for each local authority in England is published in the quarterly publication "Local Housing Statistics". Estimates are for financial years, or parts of financial years. The July 1992 issue (No. 102) contains figures for the financial year 1990-91 (table 5B) and provisional information for 1991-92 (table 5A). Details for the first quarter of 1992-93 were given in table 5 of the October 1992 issue (No. 103). Updated information covering the first half of 1992-93 will be available in the new year. Corresponding estimates for the periods requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what is the proportion of *(a)* houses and *(b)* flats sold to sitting tenants in England and Wales which have been repurchased by English and Welsh local authorities under housing defects legislation for each year since 1982;

(2) how many *(a)* houses and *(b)* flats sold to sitting tenants under the right to buy have been repurchased by English local authorities under housing defects legislation for each year since 1982.

Sir George Young: In England 12,165 houses and flats have been repurchased under the legislation by local authorities, representing 1·1 per cent. of all sales by those local authorities under the right to buy to the end of June 1992. In Wales the corresponding figures are 467 and 0·5 per cent. The number of properties repurchased each year has been as follows:

	(a) Houses	*(b) Flats*
England:		
1984-85	78	1
1985-86	2,342	16
1986-87	2,550	30
1987-88	2,006	35
1988-89	1,674	14
1989-90	1,258	7
1990-91	1,306	11
1991-92	834	3
Wales:		
1984-85	—	—
1985-86	22	3
1986-87	90	—
1987-88	214	2
1988-89	63	1
1989-90	38	1
1990-91	17	1
1991-92	12	1

Source: Local authority returns

The available data on repurchases does not include the year in which the dwelling was purchased under the right to buy so it is not possible to calculate the proportions of each year's sales that have been repurchased.

Disabled Employees

Mr. Elletson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many *(a)* physically disabled and *(b)* sensorily disabled people are employed in his Department; and what percentage they are of the total work force.

Mr. Howard: The Department employs 97 disabled people and this represents some 1·5 per cent. of the non industrial work force. Of the 97 disabled people, we are aware of 25 who have a sensory disability.

County Archive Services

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received concerning the continuation of the county archive services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: In the context of the review of local government structure by the Local Government Commission we have received representations from the Society of Archivists, the Association of County Archivists, the National Council on Archives and the Royal Commission on Historic Manuscripts, as well as representations from other interested parties and members of the public.

Our policy guidance to the Commission highlights the need for it to consider arrangements for the maintenance and management of archives. Our objective is for local authorities to continue to develop local policies for the collection and preservation of archives, and for making them available for public inspection whilst maintaining the integrity of existing collections.

Building and Construction

Sir Michael Neubert: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his latest assessment of the prospects for increased activity in the building and construction industry.

Sir George Young: The prospects for increased activity in the construction industry will have been boosted by the measures announced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his autumn statement. The action to revive the housing market, the "window of opportunity" for use of local authority capital receipts, the changes in capital allowances and the protection of many key capital spending programmes will all help create work in the industry. Most important of all is the reduction in interest rates, which are now at their lowest level since January 1978. All that is needed now is a return of confidence, and that should begin to re-assert itself now that the Government have set out their strategy for growth.

Standard Spending Assessments

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to change the standard spending assessment calculation for under-fives from a population base to a provision base.

Mr. Robin Squire: Our proposals for the 1993-94 standard spending assessments do not include any amendment to the education SSA element for under-fives. However all representations on these proposals will be carefully considered before final decisions are reached.

Water

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has had with the chairmen of water companies in England and Wales about water supply disconnections.

Mr. Maclean: Both Ministers and officials from time to time meet the chairmen of water companies and discuss matters of mutual interest, including disconnections. For example, this subject was raised briefly when Lord Strathclyde and I met the chairmen of the Water Services Association and the Water Companies' Association on 1 December 1992.

Housing

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many new houses were completed in Essex for every year since 1979, broken down by local authority district and between private, local authority and housing association ownership management.

Mr. Baldry: Estimates of housebuilding completions by sector for each local authority area in Essex are shown in the publications "Local Housing Statistics" and "Housebuilding in England by Local Authority Areas 1980-89".

Figures for 1979 are in table 5 of the May 1980 edition (issue No. 53) of "Local Housing Statistics". Figures for 1980 to 1984 are in "Housebuilding in England by Local Authority Areas"; tables 1.1 to 1.5. Latest figures for 1985 to 1991 and the first half of 1992 are in tables 1(a) to 1(h) of the October 1992 edition (issue No. 103) of "Local Housing Statistics". Copies of these publications are in the Library.

Budget Allocations

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what were the budget allocations made to each region for city grant for each year from 1989-90 *(a)* at current prices and *(b)* at 1989-90 prices.

Mr. Robin Squire: City grant is a demand-led grant programme and not allocated on a regional basis. Details of the amount of city grant approved by region and financial year are listed.

Region	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*1992 to date*
	£ million	*£ million*	*£ million*	*£ million*
Prices at date of approval				
West Midlands	19·34	14·10	15·84	13·61
North West	24·33	15·85	21·15	16·10
Northern	6·45	2·39	8·81	6·77
Yorkshire and Humberside	5·07	16·60	11·87	3·61
London	5·66	2·56	5·38	1·60
East Midlands	4·34	1·73	8·23	2·00
South West	—	0·26	4·83	3·70
	65·19	53·49	76·11	47·39
Amount of City Grant approved (1989-90 prices)				
West Midlands	19·34	13·03	13·68	11·25
North West	24·33	14·65	18·27	13·31
Northern	6·45	2·21	7·61	5·60
Yorkshire and Humberside	5·07	15·34	10·25	2·98
London	5·66	2·36	4·65	1·32
East Midlands	4·34	1·60	7·11	1·65
South West	—	0·24	4·17	3·06
	65·19	49·43	65·74	39·17

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what were the budget allocations made to each inner-city task force by his Department for each year from 1989-90 *(a)* at current prices and *(b)* at 1989-90 prices.

Mr. Squire: Responsibility for the task force unit transferred to my Department from the Department of Trade and Industry on 1 June 1992. The expenditure by each inner city task force for the period from 1989-90 to 1991-92 is set out in the following table.

Expenditure by task forces 1989-92

Task force	*1989-90 (£'000s)*	*1990-91 (£'000s)*	*1991-92 (£'000)*
Birmingham			
East	958·9	753·5	999·1
Handsworth	311·9	516·8	8·0
Bradford	129·6	1,107·4	1,264·7
Bristol	920·6	1,316·3	1,073·9
Coventry	879·0	802·3	1,278·3
Derby	—	62·2	807·2
Doncaster	1,619·4	1,192·4	188·5
Hartlepool	941·4	1,350·7	769·6
Hull	—	—	80·5
Leeds	1,211·8	1,021·5	1,180·6
Leicester	981·5	212·9	2·8
Liverpool	297·7	1,059·4	1,422·9
London			
Deptford	48·5	1,144·8	1,208·7
Hackney	—	—	158·8
North Peckham	766·2	1,530·4	1,391·9
Spitalfields	859·5	921·1	1,243·9
West London	502·2	1,163·8	1,481·2
Manchester	996·7	1,920·0	2,203·1
Middlesbrough	979·7	1,006·9	1,160·1
Nottingham	998·4	1,100·3	857·2
Preston	487·8	408·9	87·7
Rochdale	908·7	632·6	254·6
South Tyneside	—	—	16·8
Wirral	—	317·9	701·2
Wolverhampton	1,269·8	326·7	99·6

Note: Allocation of the task force budget of £23 million for 1992-93 is not yet complete. Figures are not available on a 1989-90 cost basis. To provide this would incur disproportionate costs.

Standard Spending Assessments

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what weight he gives to service-specific costs such as education inflation and social service provision inflation in calculating standard spending assessments; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire *[holding answer 7 December 1992]:* Standard spending assessments are distributed according to general principles which best reflect the differences in the costs of providing a standard level of service between local authorities. Total standard spending and its division between services, takes account of a number of factors including service responsibilities, cost pressures and what the country can afford.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Market Testing

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to which of those of his Department's activities due to be market-tested by 30 September 1993 the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 and the EC Acquired Rights Directive 77/189/EEC will apply.

Mr. Curry: Whether or not the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 and the EC Acquired Rights Directive 77/189/EEC will apply to an individual case depends on the facts of that case; and there are a number of tests to be applied. For example, it needs to be shown that an undertaking or part of an undertaking is actually being transferred.

We are seeking the advice of our legal advisers about the relevance of TUPE on a case by case basis.

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish a timetable showing when he plans to market test those activities listed for testing before 30 September 1993.

Mr. Curry: The timetable set for market testing the Departmental activities listed in the citizens charter first report: 1992 (CM 2101) requires the whole programme to be completed by 30 September 1993.

Planning is well under way on individual market tests and it is anticipated that the first invitations to tender will be issued early in 1993.

Agri-environment Measures

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how he intends to set priorities for the implementation of Agri-Environment Regulation (2078/92).

Mr. Curry: Our priorities, based on advice from Government agencies and others, include nitrate reduction measures where this is necessary to protect drinking water sources, reduction of livestock numbers where this will be environmentally beneficial, measures to increase the environmental benefits of set-aside, the encouragement of organic farming and the management of land for public access and recreation. Details of our proposals will be issued for consultation this winter. They are additional to the expansion of environmentally sensitive areas already under way.

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the relationship between the agri-environment package and the implementation of the national sustainability plan.

Mr. Curry: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment is consulting widely on the scope of the United Kingdom's report to the Sustainable Development Commission. Our proposals for agri-environment measures, on which we will also consult widely, will reflect Government commitments on agriculture and the environment.

Potatoes

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to what extent his proposals on reorganisation of the Potato Marketing Board are affected by the most recent EC reform proposals for potato marketing.

Mr. Curry: I have made no proposals on reorganisation of the Potato Marketing Board. The EC proposals in their present form would require fundamental changes to the potato marketing scheme and the board's powers. The Agriculture Bill, currently in another place, contains enabling powers for the potato marketing scheme to be revoked, the Potato Marketing Board to be wound up and its assets transferred to a successor body or bodies. This flexibility does not exist in the European Communities Act

which would otherwise have to be used to wind up the scheme and the board if the current EC proposals were agreed.

GATT

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what estimate he has made of the effect of the GATT round on the price of *(a)* beef and *(b)* milk within the United Kingdom.

Mr. Curry: None. As the EC Commission has made clear, the agreement on agricultural issues reached with the United States in the context of the current GATT round is consistent with the reforms to CAP regimes agreed earlier this year.

Scrapie

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on what date officials of his Department and other invited persons will be meeting Dr. Narang.

Mr. Soames: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Ewes

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish figures showing the total number of breeding ewes within the less-favoured areas in England and Wales in each year since 1987.

Mr. Curry: The information requested is as follows:

Breeding Ewes within less favoured areas

	England and Wales (thousands)
1987	7,863
1988	8,163
1989	8,507
1990	8,696
1991	8,727

Source: June Agricultural Censuses 1987 to 1991—results for 1992 are not yet available in this form.

Slaughterhouses

Mr. Sykes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what additional training veterinary surgeons will have to undertake in order to carry out the ante and post-mortem inspection proposed under the EC directive on slaughterhouses.

Mr. Soames: Ante and post-mortem inspections are already required under United Kingdom legislation. For meat going for intra-community trade the ante-mortem must be carried out by an official veterinary surgeon and the new rules extend this requirement to meat going for domestic consumption. In the United Kingdom post-mortem inspections will generally continue to be carried out by meat inspectors although in many other member states it is normally performed by a fully qualified veterinary surgeon.

The degree qualification obtained by every veterinary surgeon fully equips him or her to perform both ante and post-mortem inspections. In order to be designated by the Minister as an official veterinary surgeon in Great Britain a veterinary surgeon has to undertake a short course organised by the Department to bring him or her up to date with the latest United Kingdom and EC meat hygiene technology, legislation and practice.

Set-aside Land

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will consider the desirability of linking grants for set-aside land in suitable locations in the upper and middle zones of river catchments, to a national scheme of grants for the construction of simple bunds and associated temporary sluices that would impound heavy natural run-off of water to avoid flooding.

Mr. Curry: Under domestic legislation, the Ministry makes grant aid available to the National Rivers Authority, local authorities and internal drainage boards in support of flood defence measures which are technically sound, economically worthwhile and environmentally acceptable. The rules for land set-aside under the new EC arable arrangements from autumn 1992 require the land to be kept in good agricultural condition during the set-aside period. It would be incompatible with this requirement to permit the construction of structures to prevent run-off on set-aside land.

DEFENCE

NATO Status of Forces Agreement

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on progress in the renegotiation with the German authorities of the supplementary agreement to the NATO status of forces agreement; when he expects the negotiations to be concluded; and when he expects a new agreement to come into force.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The review of the supplementary agreement to the NATO status of forces agreement began in September 1991. Negotiations have progressed very well and are now nearing their final stage. Seven states, including the United Kingdom and Germany are parties to the agreement and it is not possible therefore to say exactly when negotiations will be completed.

Menwith Hill Station (Visit)

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what official assistance was given to the new director of the National Security Agency in connection with his visit to Menwith Hill station on 26 September.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: All arrangements in support of visits by senior US officials to Menwith Hill station are a matter for the US Department of Defence.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the purpose of the visit by representatives of the Government to Menwith Hill station around 11 October; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There was no visit to Menwith Hill station by representatives of the Government on or around 11 October.

Greenwich Hospital Trust

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last published accounts for Greenwich hospital trust; and when he will make available a copy of the next available accounts.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Greenwich hospital's accounts for 1990-91 were ordered to be printed on 23 January 1992 and published accordingly by HMSO as House of Commons paper No. 203 of 1991-92. The 1991-92 accounts are nearing completion with a view to presentation to the House early in 1993.

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the appointment of Hunters to act as agents for Greenwich hospital trust was subject to competitive tendering; and when the contract was last put out to tender.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No. In 1968, Mr. D. C. Hunter, FRICS, was, with Admiralty Board approval, appointed manager of the hospital's Greenwich estate. In 1986, with the approval of the Greenwich hospital advisory panel, the appointment was transferred to Mr. Hunter's firm, Hunters, for a three-year trial period, with Mr. Hunter retaining responsibility for overall supervision of Greenwich hospital's interests. Although Mr. Hunter formally retired in 1989, he continues to act as a consultant to the firm. After the end of the trial period, the arrangement was reviewed and it was decided that existing contractual arrangements should continue.

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consultation was undertaken with commercial tenants of Greenwich hospital trust about the appointment of the trust's agents to handle matters relating to the commercial leases held for the trust.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Available records do not indicate whether such consultation was undertaken. It is not normal commercial practice for a landlord to consult tenants before appointing an agent.

Windsor Castle (Fire)

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the deployment of military personnel at Windsor castle following the recent fire; what charges are being made for the cost of those services; and by whom they will be met.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: During the fire and the immediate aftermath, in addition to men from the Windsor castle guard, some 200 soldiers from the Household Cavalry regiment were deployed to assist in removal of precious artifacts to a place of safety. Once the fire had been extinguished, soldiers assisted with the transfer of the previously removed objects back to their proper locations. During the period when members of the castle guard were providing assistance, the guard was reinforced with men from the 7th Duke of Edinburgh's Own Gurkha Rifles. Apart from charges which are being raised to cover the cost of meals provided for firemen at Combermere barracks, no charges are being raised for this assistance.

Amalgamations

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will set out details of amalgamations or disbandments of combat arms units of the Army which have taken place during 1992, giving dates, the units affected and the titles of regiments formed by amalgamations; and if he will set out the timetable for future amalgamations or disbandments of combat arms units.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The information requested is set out in the tables.

Amalgamations in 1992

Date	*Unit*	*Full Title*	*Formed from*
25 July 1992	1 and 2 RGJ	The Royal Green Jackets	Reduction from 3 battalions to 2
31 July 1992	RDG	The Royal Dragoon Guards	Amalgamation of 4th/7th Royal Dragoon Guards and 5th Royal Inniskilling Dragoon Guards
1 August 1992	1 and 2 RRF	The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers	Reduction from 3 batallions to 2
3 August 1992	2 RTR	2nd Royal Tank Regiment	Amalgamation of 2nd Royal Tank Regiment and 3rd Royal Tank Regiment
9 September 1992	1 and 2 PWRR	The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment (Queen's and Royal Hampshires)	Forms from the amalgamation of The Royal Hampshire Regiment and The Queen's Regiment (during period August 1992 to February 1993)
14 September 1992	2 GR	2nd King Edward VII's Own Gurkha Rifles (The Sirmoor Rifles)	Amalgamation of the 1st and 2nd battalions 2nd King Edward VII's Own Gurkha Rifles (The Sirmoor Rifles)
5 October 1992	1 and 2 R Anglian	The Royal Anglian Regiment	Reduction from 3 battalions to 2
19 October 1992	HCR	The Household Cavalry Regiment	Union of The Life Guards and The Blues and Royals
1 December 1992	LD	The Light Dragoons	Amalgamation of 13th/18th Royal Hussars (Queen Mary's Own) and 15th/19th The King's Royal Hussars
4 December 1992	KRH	The King's Royal Hussars	Amalgamation of The Royal Hussars (Prince of Wales's Own) and 14th/20th King's Hussars

Amalgamations—Future timetable

Date	Unit	Full title	Formed from
27 February 1993	1 and 2 LI	The Light Infantry	Reduction from 3 battalions to 2
25 June 1993	QRL	The Queen's Royal Lancers	Amalgamation of 17th/21st Lancers and 16/5th The Queen's Royal Lancers
July 1993	1 RTR	1st Royal Tank Regiment	Amalgamation of 1st Royal Tank Regiment and 4th Royal Tank Regiment
August 1993	QRH	The Queen's Royal Hussars (The Queen's Own and Royal Irish)	Amalgamation of The Queen's Own Hussars and The Queen's Royal Irish Hussars
August 1993	1 R IRISH	The Royal Irish Regiment (27th (Inniskilling), 83rd, 87th and Ulster Defence Regiment)	Amalgamation of 1st and 2nd battalions The Royal Irish Regiment
August 1993	1 CS (to be confirmed)	The Cheshire and Staffordshire Regiment	Amalgamation of The Cheshire Regiment and The Staffordshire Regiment (The Prince of Wales's)
November 1993	1 SG	Scots Guards	2nd battalion in suspended animation
December 1993	1 COLDM GDS	Coldstream Guards	2nd battalion in suspended animation
April 1994	RGBWR (to be confirmed)	The Royal Gloucestershire, Berkshire and Wiltshire Regiment	Amalgamation of The Duke of Edinburgh's Royal Regiment (Berkshire and Wiltshire) and The Gloucestershire Regiment
September 1994	to be announced	to be announced	Amalgamation of Queen's Own Highlanders (Seaforth and Camerons and The Gordon Highlanders)
October 1994	to be announced	to be announced	Amalgamation of The Royal Scots (The Royal Regiment) and The King's Own Scottish Borderers
November 1994	1 GREN GDS	Grenadier Guards	2nd battalion in suspended animation
March 1995	1 RGR	1st Battalion The Royal Gurkha Rifles	Amalgamation of 2nd King Edward VII's Own Gurkha Rifles (The Sirmoor Rifles) and 6th Queen Elizabeth's Own Gurkha Rifles
March 1995	2 RGR	2nd Battalion the The Royal Gurkha Rifles	7th Duke of Edinburgh's Own Gurkha Rifles renames
March 1995	3 RGR	3rd Battalion The Royal Gurkha Rifles	10th Princess Mary's Own Gurkha Rifles renames
March 1997	2 RGR	2nd Battalion The Royal Gurkha Rifles	Amalgamation of the 2nd and 3rd battalions The Royal Gurkha Rifles

Note: Actual dates shown where known, others are approximate and subject to amendment.

Military Aid

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what has been the value of military aid supplied to overseas countries in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Ministry of Defence has no military aid budget. The primary responsibility for funding military training assistance and other forms of aid lies with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and MOD assists where it is compatible with defence interests. The information requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Liquid Radioactive Waste

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much liquid radioactive waste was dealt with annually since 1962 by the present liquid radioactive waste treatment plant at AWE Aldermaston.

Mr. Aitken: The volumes, in cubic metres, are as follows:

Year	Volume
1962	46,545
1963	39,950
1964	36,435
1965	34,661
1966	35,748
1967	34,643
1968	35,250
1969	32,700
1970	34,200
1971	34,400
1972	31,200
1973	33,000
1974	25,500
1975	25,500
1976	24,000
1977	25,800
1978	17,700
1979	21,300
1980	22,650
1981	16,800
1982	18,750
1983	15,900
1984	15,900
1985	15,300
1986	15,450
1987	14,250
1988	14,100
1989	13,800
1990	12,596
1991	13,500

Note: Figures for 1992 are not yet available.

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the nuclear weapons in the United Kingdom's active stockpile were declared one-point safe.

Mr. Aitken: Each design of nuclear weapon in the United Kingdom's active stockpile was declared one-point safe before entering service.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress has been made in the establishment of a nuclear weapons safety group by his Department on the lines proposed in the Oxburgh report.

Mr. Aitken: I refer the hon. Member to my answer of 6 November at column *532*.

Helicopter Noise

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what plans there are to extend the helicopter noise insulation grant scheme to include dwellings which are on regular helicopter flight paths;

(2) what progress has been made on the review of the helicopter noise insulation grant scheme; and when he intends to reform the scheme.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: A study is underway to establish whether the boundary of the existing noise scheme at Bessbrook should be extended in some areas to take into account the intensity of noise created by helicopters on approach and departure routes. The study is being conducted in close consultation with Newry and Mourne district council and we would expect the results to be available around mid-1993. If these show that additional properties are subject to the qualifying noise levels for sound insulation grant we will consider extending entitlement to those areas and, if appropriate, review the implications for other helicopter landing sites in Northern Ireland. We have no plans to introduce schemes other than in the vicinity of helicopter landing sites.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration has been given to including individual dwellings in the vicinity of look-out posts and occasional helicopter landing sites within the helicopter noise insulation grant scheme.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: At look out posts and occasional helicopter landing sites the average 70dB(A) noise contour upon which our existing scheme is based would not be triggered from the small number of flights involved. It is not therefore proposed to include these sites in our scheme.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what monitoring of helicopter noise and flight frequencies has been carried out, and at what locations, as part of the review of the helicopter noise insulation grant scheme.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: A pilot noise survey including a daily check of flight movements at Bessbrook, which we believe is the worst affected area, has already commenced and is continuing. Our efforts will be concentrated there until data from this task and a subsequent full noise survey have been collected and analysed.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the current review of the helicopter noise insulation grant scheme was initiated.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: April 1991.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration has been given to the high incidence of night-time helicopter flights in parts of Northern Ireland during the review of the helicopter noise insulation grant scheme.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is because of our concern about the number of night-time helicopter flights in certain parts of Northern Ireland that this aspect forms an important part of our review.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration has been given to introducing helicopter noise insulation schemes at landing sites excluded from the last such grant scheme.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We will consider the inclusion of other helicopter landing sites in Northern Ireland when the results of the noise survey at Bessbrook have been evaluated and the review of our night-time policy is complete.

Market Testing

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish a timetable showing when he plans to market-test those activities listed for testing before 30 September 1993.

Mr. Aitken: The table gives the information the hon. Gentleman requests for significant activities to be tested in this timescale. It should be noted that the planning dates given are indicative only, as the length of the consultation period and the negotiations which follow are not easy to predict in each case.

Main activities to be tested by 30 September 1993

	Estimated completion date
Accommodation and office services	Property management (completed August 1992)
	Others March and September 1993
Elementary Flying Training	January 1993
Engineering services and support	RAF Scampton (completed)
	30 July 1993 (18 Base Workshop)
	Helicopter and aircraft support—RNAS Yeovilton (completed)
Fire services	31 August 1993
Freight delivery	BAOR freight services (completed)
	31 August 1993 Military container service
Grounds maintenance	September 1993
Information Technology services	February 1993
Motor Transport	July 1993
In-service equipment support	May 1993 (Trident in-service support)
	March 1993 Flight checking
Nuclear weapon research and production facilities	April 1993
Operation of experimental aircraft fleet	September 1993
Vehicle maintenance	May 1993

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence to which of those of his Department's activities due to be market-tested by 30 September 1993 the Transfer of

Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 and the EC Acquired Rights Directive 77/189/EEC will apply.

Mr. Aitken: Whether or not the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 and the EC Acquired Rights Directive 77/189/EEC will apply to an individual case will depend on the facts of that case. There are a number of tests to be applied; for example, it needs to be shown that an undertaking or part of an undertaking is actually being transferred. We are seeking the advice of our legal advisers about the relevance of TUPE on a case by case basis.

Aircraft

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy towards the development of a European maritime patrol aircraft.

Mr. Aitken: I understand that a number of European aircraft manufacturers, including British Aerospace, are conducting exploratory studies into a possible European maritime patrol aircraft. I would be happy to consider such an aircraft as a possible contender to meet our future requirements, were it to be available.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the United Kingdom will participate in the feasibility stage of the European future large aircraft.

Mr. Aitken: No. However, we will continue to follow developments on the project.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the United Kingdom's requirement for a replacement maritime patrol aircraft.

Mr. Aitken: My Department intends shortly to issue a request to industry for information, on possible means of upgrading the maritime patrol capability currently provided by the Nimrod MR2 aircraft. This will allow the identification of possible enhancements to, or replacements for, the present aircraft and their systems around the turn of the century. The responses to this request will enable my Department to assess possible solutions and establish which offers best value for money in meeting the requirement.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the need for the United Kingdom to acquire a replacement for the Hercules aircraft.

Mr. Aitken: My Department is currently assessing the need for a replacement for the Hercules aircraft against our future air transport requirements. It is out intention to procure any such replacement aircraft off-the-shelf.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the prospects for the European future large aircraft project following recent progress on the European fighter aircraft project.

Mr. Aitken: As my Department is not participating in the European future large aircraft project, we have made no assessment of its prospects following progress on EFA. We will, however, follow any developments.

EMPLOYMENT

Health and Safety Executive

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list the number of *(a)* agricultural inspectors and *(b)* factory inspectors in the HSE area offices in (i) London and the south-east and (ii) the midlands region in each year since 1978.

Mr. McLoughlin: *(a)* The information available for Health and Safety Executive (HSE) agricultural inspectors is as follows:

	(i) London and south-east region	*(ii) Midlands region*
1985	10	31
1986	8	34
1987	9	31
1988	10	30
1989	9	31
1990	11	30
1991	10	27
1992	10	30

Note: Figures are for 1 April each year and show full-time equivalent staff.

Comparable figures are not available for earlier years by these regions because of changes in the basis of compiling staffing statistics for the occupational group.

(b) The number of factory inspectors employed by HSE in (i) London and the south-east and (ii) the midlands region in each year since 1978 was:

Year	*(i) London and South East region*	*(ii) Midlands region*
1978	98·0	122·0
1979	108·0	124·0
1980	110·0	132·0
1981	111·0	127·0
1982	105·0	118·0
1983	99·0	109·0
1984	91·0	103·0
1985	100·0	106·0
1986	94·0	105·5
1987	94·5	104·5
1988	96·0	101·5
1989	96·0	103·5
1990	93·0	116·0
1991	95·0	120·5
1992	99·0	132·5

Note: Figures are for 1 April each year and show full-time equivalent staff.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list the number of *(a)* nurses and *(b)* doctors employed in the HSE area offices in the (i) London and south-east and (ii) midlands regions, in each year since 1978.

Mr. McLoughlin: *(a)* The information available for nurses employed by the Health and Safety Executive in (i) London and the south-east and (ii) the midlands is as follows:

	(i) London and South East region	(ii) Midlands region
1985	4	8
1986	4	8
1987	5	8
1988	5	9
1989	6	8
1990	5	9
1991	6	8
1992	7	9

Note: Figures are for 1 April each year and show full-time equivalent staff.

Comparable figures are not available for earlier years by these regions because of changes in the basis of compiling staffing statistics for the occupational group.

(b) The information available for doctors employed by the Health and Safety Executive in (i) London and the south-east and (ii) the midlands is:

	(i) London and the South East region	(ii) Midlands region
1985	10·0	12·0
1986	10·0	10·5
1987	6·5	10·5
1988	4·5	10·0
1989	4·5	8·0
1990	4·0	9·0
1991	3·5	8·0
1992	6·5	10·0

Note: Figures are for 1 April each year and show full-time equivalent staff.

Comparable figures are not available for earlier years by these regions because of changes in the basis of compiling staffing statistics for the occupational group.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list the number of *(a)* agricultural inspectors, *(b)* factory inspectors, *(c)* doctors and *(d)* nurses in the Health and Safety Executive area offices in the north-west region in each year since 1978.

Mr. McLoughlin: *(a)* The available information for Health and Safety Executive (HSE) agricultural inspectors in the north-west region is as follows:

	Number
1985	12
1986	13
1987	13
1988	10
1989	12
1990	14
1991	14
1992	17

Note: Figures are for 1 April each year and show full-time equivalent staff.

Comparable figures are not available for earlier years by this region because of changes in the basis of compiling staffing statistics for the occupational group.

(b) The number of factory inspectors employed by HSE in the north-west region in each year since 1978 was:

	Number
1978	92
1979	97
1980	90
1981	93
1982	87
1983	85
1984	83
1985	85·5
1986	78·5
1987	78·5
1988	74·5
1989	60
1990	83·5
1991	82·5
1992	79·5

Note: Figures are for 1 April each year and show full-time equivalent staff.

(c) The information available for HSE doctors in the north-west region is as follows:

	Number
1985	10
1986	8
1987	9
1988	7
1989	7
1990	5
1991	7
1992	7·5

Note: Figures are for 1 April each year and show full-time equivalent staff.

Comparable figures are not available for earlier years by this region because of changes in the basis of compiling staffing statistics for the occupational group.

(d) The information available for HSE nurses in the north-west region is as follows:

	Number
1985	7
1986	7
1987	7
1988	7
1989	7
1990	6
1991	7
1992	8

Note: Figures are for 1 April each year and show full-time equivalent staff.

Comparable figures are not available for earlier years by this region because of changes in the basis of compiling staffing statistics for the occupational group.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list the number of *(a)* factory inspectors, *(b)* agricultural inspectors, *(c)* doctors and *(d)* nurses in the Health and Safety Executive area offices in the Yorkshire and north-east region in each year since 1978.

Mr. McLoughlin: *(a)* The number of factory inspectors employed by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) in the Yorkshire and north-east region in each year since 1978 was:

	Number
1978	101·0
1979	104·0
1980	108·0
1981	103·0
1982	90·0
1983	92·5
1984	88·0
1985	91·0
1986	88·0
1987	86·5
1988	79·5
1989	84·5
1990	90·5
1991	92·5
1992	89·5

Note: Figures are for 1 April each year and show full-time equivalent staff.

(b) The information available for Health and Safety Executive agricultural inspectors in the Yorkshire and north-east region is as follows:

	Number
1985	18
1986	17
1987	18
1988	14
1989	16
1990	19
1991	22
1992	18

Note: Figures are for 1 April each year and show full-time equivalent staff.

Comparable figures are not available by these regions for earlier years because of changes in the basis of compiling staffing statistics for the occupational group.

(c) The information available for Health and Safety Executive doctors in the Yorkshire and north-east region is as follows:

	Number
1985	9·0
1986	9·5
1987	7·0
1988	6·0
1989	6·5
1990	8·5
1991	7·5
1992	8·5

Note: Figures are for 1 April each year and show full-time equivalent staff.

Comparable figures are not available by these regions for earlier years because of changes in the basis of compiling staffing statistics for the occupational group.

(d) The information available for HSE nurses in the Yorkshire and north-east region is:

	Number
1985	10
1986	12
1987	10
1988	10
1989	10
1990	9
1991	9
1992	8

Note: Figures are for 1 April each year and show full-time equivalent staff.

Comparable figures are not available by this region for earlier years because of changes in the basis of compiling staffing statistics for the occupational group.

Mr. A. J. Linehan

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps were taken under the civil service rules relating to business appointments in connection with approval of the recruitment of Mr. A. J. Linehan by Higgs and Hill Safety Consultants.

Mr. McLoughlin: Mr. Linehan did not apply to the executive under the normal civil service rules prior to this appointment as a non-executive director of Hinton and Higgs and the executive is in correspondence with him on the matter.

Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the cost of ACAS during each year since its creation; and what is the expected cost in *(a)* 1992 and *(b)* 1993.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information requested is set out in the following table:

	Cost £ million[1]
(a) Historical costs	
[2]1974-75	1·3
1975-76	3·4
1976-77	8·0
1977-78	8·6
1978-79	9·4
1979-80	10·6
1980-81	11·8
1981-82	10·7
1982-83	11·7
1983-84	12·3
1984-85	12·6
1985-86	13·1
1986-87	14·4
1987-88	15·2
1988-89	15·9
1989-90	16·5
1990-91	17·7
1991-92	19·5
(b) Estimated costs:	
1992-93	21·7

[1] Total net costs of ACAS. Figures do not include the costs of the Certification Officer or of the Central Arbitration Committee.
[2] 2 September 1974 to 31 March 1975.

Figures for 1993-94 will be published in the Government's expenditure plans (Employment Department Group Report) early next year.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many conciliation officers have been employed by ACAS during each year since its creation; how many it employs now; and how many it expects to employ in 1993.

Mr. McLoughlin: I am told by the chairman of ACAS that all higher executive officers (HEOs) employed by the service in its regional organisation are nominated as

conciliation officers under section 211(1) of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992, although not all are employed full-time on conciliation work. Records of the total number of HEOs employed are not available before 1983.

Year	Number of HEOs on operational work
1983	221
1984	216
1985	203
1986	204
1987	200
1988	190
1989	184
1990	185
1991	181
1992	191

The figures given are calculated on the average number of HEOs in post over the first half of the calendar year in question. This year it is estimated that 92 per cent. of all HEO operational time is being employed on conciliation. This proportion is expected to be higher in 1993.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how the role of ACAS has changed since its foundation; and what further changes are proposed.

Mr. McLoughlin: Since its creation as an independent statutory body, by the Employment Protection Act 1975, there have been three main changes to the statutory role of ACAS. First, the provisions in the 1975 Act relating to ACAS's role in the determination of claims for trade union recognition were repealed by the Employment Act 1980. Secondly, ACAS's role in undertaking inquiries into questions concerning Wages Councils was ended by the Wages Act 1986. Thirdly, ACAS's role in seeking to promote the settlement of complaints without them having to be determined by an industrial tribunal has been extended by a variety of enactments.

As to the future, I refer the hon. Member to the reply given on 1 December, *Official Report*, columns *132-33*, to my hon. Friend the Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick). If there are to be any further changes, they will be made after consultation with the ACAS Council.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many and what percentage of ACAS conciliation officers have portable telephones and word processors; and what plans there are to increase these provisions.

Mr. McLoughlin: I am told by the chairman of ACAS that no portable telephones are in use by conciliation officers. Most conciliation officers have access to personal computers. Replacement of the service's current computing systems is scheduled for 1993.

Training

Mr. Pope: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people resident in the Hyndburn constituency are engaged on employment training and employment action; and what proportion they represent of the total number of eligible people.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information requested is not available. Information on the number of participants on employment training and employment action is not collected centrally below training and enterprise council level.

Pools Industry

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people are employed in the pools industry.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information requested is included in the estimates for sport and other recreational services, which do not separately identify the pools industry.

In June 1992 (the latest date for which information is available) there were 343,000 employees in employment in sport and other recreational services in Great Britain.

Vocational Training

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will make it her policy to establish United Kingdom wide minimum standards for the provision of vocational training, including *(a)* maximum numbers of hours that trainees are allowed to work, *(b)* the proportion of time to be spent on off-the-job training, *(c)* the proportion of time to be spent on placement, *(d)* break entitlements, *(e)* holiday entitlement, *(f)* other paid or unpaid leave and *(g)* grievance and disciplinary procedures.

Mr. McLoughlin: We have no plans to do so.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what guidelines have been produced by her Department to training and enterprise councils concerning the inclusion of statements relating to *(a)* the quality of the training provision and *(b)* equal opportunity statements within their operating agreements.

Mr. McLoughlin: Relations between training and enterprise councils and the Employment Department are governed by the TEC operating agreement. Under this agreement TECs are required to:

Contract only with training providers that obtain and maintain approved training organisation status under criteria published by the Secretary of State or under criteria that are agreed to be at least equivalent; and to use all reasonable endeavours to ensure equality of opportunity in respect of all their activities and to pass on this obligation to their training providers.

Each year, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State produces strategic guidance to support TECs in developing their plans. This sets out the strategic priorities that underpin the operating agreement. These cover help for those at a disadvantage in the labour market and the provision of high quality training.

In addition, TECs have access to "Developing Good Practice" briefs on equal opportunities, managing quality and a wide range of other subjects.

PA Consulting Group

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how much money has been paid to PA Consulting Group in respect of contracts undertaken to *(a)* establish the feasibility of privatising the electrical equipment certification service and *(b)* undertake a pay and grading review for the Health and Safety Executive.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Health and Safety Executive paid PA Consulting Group £87,400 in the financial year 1991-92 for a study of the future status of the electrical equipment certification service.

The Health and Safety Executive appointed PA Consulting Group in March 1992 to assist in a review of pay and grading arrangements. A total of £79,400 has been paid to date.

Both contracts were awarded following competitive tendering exercises.

Hazard Ratings

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how occupational health factors are taken into account in determining the Health and Safety Executive's hazard rating system for the inspection of premises.

Mr. McLoughlin: When determining current health performance at inspection visits, to enable them to determine or review the inspection rating calculated, inspectors from the Health and Safety Executive's field operations division (FOD) take into account the action taken by employers, owners and the self employed to both identify risks to health and to prevent or control the risk so far as is reasonably practicable.

Field operations division is currently looking at new approaches to stimulate systematic collection of information on health risks further to refine the targeting of inspection visits planned on the basis of the rating system.

Employment Service

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what progress the Employment Service has made in the latest quarter in meeting targets outlined in the 1992-93 agency agreement; and if she will show for the latest possible date *(a)* the total unemployed job placings against profiled target, *(b)* the long-term unemployed job placings, *(c)* people with disabilities job placings, *(d)* inner-city job placings, *(e)* the employment training referral to the start ratio, *(f)* the number of new claims not pursued following initial contact and *(g)* the number of people who withdrew their claim to benefit after contact with fraud investigators.

Mr. McLoughlin: I am informed by the chief executive of the Employment Service that in the period April to September 1992, the Employment Service placed a total of 729,000 unemployed people into jobs, against an annual target of 1·425 million. 24·3 per cent. of these placings were long-term claimants, 2·8 per cent. were people with disabilities and 34 per cent. were unemployed people in inner cities against annual targets of 19 per cent., 2·5 per cent. and 36 per cent. respectively. Over the same period the employment training/employment action referral to start ratio was 2·8:1 against an annual target of 2·5:1. New claims not pursued following initial contact were at the annual target level of 10 per cent. The number of people who withdrew their claim to benefit after contact with fraud investigators was 35,000 against an annual target of 58,000.

Unemployment

Mr. Pope: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of those unemployed in the Accrington and Rossendale travel-to-work area have been out of work for more than 12 months.

Mr. McLoughlin: Unemployment figures by duration are available only on a quarterly basis. In October 1992, the latest date for which figures are available, 25·1 per cent. of unemployed people in the Accrington and Rossendale travel-to-work-area had been unemployed for over 12 months.

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list by county the number and percentage of long-term unemployed for each year since 1984; and if she will indicate the percentage increase or decrease for each county.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information requested can be obtained from the NOMIS database in the Library.

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list the areas of the south-east region which are considered as long-term unemployment black spots; and what actions she proposes to take to help these areas.

Mr. McLoughlin: It is departmental policy to target assistance for the long term unemployed at individual people. In November, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced that next year help on Government employment and training programmes for unemployed people is being increased by nearly £500,000 to almost £1·5 million. New jobplan workshops will offer guidance and assessment for 300,000 people unemployed for a year or more.

The successful job club and job interview guarantee schemes, including work trials, will both be expanded to provide an additional 180,000 places. Training for work will give training and enterprise councils greater flexibility to provide over 300,000 adults with opportunities to improve, update and learn new skills, or do work of benefit to the local community.

Job Clubs

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many job clubs were operational in each region and for Great Britain as a whole at the latest available date and for each year since 1987; how many of them in each region catered for groups with special needs; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from J. Cooper to Ms. Clare Short, dated 9 December 1992:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, it is the responsibility of Mike Fogden, the Agency's Chief Executive to answer Parliamentary Questions about relevant operational matters. In his absence, I am replying to your question about the number of Jobclubs operational since 1987.

Table 'A' attached shows the number of Jobclubs at the end of each operational year (end March) from 1986-87. The

number of Jobclubs at the end of 1986-87 is only available as a national total, but regional breakdowns are shown for subsequent years. The most recent figures (October 1992), are also given.

Table 'B' shows the number of standard and specialist Jobclubs by region and nationally at the end of March 1992. Although specialist Jobclubs were introduced as pilots in previous years, this was the first year for which separate statistics were recorded. The most recent figures (September 1992), are also given.

All Jobclubs help people who face particular difficulties in the labour market and most will have members who either have some degree of literacy or language problem, have a disability or have been in prison. Similarly, all Jobclubs are open to executives and managers. In response to the rise in unemployment at executive levels we have been opening some Jobclubs which focus particularly on that client group, though the activities and operations are very similar to the standard provision.

For ex-offenders and people with disabilities, our policy is to integrate them into our standard provision wherever possible. The existence of a very small number of Jobclubs targeted specifically at such clients is aimed at developing our expertise which can help improve provision over the whole network.

Supportive Jobclubs provide additional help to people with more severe problems who cannot cope in the standard provision. They are proving a useful way of extending the range of people Jobclubs can help, especially in terms of literacy or language, or people with a severe lack of confidence who have been unemployed for a long time.

In her statement to the House on 12 November 1992, the Secretary of State indicated, amongst other things, that there will be a further expansion of Jobclubs in 1993-94. We expect to target part of the expansion towards supportive Jobclubs. An evaluation of this provision is nearing completion and we shall want to consider the findings before deciding on the balance between the standard and supportive approaches.

I hope this is helpful.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the *Official Report*. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Table A
Number of jobclubs by region

	Northern	Yorkshire and Humberside	East Midlands	London and South East	South West	Wales	West Midlands	North West	Scotland	National
March 1987	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	390
March 1988	90	102	111	265	75	75	144	200	142	1,204
March 1989	95	96	111	263	77	74	146	208	140	1,210
March 1990	78	91	90	229	57	62	108	165	130	1,010
March 1991	76	84	80	209	57	59	100	155	123	943
March 1992	100	105	118	317	77	68	144	196	138	1,263
October 1992	100	106	110	317	85	75	143	193	139	1,268

Table B
Number of specialist jobclubs by region

	Northern	Yorkshire and Humberside	East Midlands	London and South East	South West	Wales	West Midlands	North West	Scotland	National
March 1992										
Standard	89	86	86	236	62	65	118	171	120	1,033
Supportive	3	11	14	36	3	1	12	10	9	99
Executive	5	4	16	37	11	2	9	12	9	105
People with disabilities	1	1	1	3	0	0	2	0	0	8
Ex offenders	2	3	1	5	1	0	3	3	0	18
September 1992										
Standard	88	85	86	242	67	67	118	165	118	1,036
Supportive	3	13	9	35	3	1	8	9	11	92
Executive	7	5	16	38	13	7	9	15	9	119
People with disabilities	1	1	1	4	1	0	3	0	0	11
Ex offenders	1	2	1	5	1	0	3	4	0	17

Market Testing

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment to which of those of her Department's activities due to be market-tested by 30 September 1993 the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 and the EC Acquired Rights Directive 77/189/EEC will apply.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Whether or not the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 and the EC Acquired Rights Directive 77/189/EEC will apply to an individual case depends on the facts of the case; and there are a number of tests to be applied. For example, it needs to be shown that an undertaking or part of an undertaking is actually being transferred.

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish a timetable showing when he plans to market-test those activities listed for testing before 30 September 1993.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The citizens charter White Paper, "The Citizen's Charter: First Report 1992" (Cm. 2101), shows the main activities which are included in the Employment Department market-testing programme up to 30 September 1993.

Planning is well under way.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 10 December 1992

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prison Officers' Quarters

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department to what fund the sums received from the selling of prison officers' quarters have been placed; and if he will make a statement as to the use made of these sums.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Receipts from the sale of prison officers' quarters are taken as appropriations in aid to defray the costs of the prison service. Any sums in excess of those authorised to be used in that way are paid into the Consolidated Fund.

Terrorism

Mr. Conway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will review the advice and financial assistance given in respect of public buildings damaged by terrorist action on mainland Britain following the IRA bombing of Shrewsbury castle.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Advice on the protective security of buildings is available from chief officers of police. In Great Britain, where insurance cover is available in respect of criminal damage to property, including damage caused by acts of terrorism, the Government do not provide any financial assistance.

Metropolitan Police Commissioner

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what selection criteria are used in determining the appointment of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis.

Mr. Charles Wardle: When considering the suitability of senior police officers for the appointment, my right hon. and learned Friend had regard to the operational and managerial experience needed for leading the Metropolitan police service.

Immigration Detention Centres

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* suicides and *(b)* attempted suicides have occured at Harmondsworth immigration detention centre in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Charles Wardle: One suicide has occurred in Harmondsworth detention centre over this period. It occurred in 1990.

Records of incidents of self-injury by detainees which might amount to attempted suicide have been maintained only since 1986. The number of such incidents is as follows:

	Number
1986	Nil
1987	4
1988	2
1989	1
1990	Nil
1991	Nil
[1]1992	Nil

[1] To date.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the weekly cost of holding an immigration detainee at *(a)* Harmondsworth immigration detention centre and *(b)* Her Majesty's prison, Haslar.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The Harmondsworth detention centre is managed under contracts, and the costs involved are not disclosed on grounds of commercial confidentiality. The average net operating cost per inmate per week for all prison service establishments for the financial year to 31 March 1992 was £406, and it would be reasonable to assume that the cost of accommodating immigration detainees at Haslar is of a similar order.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many deaths in custody have occurred at Harmondsworth immigration detention centre in each of the last 10 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: One death has occurred at Harmondsworth detention centre over this period. It occurred in 1990. A fire at the centre in 1989 resulted in the subsequent death in hospital of one detainee.

Illegal Immigrants

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will estimate how many illegal immigrants are working in the London area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Comprehensive information on the number of persons working in breach of the conditions imposed on their leave to enter or to remain in the United Kingdom is not available. In many cases it is not possible to determine whether a person is working illegally until he/she has been traced and interviewed.

President-elect Clinton

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department for what purpose and at whose request officials of his Department examined Home Office files to ascertain whether President-elect Clinton had applied for United Kingdom citizenship.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what information was passed on by his Department during 1992 to journalists in respect of Mr. Bill Clinton's period of temporary residence in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement;

(2) when a search was authorised of Home Office records in respect of Mr. Bill Clinton's period of study in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the checking of Home Office files for information on Governor Bill Clinton.

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the reasons for the examination undertaken into his Department's records as to whether Mr. Bill Clinton had applied for United Kingdom citizenship while studying in Britain; by whom the investigation was authorised; on what dates the research was undertaken; what were the total costs of the work involved; and what was the result of the investigation regarding Mr. Clinton.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I refer the hon. Members to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) on 9 December, at columns *662-63*, to which I have nothing to add.

War Crimes

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) of 30 November, *Official Report*, column *8*, how many of the few records relating to the wartime Nazi occupation of the Channel islands that have been held by the Home Office on extended closure relate in any way to allegations of war crimes atrocities that may have been committed by *(a)* United Kingdom citizens and *(b)* non-United Kingdom citizens on the island of Alderney, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Only seven files have been retained on extended closure under section 5(1) of the Public Records Act 1958. It has been the practice of successive Administrations not to disclose the contents of records which are so withheld from public release. The papers will, however, be made available to any official prosecuting authority investigating alleged war crimes.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Walsall North (Mr. Winnick) of 30 November, *Official Report*, columns *7-8*, how many records from the few records relating to the wartime Nazi occupation of the Channel islands that have been held by the Home Office on extended closure have been passed to prosecuting authorities in the United Kingdom or in Germany; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: None; but none has been requested. It is the policy of the Home Office that such records—whether open or closed—may be made available to any official prosecuting authority which requests them for the purposes of investigations or prosecutions concerning alleged war crimes.

Police (Firearms)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions he has held with the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis on the policy of stop and search exercises involving armed police officers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The exercise by the Metropolitan police of their statutory powers to stop vehicles and, if necessary, to search them is an operational matter and as such falls within the discretion of the Commissioner. So, too, does the decision when, and in what manner, armed police should be deployed in support of such operations.

Remand Prisoners

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the total number of persons currently held on remand in gaols in England and Wales; and if he will give a breakdown showing *(a)* the number of male and female remand prisoners, *(b)* the number in each over 18 years but under 21 years and *(c)* the number under the age of 18 years.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 1 December 1992]:* The latest readily available information which includes the age breakdown requested relates to 30 June 1992 and is given in table 1.

Table 1

Estimated population of unsentenced prisoners in prison service establishments in England and Wales on 30 June 1992: by type of prisoner, sex and age group

Type of prisoner and age group	Number of persons		
	Males	Females	Persons
Untried:			
Under 18 years	460	5	465
18 to 20 years	1,463	30	1,493
Total under 21 years	1,923	35	1,958
21 years and over	5,369	231	5,600
Total all ages	7,292	266	7,558
Convicted unsentenced:			
Under 18 years	139	4	143
18 to 20 years	599	24	623
Total under 21 years	738	28	766
21 years and over	1,170	65	1,235
Total all ages	1,908	93	2,001
All unsentenced prisoners	[1]9,200	[1]359	[1]9,559

[1] A further 142 males aged under 21, 684 males aged 21 and over and 19 females aged 21 and over were held in police cells.

Information excluding the under-18/aged 18 and under-21 breakdown is available for 31 October 1992; this is shown in table 2.

Table 2

Estimated population of unsentenced prisoners in prison service establishments in England and Wales on 31 October 1992: by type of prisoner, sex and age group

Type of prisoner and age group	Number of persons		
	Males	Females	Persons
Untried:			
Total under 21 years	1,654	35	1,689
21 years and over	5,081	232	5,313
Total all ages	6,735	267	7,002
Convicted unsentenced:			
Total under 21 years	633	20	653
21 years and over	1,437	71	1,508
Total all ages	2,070	91	2,161
All unsentenced prisoners	[1]8,805	358	[1]9,163

[1] A further 132 males aged under 21 and 310 males aged 21 and over were held in police cells.

Ammonium Nitrate Fertilisers

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which ammonium nitrate fertilisers banned from sale in Northern Ireland are on the market in England; and what is the maximum percentage of ammonium nitrate in fertilisers on sale in England.

Mr. Soames: I have been asked to reply.

Ammonium nitrate fertilisers containing more than 79 per cent. ammonium nitrate are banned in Northern Ireland. Such fertilisers on sale in England may contain up to approximately 99 per cent. ammonium nitrate.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Industrial Sites

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what progress has been made in obtaining land for industrial sites in Kilkeel in the constituency of South Down.

Mr. Atkins: The Industrial Development Board—IDB—has no plans to acquire land for industrial sites in Kilkeel, as industrially zoned land is already available in private ownership in the town.

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what progress has been made in obtaining land for industrial sites on the Ballydugan road, Downpatrick; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The IDB is in negotiation with Dunleath Estates to acquire a six-acre site at Ballydugan road, Downpatrick. It is hoped that agreement can be reached soon.

Housing (Funding)

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland which housing associations submitted applications for funding for the purchase of empty homes by the closing date for applications on 30 November; and how many homes each of these housing associations submitted for consideration.

Mr. Atkins: The following 28 registered housing associations in Northern Ireland made application to purchase properties to rent under the Government's housing initiative announced in the Chancellor's autumn statement:

Housing Association	*Number of Properties*
Ballynafeigh	21
Belfast Community	4
BIH	81
Botanic	16
Church of Ireland	25
Clonard	28
Connswater	4
Craigavon and District	78
Craigowen	10
Derry	49
Dungannon	37
Flax	47
Fold	33
Gosford	30
Grove	1
Larne and District	34
Malone	18
Newington	13
Oaklee	14
Open Door	85
RBL	6
Rural	34
Students	76
Tennent Street and District	40
Triangle	5
Ulidia	46
Willowfield	28
Woodvale and Shankill	38
Total	901

Surveys and Consultants' Reports

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish details of all surveys and consultants' reports commissioned by Northern Ireland Electricity and the Department of Economic Development since 1985 and the cost to Northern Ireland Electricity and the Department of Economic Development of each survey or consultant's report.

Mr. Atkins: Information on surveys and consultants' reports commissioned by Northern Ireland Electricity since 1985 is not readily available in the form requested and could be compiled only at disproportionate cost.

Information is not available on surveys and consultants' reports commissioned by the Department of Economic Development prior to 1988. Details of surveys and consultants' reports commissioned since then are as follows:

Consultant	*Title of Survey/Report*
N.M. Rothschild/Coopers and Lybrand	Feasibility Study of Privatisation of NIE
Coopers and Lybrand	Competition and Interconnection Study
	Review of NIE Performance Aims 1989/90
	Review of NIE Performance Aims 1990/91
P. J. R. Management Organisation Consultants	NIE Organisational Capability Review
Ewbank Preece Ltd.	Inspection of Generating Plant at Belfast West and Coolkeeragh
	Development of Power Station Site
Touche Ross	Advance Long Form Report
	Supplementary Privatisation Study
	Review of NI Capital Expenditure

Details of fees paid to consultants are commercially confidential.

Conductive Education

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what financial or administrative support has been offered by the Department of Education or the education

and library boards to the Conductive Therapy Primary School established in Dungannon; and if he will undertake to ensure that all suitable students requiring conductive education will have an opportunity to attend this school.

Mr. Hanley: None. The Department of Education understands that the Buddy Bear Trust is proposing to establish an independent school in Dungannon for children with motor disorders. Independent schools do not receive assistance from public funds, though they are required to comply with statutory procedures regarding registration. To date, no such application has been received. Education and library boards are responsible for identifying, assessing and determining the special educational provision for children with special educational needs. If a board considers that provision should be made other than at a grant-aided school, it is obliged to seek the Department's approval. In considering such a placement, the board and the Department would seek to establish that this best meets the child's special educational needs.

Local Government Elections

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he will announce the composition of district electoral areas for the local government elections in May 1993.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I have today laid before Parliament the report of the District Electoral Areas Commissioner, Dr. Maurice Hayes, which contains his recommendations for the grouping of wards into district electoral areas for the purpose of local government elections in Northern Ireland. I have accepted the recommendations without modification and shall shortly bring forward for approval a draft Order in Council under section 38(1)(a) of the Northern Ireland Constitutional Act 1973 giving effect to the commissioner's recommendations.

ENVIRONMENT

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last met the council of the Association for the Conservation of Energy; and if he will make a statement concerning the value he places upon the role of the association in the development of policies concerning the energy efficiency industry.

Mr. Howard: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given on 26 November, *Official Report*, column *827*.

Business Rates

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to encourage local authorities to use their powers to reduce the burden of business rates in cases of hardship.

Mr. Redwood: Local authorities are able to offset 75 per cent. of the cost of granting hardship relief against the non-domestic rates pool. Guidance on the relief was issued to authorities in 1990, but discretion as to when, and whether, to use the powers lies entirely with them having regard to the interests of their community charge payers.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to introduce an incentive for local authorities to notify the Valuation Office of new non-domestic property in their area to ensure that rating lists are kept properly up to date.

Mr. Redwood: We have today laid regulations that will allow billing authorities to retain until the end of the year the benefit of any additional rates they collect when non-domestic property is improved or first included in the rating list. The new arrangements will apply from 1 April 1993. This will, I am sure, be a welcome incentive to local authorities.

Housing

Mr. Bell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent representations he has received regarding increasing the stock of rented accommodation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: I have received a number of representations from the National Federation of Housing Associations and others about the need to maintain output from the Housing Corporation's programme.

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced in his autumn statement plans to allocate around £6 billion to the Housing Corporation over three years from 1992-93. Over these years, housing associations will be able to provide considerably more than the 153,000 new social homes forecast in our election manifesto. Over the four years to 1995-96, the Government plan to provide £7·5 billion in support of the corporation's capital expenditure. In addition, we hope that associations will be able to attract a further £3 billion from the private sector.

Mr. Bell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many new housing association properties have been made available in *(a)* England and *(b)* Wales in each year since 1974.

Mr. Baldry: New housing for rent made available by housing associations in England and Wales since 1974-75, with subsidy from the Housing Corporation and Tai Cymru—from 1989-90—has been as follows:

	England	*Wales*
1974-75	242	4
1975-76	4,288	105
1976-77	10,260	355
1977-78	20,521	644
1978-79	23,782	1,057
1979-80	20,693	1,534
1980-81	25,956	1,173
1981-82	20,014	2,328
1982-83	21,637	2,115
1983-84	20,658	1,535
1984-85	25,335	1,487
1985-86	21,329	1,520
1986-87	19,981	1,424
1987-88	18,183	1,767
1988-89	13,925	1,662
1989-90	17,728	2,442
1990-91	19,843	3,060
1991-92	25,815	3,548

These figures include housing made newly available for rent when tenants take advantage of grants to help them to move into owner occupation.

Mr. Bell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many families were housed in

temporary bed-and-breakfast accommodation by local authorities in *(a)* England and *(b)* Wales in each year since 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: Estimates of the average number of households who were being dealt with under the homelessness provisions of the Housing Act 1985 and were temporarily placed in bed-and-breakfast accommodation in England are as follows:

Averages for years ending September	*Households in bed and breakfast*
1985	4,250
1986	6,350
1987	9,970
1988	11,240
1989	11,550
1990	11,960
1991	12,470
1992	11,880

For information about Wales I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Mr. Bell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much was spent by local authorities in *(a)* England and *(b)* Wales in each year since 1985 on the provision of temporary bed-and-breakfast family accommodation.

Mr. Baldry: The net cost to local authorities since 1985 of providing bed-and-breakfast accommodation in England was as follows:

	Net expenditure (£ million)
1985-86	33·9
1986-87	75·5
1987-88	104·5
1988-89	90·2
1989-90	72·6
1990-91	66·3

For information about Welsh authorities I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

London Residuary Body

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 3 December, *Official Report*, column *295*, for what period Mr. Wallace Mackenzie, Mr. Michael Roberts, Mr. Jack Wolkind and Sir Godfrey Taylor have been reappointed to the board of the London residuary body.

Mr. Robin Squire: Mr. Mackenzie, Mr. Roberts and Mr. Wolkind have not yet been reappointed. Sir Godfrey Taylor has been reappointed to serve until 31 March 1995 or until the winding up of the London residuary body, whichever is the sooner.

Market-testing

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment to which of those of his Department's activities due to be market-tested by 30 September 1993 the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 and the EC acquired rights directive 77/189/EEC will apply.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 9 December 1992]:* It is too early to say whether the EC acquired rights directive 77/187 and the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981—TUPE—will apply to any of the Department's activities due to be market-tested before 30 September 1993. The nature, scope and terms and conditions for market-testing each activity will be carefully considered in a case-by-case basis by the Department's legal advisers to determine whether they amount simply to contracting-out, or involve the transfer of an undertaking or part of an undertaking to which the TUPE regulations will apply.

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a timetable showing when he plans to market-test those activities listed for testing before 30 September 1993.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 9 December 1992]:* Market-testing of the following activities, of which the main ones are listed under my Department in Cm 2101, is expected to have been completed by the end of September 1993:

Accommodation Facilities Management
Accountants
Central Reprographics
Conveyancing
Design, Drawing and Print Services
Economists
Professional Property Services
Registry Services
Statistical Support Services
Training
Travel Services
Workshops and Stores

All these market-testing exercises are well under way and are proceeding as planned. The Department expects to invite tenders for these functions in the period February to June 1993 if they are shown to be viable areas for testing following the more detailed investigations into the scope for market-testing which are now under way.

City Action

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what were the budget allocations made to each city action team by his Department for each year from 1989-90 *(a)* at current prices and *(b)* at 1989-90 prices.

Mr. Robin Squire *[holding answer 9 December 1992]:* I refer the hon. Member to my answer of 23 June 1992, *Official Report*, column *132*. The 1987-88 prices quoted can be converted into 1989-90 prices by multiplying by 1·143. For 1992-93 £4·0 million of the special budget was transferred to support city challenge round 1. Provisional allocation of the £4·4 million balance for 1992-93 is as follows:

City Action Team	*Provisional Allocation £000*
Nottingham/Leicester/Derby	500
Liverpool	500
London	900
Tyne and Wear	500
Leeds/Bradford	500

City Action Team	Provisional Allocation £000
Birmingham	500
Manchester/Salford	500
Cleveland	500
Total	4,400

Earth Summit

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he has taken on the preparation of a national plan based on the forest principles agreed at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 7 December]:* I have been asked to reply.

The guiding objective of the forest principles is to contribute to the management, conservation and sustainable development of forests and to provide for their multiple and complementary functions and uses. These principles already underlie the Government's forestry policy, the various elements of which were drawn together and published in a single statement in September 1991. This set the framework for the development of forestry in Britain.

The Government have now started preparing their national plan for the implementation of the forest principles. This will be published before the end of 1993.

Shrewsbury Castle (Bombing)

Mr. Conway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what advice and assistance he has given to Shrewsbury and Atcham borough council following the IRA bombing in August of Shrewsbury castle.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I have been asked to reply.

Advice on the protective security of buildings is available from chief officers of police. In Great Britain, where insurance cover is available in respect of criminal damage to property, including damage caused by acts of terrorism, the Government do not provide any financial assistance.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

East Sussex

Mr. Bowden: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assistance is available to stimulate economic development and attract investment to *(a)* the borough of Brighton, *(b)* the coastal area between Hove and Hastings in East Sussex and *(c)* the county of East Sussex.

Mr. Sainsbury: Businesses in these areas have access to a wide range of assistance provided by my Department with the support of the Sussex training and enterprise council. DTI services include the enterprise initiative, offering expert advice on different aspects of business development, " Managing in the 90s" and other support providing grants for the development of innovative ideas and projects. Help for exporters is available from overseas trade services operated by the DTI. The Federation of Sussex Industries, local enterprise agencies and other local business support organisations deliver a wide range of business services to Sussex companies.

My Department maintains regular contact with local authorities in East Sussex over economic development issues and inward investment opportunities.

Wind-generated Electricity

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proposals he has to increase the generation of wind-generated electricity in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Wind-generated electricity is being implemented in Wales with support from the non-fossil fuel obligation. Two wind farms have recently become operational with an installed capacity of 14·4 MW. A further five wind farms with an installed capacity of 46·4 MW are currently under construction and expected to be delivering electricity to the grid within the next six months.

Post Office

Mr. Welsh: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has received on the future of Post Office services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Leigh: I have received a number of representations from interested parties and the general public on the future of Post Office services.

I have held, or am due to hold, meetings with the following in connection with the review of the structure and organisation of the Post Office: the Post Office, the Post Office Users National Council, Union of Communication Workers, National Communications Union, Communications Managers Association, National Union of Civil and Public Servants, Post Office Unions Council, the National Federation of Sub-Postmasters, the Association of International Courier and Express Services, TNT Express (UK), DHL International (UK) Ltd., Securicor Omega Express, Britdoc, Mail Users Association, Direct Marketing Association, Periodical Publishers Association, British Printing Industries Federation, European Mail and Express Services Users Association.

In addition, my officials and consultants appointed to advise the Government have met Business Post, Electronic Equipment Association, Mail Order Traders Association, BT, Girobank and other Government Departments.

Mr. Welsh: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he intends to complete the review of the organisation and structure of the Post Office and to publish his recommendations.

Mr. Leigh: Work is continuing on the Post Office review. No date for completion has been set. The Government will announce their conclusions in due course.

Mr. Welsh: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has received on the Green Paper on the development of the single market for postal services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Leigh: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer given to my hon. Friend the Member for Gloucester (Mr. French) on 18 November, *Official Report*, column 226.

Mr. Hain: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what reasons underlie the increase in the Post Office's negative external financial limit from 1992-93 to 1993-94; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Leigh: At a time when there is very great pressure on the public sector borrowing requirement, it is reasonable that the Government should look for a higher level of return from the Post Office.

Petroleum Engineering Directorate

Mr. Robert Hughes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish the independent consultants' report into the transfer of the petroleum engineering directorate from London to Aberdeen.

Mr. Eggar: Decisions on this report will be announced as soon as possible. It is certainly my intention to publish it.

Mineral Rights

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what will become of British Coal's mineral rights upon privatisation.

Mr. Eggar: Decisions on privatisation will have to take account of the coal review and the debate on the White Paper in the new year.

Export Controls

Mr. Hague: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he intends to update the Export of Goods (Control) Order 1991.

Mr. Needham: A revised Export of Goods (Control) Order has been made and sent today to the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments and laid in the Library of both Houses. It will implement changes to export controls agreed in international forums and introduce a requirement for users of some open general export licences to register with the Department of Trade and Industry. It will come into force on 31 December 1992.

Sales Promotions

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps he is taking to safeguard consumers by ensuring that offers of free flights from retailers and manufacturers as part of sales promotions are genuine.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 2 December 1992]:* Sales promotions involving the offer of free flights are already subject to a number of controls, both statutory and voluntary.

My Department takes the view that a false statement as to the provision of free flights could constitute an offence under the Trade Descriptions Act 1968 and a false statement that a service is free could constitute an offence under part III of the Consumer Protection Act 1987. Trading standards officers are responsible for enforcing the legislation.

Under the voluntary system of controls in advertising and sales promotion, the codes of practice administered by the Advertising Standards Authority—ASA—require all sales promotion material to be legal, decent, honest and truthful. Where someone has reason to believe that a free-flight offer may not be genuine, he should take the matter up with the relevant authorities.

I do not consider that any additional controls over offers of free flights are necessary at the present time.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if his inspectors will investigate current offers of free flights and report to him on *(a)* the supply of flights meeting the demand generated by the purchase and *(b)* the financial security of the firms responsible for providing the flights.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 2 December 1992]:* No. Under the British code of sales promotion practice, promoters are required to take all reasonable steps to avoid disappointing the consumer. This includes ensuring that a reasonable estimate of the likely response to a promotion is made before consumers are invited to participate. The ASA regularly reminds advertisers that consumers should be able to understand without difficulty what offers consist of and any restrictions imposed on them.

British Steel

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has made to the American Government to secure the withdrawal of the anti-dumping tariff imposed on British Steel on 30 November.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 4 December 1992]:* I am not aware of any anti-dumping tariff imposed on British Steel on 30 November.

Motor Cycles

Mr. Milburn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the makes and models of motor cycles of over 100 bhp currently sold in the United Kingdom, indicating the numbers of each model sold and the value of sales in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 7 December 1992]:* The data requested about makes and models of motor bikes over 100 bhp is not collected either by the Government or the Motor Cycle Industry Association.

Shipbuilding Industry

Mr. Wareing: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will seek European intervention fund assistance to resuscitate the British shipbuilding industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 9 December 1992]:* The shipbuilding intervention fund is already available to merchant shipbuilders in the United Kingdom. Our agreement with the European Commission forbids the provision of subsidy to those companies which were privatised as warship builders.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Television Licence Fee

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Bradford, West on 19 November 1992, *Official Report*, column *316*, if he will increase the value of the reduction in television licence fee available for all registered blind people.

Mr. Brooke: No.

Windsor Castle

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage, if he will list and give details of the vehicles belonging to the Windsor Castle fire brigade over the past three years, with the date of each vehicle's disposal and date and details of replacement.

Mr. Brooke *[holding answer 3 December 1992]:* In November 1989, the Windsor Castle fire brigade retained three vehicles, a "Firefly", custom-built fire fighting vehicle originally purchased by the Property Services Agency but now the property of the royal household, and two Land-Rovers. One Land-Rover was replaced in February 1991 with a Ford Transit personnel carrier which was itself replaced in March 1992 by a Leyland DAF Crewbus. The other Land-Rover was 12 years old and withdrawn from service in November 1991. The vehicles currently in use by the castle fire brigade are the Firefly and the Leyland DAF Crewbus.

PRIME MINISTER

Energy Policies

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister what progress has been made in the development of *(a)* coal policy, *(b)* renewable energy policy, *(c)* nuclear research and development policy and *(d)* energy conservation policy in the European Community during the United Kingdom presidency of the European Council.

The Prime Minister: The Energy Council discussed European coal issues on 30 November, during which the Commission presented its new proposals on subsidies for coal mines. The Council agreed on the text of a decision intended to foster the development of new and renewable energy sources. The Council noted the progress officials had made in discussing a proposed directive designed to increase energy efficiency in buildings, industry and road vehicles. The Council had earlier adopoted a directive on energy labelling of appliances. Progress on nuclear R and D was satisfactory.

Exchange Rate Mechanism

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister what progress has been made in consolidation of the exchange rate mechanism during the United Kingdom presidency of the European Council.

The Prime Minister: Following the severe financial turbulence which affected a number of ERM currencies in the autumn, I called the European Council in Birmingham on 16 October. This decided that the mechanism should be analysed in the light of developments in capital markets and in the European and world monetary systems. The work was remitted to ECOFIN. Further strains have recently confirmed the need for this work.

Sees and Titles

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Prime Minister (1) pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Eltham of 18 May, *Official Report*, column *5*, whether the consultation of Church authorities includes the Catholic Bishops Conference of England and Wales;

(2) what changes he proposes to official recognition of territorial sees of the Roman Catholic Church in Scotland or, in so far as restrictions apply, in Northern Ireland;

(3) when he expects to propose changes to official recognition of territorial sees and titles of the Roman Catholic Church in England and Wales.

The Prime Minister: Consultations with Church authorities and others about the official recognition of Roman Catholic territorial designations within the United Kingdom are making good progress but have not yet been completed. We shall be seeking the views of the relevant Roman Catholic authorities as part of that consultation.

President de Klerk

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Prime Minister if he will place in the Library the documents he received from President de Klerk during the President's recent visit to the United Kingdom.

The Prime Minister: No, as the correspondence involves matters of national security.

Civil List

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Prime Minister what is the time-lag between the annual payments into the civil list and the reinvestment of specified annuities to the Consolidated Fund.

The Prime Minister: If the right hon. Member is referring to Her Majesty's reimbursement of the Consolidated Fund for the section 3 annuities, refunds are normally made each November, for payments made during the course of the calendar year. The timing follows that of the first voluntary reimbursement by Her Majesty in November 1975.

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Prime Minister if interest on the early-years surpluses on the civil list under the current 10-year agreement is retained within the civil list.

The Prime Minister: Yes. Any surplus at the end of the 10-year period would be carried forward and taken account of in the settlement for the next period.

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Prime Minister what investments the royal trustees consider appropriate for the early-year surpluses on the civil list.

The Prime Minister: The surpluses are prudently invested in the United Kingdom from within a range approved by the royal trustees.

Correspondence

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Prime Minister what is the policy adopted by Ministers if hon. and right hon. Members request that replies to letters concerning constituents abroad come from Ministers and not from chief executives or departmental heads of agencies.

The Prime Minister: The Government's policy on dealing with letters from hon. and right hon. Members on agency matters was most recently set out in the Government's reply to the Treasury and Civil Service Committee's 1990 report on the next steps initiative, Cm 1263, which said:

"It is for Ministers responsible for particular Agencies to respond in the way they consider most helpful and appropriate to inquiries raised by Members. Ministers will normally ask the Chief Executive to reply to letters which concern day-to-day operational matters delegated to the Agency."

The fact that a Member's inquiry was made on behalf of a constituent who lived abroad would not in itself provide a reason to change this approach.

Alois Brunner

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Prime Minister if he will discuss with his counterparts in the European Council a joint approach to the Syrian Government in support of Germany's request for the extradition of Alois Brunner for Nazi war crimes against humanity.

The Prime Minister: The case of Alois Brunner is not on the agenda for the European Council. Member states are aware of the continuing strength of feeling behind calls for his extradition. Most recently, Germany has made clear to Syria its own and wider European concerns on this matter.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Pensions Ombudsman

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what plans he has *(a)* to appoint additional pensions ombudsmen on a regional basis and *(b)* to increase the resources allocated to the present pensions ombudsman;

(2) what plans he has to increase funding to the office of the pensions ombudsman.

Miss Widdecombe: We have no plans to appoint additional pensions ombudsmen. Resources are allocated to the pensions ombudsman taking account of projected workloads and costs. These are reviewed from time to time as part of the normal process of reviewing public expenditure.

Disabled Employees

Mr. Elletson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many *(a)* physically disabled and *(b)* sensorily disabled people are employed in his Department; and what percentage they are of the total work force.

Mr. Burt: On 1 July 1992 the number of registered disabled staff employed in this Department was 1,484, which represented 1·7 per cent. of the total number of staff in post.

Notes:

1. Figures are not available for non-registered disabled staff.

2. Full details of the breakdown of figures between physically and sensorily disabled staff are not available.

Benefits Statistics

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish a table showing total spending on single payments in each year since 1985 and community care grants since 1988 in cash and real terms.

Mr. Burt: Details of community care grant expenditure in both cash and real terms are in the Library.

Single payment expenditure is in the table.

£ million

	Total expenditure	*Real terms expenditure*
1985-86	335	504
1986-87	330	481
1987-88	214	296

Note:

Real terms figures have been calculated using the GDP deflator and may alter.

Occupational Social Security Schemes

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement about the implementation of schedule 5 to the Social Security Act 1989 and paragraph 7 of schedule 4 to the Social Security Act 1990.

Miss Widdecombe: These provisions were designed to give effect to EC directive 86/378 on equal treatment in occupational social security schemes which was due to be implemented by 1 January 1993. However the European Court of Justice held in the Barber case on 17 May 1990 that occupational pensions are pay and must be equal under article 119 of the EC treaty. This has left considerable areas of uncertainty, including questions as to the status of the directive and the validity of the derogations it would have allowed. We expect the Coloroll case, which is currently before the European Court of Justice, to begin to resolve some of these uncertainties. I have, therefore, decided not to bring schedule 5 to the 1989 Act into force with effect from 1 January 1993 but to introduce legislation, amended as necessary, when the uncertainties are resolved. I shall consider the implementsation of paragraph 7 of schedule 4 to the 1990 Act in the context of this legislation and of any consequential review of provisions relating to contracting out.

Wages Councils

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what estimates his Department have made of the increased entitlements to benefits which will result from the abolition of wages councils.

Mr. Burt: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) on 11 November, at column *817*.

EDUCATION

Primary Schools, Kent

Mr. Bell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) how many children *(a)* under eight years and *(b)* eight to 11 years of age are in (i) local authority schools, (ii) independent schools and (iii) grant-maintained schools in each local education area in Kent;

(2) how many places are available at the present time and how many places will be available at 1 April 1993 for children *(a)* under eight years and *(b)* eight to 11 years of age in (i) local authority schools, (ii) independent schools and (iii) grant-maintained schools in each local education area in Kent.

Mr. Forth: This information is not available centrally.

Thomas Becket School, Knowsley

Mr. O'Hara: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will undertake an investigation of the drawing of the pupils of Thomas Becket school, Knowsley, into the debate on that school's opting out; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend has received no complaint about the drawing of pupils into the debate about grant-maintained status for Thomas Becket school.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. O'Hara: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will introduce guidance for the conduct of ballots in respect of applications for grant-maintained schools under which head teachers or staff would be prohibited from suggesting to parents or pupils that a vote against grant-maintained status would involve *(a)* the loss of particular teachers' jobs or *(b)* difficulty for certain pupils in completing their GCSE and A-level courses.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend issues, and from time to time updates, guidance on the overall conduct of ballots. In addition, the Department's letter of 3 November reminded local education authorities and other bodies, what in his view are the proper duties and responsibilities of the parties involved in the ballot process. We would expect representatives of LEAs and schools involved in ballots in respect of applications for grant-maintained status to act responsibly and professionally.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Commercial Court

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what steps are being taken to appoint an additional commercial judge to restore the full complement in the commercial court.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Mr. Justice Colman, who was yesterday appointed to the Queen's Bench Division of the High Court, has been nominated to be a judge of the commercial court.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowances

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about the future of HLCA payments.

Mr. Gummer: United Kingdom Agriculture Ministers have completed the autumn review of economic conditions in the hills and uplands.

The review has shown that the average net farm income of livestock producers in the United Kingdom's hill and upland areas is forecast to show a significant rise for the second year running. Specialist sheep farmers in Great Britain are seeing a large increase in their incomes as a result of the strong market for store lambs and increased returns from the ewe premium and the special supplement payable on ewes kept in the less-favoured areas—LFA.

Hill sheep farmers' receipts will be further boosted by an increase in the annual ewe premium of about £1·70 per ewe under the 1992 scheme as a consequence of the green pound devaluations which have already taken place. Although this will be partly offset by higher input costs, any further devaluations at the beginning of next year as a result of revised agrimonetary arrangements would provide an additional boost.

As a consequence of these favourable developments, the rates of hill livestock compensatory allowances—HLCA—paid on sheep in the severely disadvantaged areas—SDA—of the LFA are considered to be greater than is necessary to compensate for the permanent natural handicaps of farming in those areas. These rates will accordingly be reduced by £2·25 to £6·50 per eligible ewe for hardy breed ewes and by £1·30 to £3·60 per ewe for other breeds in the SDA for the 1993 scheme.

We will, however, be sustaining HLCA rates for breeding cows at their current levels of £63·30 per eligible cow in the SDA and £31·65 per cow in the disadvantaged areas. The rate payable on eligible ewes in those areas will be adjusted upwards to bring it into line with the EC rules. The precise rate will depend upon the value of the green pound on 1 January 1993 and we will announce it shortly thereafter.

A statutory instrument giving effect to these new rates will be introduced early in the new year. Payments of claims will commence as quickly as possible thereafter.

The environmental initiative for the LFA which I announced last February is being sustained. A new definition of overgrazing has been included in the HLCA regulations to enable problems of serious overgrazing to be tackled more effectively. We shall be seeking powers from Brussels during 1993 to apply similar rules to the ewe premium. All HLCA applicants have been sent a free copy of the code of good upland management. Thirteen new upland environmentally sensitive areas in the United Kingdom have been announced, a focus of which will be the protection and enhancement of heather moorland. In addition, I secured in the common agricultural policy reform package provision for a livestock extensification scheme which we would expect to use primarily to deal with overgrazing in the LFA.

This series of measures is designed to tackle overgrazing in a cost-effective and equitable manner by focusing upon the areas where the problem occurs. The scaling of HLCAs remains a possible additional measure which we will keep under review.

Milk

Mr. Heald: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what measures his Department proposes to implement EC requirements concerning standardised milk and milk imports.

Mr. Curry: Following consultation with interested parties, the Government have today laid before Parliament regulations that will permit the production and sale of both standardised milk in England and Wales. Similar regulations are being made in Scotland and Northern Ireland. The Milk and Dairies (Standardisation and Importation) Regulations 1992, which will come into force on 1 January 1993, also implement single market measures relating to intra-Community trade in milk. They will remove the present requirement for checks to be made at the port of entry for milk entering England and Wales

from other member states and will allow such imports of raw and thermised milk provided they are heat treated before they are sold to consumers. Regulations to amend the milk marketing schemes in Great Britain to put standardised milk within the milk marketing board's monopoly buying powers have also been laid.

Dietary Supplements

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he expects the forthcoming European directive on dietary supplements to include vitamin C in *(a)* tablet, *(b)* liquid or *(c)* powder form; and what steps are being taken by his Department to ensure that British consumers continue to have access to vitamin, mineral and other dietary supplements of their choice in those cases where no problems arising from self-overdosing have been recorded.

Mr. Soames: The discussion paper produced by the European Commission in advance of proposals for a directive did not deal in detail with individual vitamins. I have no further information on what the Commission may propose.

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps have been taken by his Department to seek to identify other member Governments of the European Community which will agree to adopt his Department's position in respect of the forthcoming European directive on dietary supplements.

Mr. Soames: We have established the broad views of other member states in discussion in Brussels and through bilateral contacts. We will seek to persuade others of the merits of the United Kingdom case as negotiations proceed.

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent representations he has received concerning the conclusions of the Denner report; and what consideration he is giving to those representations.

Mr. Soames: I have received 63 representations on the Denner report in total. These have been considered and were taken into account in shaping our proposal submitted to the Commission earlier this year.

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the current state of progress on the Denner report commissioned by his Department on dietary supplements.

Mr. Soames: Action on most of the recommendations in the Denner report is dependent on the introduction of Community legislation on dietary supplements. We are awaiting Commission proposals in this area.

Disabled Employees

Mr. Elletson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many *(a)* physically disabled and *(b)* sensorily disabled people are employed in his Department; and what percentage they are of the total work force.

Mr. Curry: Counting part-time staff as half units, MAFF and its agencies employ 138·5 registered disabled staff. These figures represent 1·4 per cent. of total staff but do not take into account staff with disabilities who have chosen not to register. Information to distinguish between staff with physical or sensory disabilities is not held centrally.

Meat Inspections

Mr. Robathan: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the extent of breakdown in hygiene in the food chain and the effect of replacing the current system of meat inspection by one of veterinary inspection.

Mr. Soames: The state veterinary service visits all licensed domestic slaughterhouses annually to check on compliance with existing meat hygiene legislation. Any hygiene problems noted during these visits are drawn to the attention of the local authority, which is currently responsible for enforcing the legislation.

These monitoring visits demonstrate that standards of hygiene and inspection in the domestic slaughterhouses are in general lower than in export-approved abattoirs which are already operating to the EC standards and which handle about half the meat produced in this country. The Government therefore supported the single market fresh meat directive which requires all meat to be produced to common standards of hygiene and inspection. Most post-mortem inspection will continue to be done by qualified meat inspectors, working under the supervision of the Official Veterinary Surgeon. The Government consider that veterinary supervision of all slaughterhouses will lead to an improvement in the protection of human and animal health and animal welfare. In the longer term, the proposed national meat hygiene service will provide a consistent and cost-effective inspection service in this specialised sector of the food chain, to the benefit of consumers and of the meat industry.

Sustainable Agriculture

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the standards and regulations which need to be defined for the United Kingdom and the EC in order to provide a basis for sustainable agriculture; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: "Promoting Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development" is the title of one chapter of "Agenda 21" which was agreed at the Earth Summit in June. The United Kingdom's response to "Agenda 21" will be covered in a report to the Sustainable Development Commission which will be submitted by the end of 1993. The Department will be contributing to this report as appropriate.

Poultry

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the effects of low-flying aircraft on poultry farming.

Mr. Soames: The Department has made no general assessment of the effects of low-flying aircraft on poultry farming. However, when requested we provide advice to the Ministry of Defence Claims Commission on the veterinary aspects of individual incidents.

Tongues

Mr. Conway: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his estimate of the job losses in the British ox tongue processing industry as a result of the EC ban on the importation into the Community of North American supplies.

Mr. Curry: There is no ban on the importation into the Community of North American ox tongues as such. The import into the European Community of products derived from animals which have been treated with growth promoting hormones is, however, banned. Accurate figures on the number of jobs lost in the British ox tongue processing industry directly as a result of the ban on the use of growth promoting hormones are not available. However, since the ban was introduced, the canning industry has reported a reduction of 280 jobs.

Mr. Conway: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has made to the European Commission on the import of raw beef tongues from North America into the United Kingdom.

Mr. Curry: We strongly opposed the ban on growth promoting hormones throughout the Community when it was introduced in 1989. This included writing directly to the European Agriculture Commissioner on the impact that the ban would have on canners of tongues in the United Kingdom.

General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade

Mr. Ancram: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the effect the recent GATT agreement between the United States of America and the EC and the proposed reduction in export subsidies will have on cereal prices in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Curry: None. As the EC Commission has made clear, the agreement on agricultural issues reached with the United States in the context of the current GATT round is consistent with the reforms to common agricultural policy regimes agreed earlier this year.

Mr. Ancram: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the effect the recent GATT agreement between the United States of America and the EC will have on exports of British cereal crops to non-EC countries.

Mr. Curry: None. As the EC Commission has made clear, the agreement on agricultural issues reached with the United States in the context of the current GATT round is consistent with the reforms to CAP regimes agreed earlier this year.

Mr. Ancram: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the effect the recent GATT agreement between the United States of America and the EC will have on the percentage of land compulsorily set aside under the CAP.

Mr. Curry: The recent agreements between the United States and the EC on GATT agriculture questions pave the way for an overall agreement which will include restrictions on subsidised exports of cereals. The Commission does not consider that these restrictions should in themselves lead to any increase in the percentage of land set aside under the new arable arrangements adopted earlier this year as part of the CAP reform package.

The agreements also provide for a separate oilseeds base area for the 1994 and subsequent harvests. The set-aside percentage for this base area will continue to be the same as for other crops covered by the new arable arrangements, subject to a minimum set-aside requirement of 10 per cent. The current requirement under the arable regime is 15 per cent.

Animal Transport

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what steps he plans to take to ensure that, as required by article 5.2 of the new EC directive on the protection of animals during transport (91/628/EEC), itineraries are drawn up for animal transport journeys exceeding 24 hours to ensure that the animals are rested and given food and water;

(2) whether he will require his officials from 1 January 1993 to ensure that the animal welfare requirements of EC directive on the protection of animals during transport (91/628/EEC) have been taken into account before issuing health certificates under directive 90/425/EEC for animals being transported from the United Kingdom to other countries.

Mr. Gummer *[pursuant to the reply, 17 June 1992, c. 575]:* EC directive 91/628 sets a framework of controls which are to be supplemented by additional Community rules. Commission proposals for these additional rules are still awaited and it is now clear that they will not be in place by 1 January 1993 when the directive is to be implemented. In this situation, the directive permits national measures to apply in the relevant areas pending implementation of the further Community rules.

The draft order to implement the directive in Great Britain was circulated for consultation at a time when the prospects for further Community measures remained unclear. It will now be revised so that national measures in the relevant areas will continue to apply.

The legislation will require animals beginning a journey in Great Britain to be rested, fed and watered after a maximum of 15 hours. Animals will also have to be fed and watered, as appropriate for the species, before the start of the journey. The current requirements for animals for export to be rested and inspected near the port will no longer apply, but there will be a requirement for inspection of export consignments at the place of origin by a veterinary surgeon. Where the directive lays down new requirements—for example, the requirement for the transport of animals and birds by air to comply with the International Air Transport Association live animals regulations—these will be applied. In areas where further Community rules are awaited, such as the design of vehicles, existing rules will continue to apply.

The legislation will give powers to inspectors to prevent journeys if the requirements, including those relating to feeding and watering arrangements, are not met.

Much concern has been expressed about further controls on animal transport. There have been fears that when the directive is implemented on 1 January 1993 much of our existing law could be removed. This will not happen. We will take full advantage of the provision in the directive for national rules to continue to apply pending

the adoption of further Community measures. I have discussed this matter in detail with the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and am delighted to have its full support for the steps we will be taking.

The Government will continue to press for the outstanding issues to be resolved in the Community as soon as possible. In the meantime, the arrangements in the United Kingdom will provide a comprehensive system of controls to safeguard the welfare of animals in transport.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

European Union Treaty

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish a table showing in respect of each lettered article of the treaty on European union, the relevant international, Community or domestic court having final jurisdiction in respect of the matters contained in, and interpretation of, each article.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Article L of the treaty on European union indicates that the European Court of Justice—ECJ—shall only have jurisdiction in respect of those provisions amending the existing treaties, as set out in articles G to I, the final provisions—articles L to S—and any conventions concluded between states under article K.3(2)*(c)* which expressly give jurisdiction to the ECJ. Any questions concerning the interpretation of the common provisions—articles A to F—the provisions on a common foreign and security policy—article J—and the provisions on co-operation in the fields of justice and home affairs—article K—will be decided in accordance with the principles of international law. The high contracting parties may refer any dispute to the International Court of Justice—either by special agreement or where the states concerned have accepted the ICJ's compulsory jurisdiction—or to ad hoc arbitration.

Mullai Marimuthu

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what efforts are being made by his Department to ascertain the whereabouts and welfare of Mullai Marimuthu, off 67 Lund point, Stratford, E15, currently held against her will in Madurai, Tamil Nadu.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Mullai Marimuthu is staying at her uncle's house in Madurai. A consular officer had planned to visit Madurai on 10 December to meet the British community, including Marimuthu. However, all flights in Tamil Nadu have been cancelled because of current disturbances. A consular official will visit Madurai as soon as practicable.

Falkland Islands

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has of injuries caused to penguins in the Falkland Islands from the explosion of mines left over from the war.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We are not aware of any such incidents.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what monitoring his Department undertakes of incidents of death and injury to wildlife in the Falklands caused by mines and other warlike devices left over from the war.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: None. Injuries to wildlife caused by mines and other warlike devices are minimal. Most wildlife is too light to set off mines.

Gross Domestic Product

Dr. John Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the latest available information on the gross domestic product per head, as a proportion of the net European Community gross domestic product per head of *(a)* Poland, *(b)* Hungary and *(c)* Czechoslovakia, showing both the actual and proportional figures.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The latest published information—for 1990—is as follows:

	Gross domestic product per head (in US$)	*As percentage of EC gross domestic product per head*
European Community	16,373	—
Poland	1,700	10·4
Hungary	2,780	17·0
Czechoslovakia	3,140	19·2

Source: World Bank Atlas.

Foreign Affairs Council

Mr. Trend: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Foreign Affairs Council held on 7 December.

Mr. Hurd: My right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office and I represented the United Kingdom at the Foreign Affairs Council on 7 December, with my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food for the discussion of the Uruguay round.

I briefed European Community ministerial colleagues on plans for handling the European Council in Edinburgh. The Council of Ministers had a further discussion on the future financing of the Community. They focused mainly on internal policies and administration issues, which had not been fully discussed at the conclave of Foreign and Finance Ministers on 27 November.

The Council noted that the essential elements of the Community's general framework for enlargement negotiations with applicants from the European Free Trade Association had been established. The Council agreed to forward the Norwegian application to the Commission for its opinion.

The Council discussed the European economic area in the light of the negative vote in the Swiss referendum. The Council noted that, without Switzerland, the agreement would require modifications. It invited the Commission to make early contact with the European Free Trade Association countries and to report to the Council on 21 December.

The Council discussed recent progress in the GATT Uruguay round negotiations, particularly on agriculture. It agreed that substantial results would be needed in the Geneva negotiations in non-agricultural areas as well.

Ministers discussed Commission proposals on Community trade instruments and important restrictions. The Council expressed concern over the handling by the United States Government of anti-dumping and countervailing duty cases affecting Community steel producers and asked the Commission to raise the matter with the United States authorities.

The Council discussed a report on European Community relations with the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia presented by Ambassador O'Neill, my personal representative on the question. Ministers issued a statement on Somalia, welcoming the adoption of United Nations Security Council resolution 794.

In further preparation for the Edinburgh European Council, Ministers met separately on 8 December to discuss a possible solution to the Danish question, subsidiarity and openness. Ministers also discussed a Commission report on strengthening links with the countries of central and eastern Europe.

Bosnia

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what evidence he has of the use of chemical weapons in warfare in the current fighting in Bosnia.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) on 1 December 1992, *Official Report*, column *164*.

WALES

Welsh Language

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people in Wales *(a)* speak the Welsh language and *(b)* are learning Welsh; what sums of Government money were spent on (i) teaching the language and (ii) otherwise promoting it during the current financial year; how much this represents per capita in Wales; how much per Welsh speaker and student; what were the figures five and 10 years ago; and what are his projections for the next three years.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Information from the 1991 census on the numbers of Welsh speakers will be published shortly by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys in a monitor for Wales. I will then write to the hon. Gentleman and place a copy of my letter in the Library of the House. Information on the number of Welsh speakers five years ago is not available. The 1981 census recorded that out of a total population of 2,749,600 there were 503,500 Welsh speakers in Wales.

Direct Welsh Office financial support for the Welsh language in 1992-93 amounts to £7·6 million. Comparable figures for 1982-83 and 1987-88 were £1·8 and £2·8 million respectively. My right hon. Friend intends to announce shortly our direct support in 1993-94. Details of local education authorities' expenditure on the language, and the number of learners, are not held centrally.

Young Offenders (Cardiff Prison)

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many section 53 young offenders aged 16 years and under are currently placed in Cardiff prison.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: None from Wales.

Churches' National Homes Coalition

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has had from the Churches' National Homes Coalition; if he proposes to meet the Churches' National Homes Coalition; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: None, directly; and neither I nor my right hon. Friend have any plans to meet the Churches' National Homes Coalition.

Secure Unit

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales where the proposed secure unit for young offenders in south Wales will be sited; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The joint local authority/Welsh Office working party, set up to take forward the development of the proposed secure unit, is progressing this work as quickly as possible.

Careers Service

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has had concerning the careers service.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I have received three letters about the careers service in the past 18 months.

House Building

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the number of houses to be built by *(a)* local authorities and *(b)* housing associations in Wales over the next five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: My right hon. Friend will be announcing the results of the current public expenditure survey in due course.

Youth Training

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the training and enterprise councils in Wales which have fulfilled their obligation of granting guaranteed youth training placements for all 16 to 17-year-olds.

Sir Wyn Roberts: It is not possible to say that at a particular date all 16 and 17-year-olds have been allocated training placements because there is a stream of new entrants or re-entrants to the guarantee group. I am satisfied that all seven TECs in Wales are giving the highest priority to fulfilling their obligations under the youth training guarantee.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps are currently taken by his Department to monitor the availability and quality of youth training placements within each training and enterprise council area in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Officials in the Department regularly monitor management information provided by TECs on

the numbers of young people seeking youth training placements and the number of placements available. TECs are also obliged through their operating agreement to have effective quality assurance systems to ensure that all TEC providers of training obtain and maintain the status of approved training organisations under the Secretary of State's published criteria or an alternative system approved by the Secretary of State, which is of equivalent or greater assurance and effectiveness.

Community Care

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps are being undertaken by his Department to monitor the consultation work with disabled people undertaken by local authorities in preparing their draft community care plans.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The Department has been closely reviewing with each county planning team the draft social care plans. Part of this review has involved consideration of the consultation process with a variety of interested parties including disabled people. Other consultations have taken place with the voluntary sector and user and carer interests. It is proposed that such consultations will continue within an annual cycle.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the local authorities in Wales which have produced their community care plans in braille or on tape.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Social care plans are, by their nature, very bulky working documents and are not targeted at the general public. However, local authorities are required to produce information for the public on the key elements of their social care plans—the range of services available, how to gain access to them, how to make complaints or suggestions, and avenues of redress—in a range of formats including writing, tape and braille. Welsh Office guidance, issued September 1990, on the preparation of social care plans refers to this requirement.

Aston Hill, Clwyd

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will make a statement on traffic blight on Aston hill, Clwyd;

(2) if he will commission an urgent study of traffic queues on the A494 Aston hill, Clwyd.

Sir Wyn Roberts: An extensive traffic study of the north-east Clwyd area, a summary of which was sent to the hon. Gentleman in February 1992, identified the need to improve a number of sections of trunk road in the area to accommodate anticipated increases in traffic growth. On this basis, an improvement scheme for the A494 from the River Dee to Ewloe, including Aston hill, was introduced into the roads programme for Wales to alleviate traffic problems along this route.

At the present time, essential maintenance works are being carried out on this very busy length of trunk road and much thought has been given to traffic management measures so as to minimise delays.

Housing Estates (Crime)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what measures his Department operates to combat car crime on housing estates; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what measures his Department operates to combat break-ins on housing estates; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Proposals for improving household security are eligible for consideration as crime prevention measures under the urban programme; any local authority in Wales may submit a bid. Projects which have received support recently include "Cardiff Safe and Secure" initiative, and improvements to the security of the communal areas of flats on the Sandfields estates in Port Talbot. Funds made available to victim support schemes have also on occasion been used to improve household security. In addition, under the Welsh Office elderly initiative scheme some £315,000 is being made available over a three-year period to support a project in Mid Glamorgan that is designed to improve the safety and well-being of senior citizens living in their own homes. In addition to providing improved door and window locks, and door viewers, the projects entails the provision of advice to the elderly on how to deal with bogus officials and confidence tricksters.

In June last year my right hon. Friend was pleased to perform the launch of "Secured by Design" in Wales. This is a major initiative promoted by the police to encourage house builders to incorporate improved crime prevention features in houses when they are built.

Security of council houses is a matter in the first instance for councils to address in assessing their priorities. It is open to tenants, subject to their landlords' permission, to make home security improvements.

As concerns car crime, the Welsh Office has supported the introduction of vehicle watch, which is a major police initiative to combat theft of vehicles and articles from them. Also, consideration is currently being given to supporting projects under the urban programme which are designed to divert young people from becoming engaged in car crime.

Urban Programme

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much assistance under the urban programme *(a)* Alyn and Deeside and *(b)* Wrexham Maelor councils have received in each of the last five years.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Urban programme allocations to Alyn and Deeside district council and Wrexham Maelor borough council for the last five years were:

	Alyn and Deeside £	*Wrexham Maelor* £
1988-89	279,627	487,641
1989-90	275,225	520,842
1990-91	225,225	776,511
1991-92	267,613	1,450,853
1992-93	100,000	599,559
Total	1,147,690	3,835,406

NHS (Competitive Tendering)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what decisions he has taken in regard to contracting out national health service jobs in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Competitive tendering of ancillary services in the NHS in Wales has led to improvements in the quality and delivery of service and to financial savings in excess of £4 million, thus releasing resources for direct patient care. The market testing of a much wider range of non-clinical services is actively being pursued by authorities, units and NHS trusts in accordance with the "Competing for Quality" White Paper. Decisions on the award of contracts are for local management. The applicability of the Transfer of undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 to NHS contracts is a particular issue which has been raised and the Department is seeking legal advice on whether current guidance should now be revised.

Hospitals

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total number of hospitals in Wales in 1979, 1991 and 1992.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: There were 173 hospitals open in Wales as at 31 December 1979 and 145 as at 31 December 1991. The number has not changed since. In the same period, the numbers of in-patients, out-patients and day patients treated have increased significantly.

Disabled Persons (Training)

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the training and enterprise councils in Wales which have appointed a board member with the specific remit of training provision for disabled people.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Appointments to the boards of TECs are made in line with guidelines issued by the Department. The particular responsibilities of individual directors is a matter, therefore, for the TEC concerned. This varies between TECs.

All TECs in Wales have advisory groups that look at the training needs and provision for individuals with special training needs, including those with disabilities.

Ambulance Service (Clwyd and Gwynedd)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on his plans for the ambulance service in Clwyd and Gwynedd.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Arrangements for the statutory provision of ambulance services is a matter for the health authorities locally, which have recently decided to combine the existing Clwyd and Gwynedd ambulance services to form the North Wales ambulance service from 1 April 1993.

My right hon. Friend has invited an application for NHS trust status from 1994 and the decision to so proceed is a matter for the service itself.

Caravans

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what measures he will take to assist people affected by the illegal parking of itinerants' caravans; and if he will make a statement;

(2) when he expects to make a statement concerning permanent caravan sites for itinerants.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The Government's proposals for reform of the Caravan Sites Act 1968 and measures to tackle illegal camping were detailed in the consultation paper issued on 18 August. A statement will be made once all responses have been considered.

Disabled Employees

Mr. Elletson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many *(a)* physically disabled and *(b)* sensorily disabled people are employed in his Department; and what percentage they are of the total work force.

Mr. David Hunt: As at 1 July 1992, 38 members of staff in my Department had registered as disabled, representing 1·6 per cent. of all staff. My Department also employs several unregistered disabled people.

	Number of Registered Disabled Staff	*Percentage of Departmental Total*
Physically Disabled	25	1·0
Sensorily Disabled	13	0·5

Note: Part-time staff count as one unit.
Percentages do not add to the total because of rounding.

Valleys Initiative

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give percentage and actual figures for adult males *(a)* registered unemployed, *(b)* receiving supplementary benefit or income support and *(c)* economically inactive for each of the areas covered by the valleys initiative programme in October 1988 and October 1992 showing the percentage changes.

Mr. David Hunt: In October 1988 there were 23,328 unemployed males in the programme for the valleys area claiming benefit—15·9 per cent. of the work force. The figure for October 1992 was 25,954—18·5 per cent. of the work force. This represents an increase of 11·3 per cent. or 2·6 percentage points since October 1988. Male unemployment figures for individual districts which are wholly or partly within the valleys programme area were provided in my answer to the hon. Gentleman on 24 November, at columns *628-30.*

Information on the total number of males in the valleys area in receipt of supplementary benefit or income support is not available.

Provisional 1991 population census estimates of economically inactive males in those districts that fall, at least in part, within the valleys programme boundary are given in the table. There are no valleys figures for 1988 or 1992.

Economically inactive population, 1991[1] males aged 16-64 years

District[2]	*Number*	*Percentage of population*
Dinefwr	2,165	21·7
Llanelli	5,037	22·6
Blaenau Gwent	5,465	22·9
Islwyn	4,355	20·6
Torfaen	5,258	18·5
Cynon Valley	4,760	23·8
Merthyr Tydfil	4,297	23·8
Ogwr	7,964	19·3

District[2]	Number	Percentage of population
Rhondda	6,116	25·4
Rhymney Valley	7,418	22·8
Taff Ely	5,753	18·6
Brecknock	2,296	18·0
Llw Valley	3,873	20·1
Neath	4,358	21·6
Port Talbot	3,903	24·7
Swansea	11,522	20·7

Source: Office of Population Censuses and Surveys.
[1]1991 data are extracted from the Census County Monitor Series CEN 91 CM.
[2]District figures include areas outside the valleys programme boundary.

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was regional policy expenditure in the South Wales valleys initiative area for each of the years 1988-89, 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92 *(a)* in total and broken down into, *(b)* regional selective assistance, *(c)* regional development grant and *(d)* regional enterprise grant.

Mr. David Hunt: The information requested is as follows:

£million

	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92
Regional Selective Assistance	11·6	8·2	7·1	13·0
Regional Development Grants	17·2	7·7	6·9	2·8
Regional Enterprise Grants	0·1	0·2	0·5	0·3
Total	28·9	16·1	14·5	16·1

Unemployment

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has to alleviate unemployment in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: The Welsh Office, along with the development agencies and training and enterprise councils, already have in place very successful initiatives designed to encourage enterprise, create new jobs and safeguard existing ones. Regional selective assistance alone has been highly successful; with offers of assistance since 1979 forecast to safeguard over 53,000 jobs and to create almost 114,000 new jobs in Wales.

Four Crosses Creamery

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement regarding the closing of the Four Crosses creamery in mid-Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: The closure of the Four Crosses creamery was a matter for the commercial judgment of Dairy Crest. I shall continue to do whatever I can to attract new investment to all parts of Wales and to that end will make available financial support as appropriate to assist individual projects.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Working Mothers

12. **Mr. Clelland:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the impact of his taxation policies on working mothers.

Sir John Cope: The reduction in income tax rates since 1979 has benefited all earners, male and female.

Manufacturing Industry

16. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what further action he intends to take to assist manufacturing industry.

Mr. Portillo: Manufacturing industry is best assisted by the conditions we have created of low inflation and low interest rates, as well as by a competitive exchange rate.

Single Market

17. **Mr. Trimble:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will make a statement on the arrangements for recovering VAT on exports after the implementation of the single market.

Sir John Cope: There will be no change for exports to countries outside the Community. VAT registered traders can also zero-rate sales to VAT registered traders in other Community countries. In such cases, evidence will be required of removal to other member states such as carriers' consignment notes or shipping documents. If a VAT registered customer collects the goods, the seller should get the customer to sign for the goods, give his or her VAT number and various other particulars, such as destination address of the goods.

Visitors from outside the EC will continue to be able to purchase goods from high street shops and reclaim VAT when they export them from the EC.

Housing Expenditure

18. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what percentage of the additional money allocated to housing expenditure in the autumn statement he estimates will have been spent by 1 January 1993.

Mr. Portillo: I am confident that the full £750 million, announced in the autumn statement as a boost to the housing market, will be spent by the end of this financial year. The amount that is spent by 1 January 1993 will depend, for example, on how quickly housing associations can complete the legal formalities on their purchases.

Value Added Tax

19. **Miss Lestor:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will exempt from value added tax all shoes and clothing bought for school children.

Sir John Cope: No. We agreed with other European partners in 1977 that, while we may retain those zero rates currently in force, subject to their being for clearly defined social reasons and for the benefit of the final consumer, we may neither widen their scope nor introduce new ones. Under the rates directive of 19 October 1992 the Government secured their retention.

Mr. Hain: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many small businesses are not registered for VAT; and how many enterprises are registered.

Sir John Cope: Customs only has information concerning the number of businesses registered for VAT. At 30 November 1992 it was 1,643,679.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on value added tax on domiciliary care provision.

Sir John Cope: I cannot add to the answers I gave to the hon. Member on this subject on 18 November 1992, at columns *234-35*.

Consumer Debt

20. **Mr. Alton:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the present level of consumer debt; and what was the comparable level of debt in 1982.

Mr. Nelson: The level of consumer debt outstanding at 30 September this year was £53 billion. The best estimate for the end of 1982 is £16 billion in 1982 prices, although changes in coverage mean that the figures are not strictly comparable.

Small Businesses

21. **Mr. Butterfill:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer which measures in the autumn statement were designed to help small businesses.

Mr. Portillo: The measures in the autumn statement were designed to rebuild confidence and to strengthen the economy and small businesses will benefit from these measures.

European Community (Contribution)

22. **Mr. Milligan:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will apply for moneys in the proposed EC cohesion fund to reduce Britain's net contribution to the EC budget.

Sir John Cope: The cohesion fund envisaged in the Maastricht treaty will be a structural fund for member states with a per capita gross national product less than 90 per cent. of the Community average. Purchasing power parities are used to calculate the relative wealth for these funds. On that basis, the United Kingdom would not therefore qualify for any assistance from the cohesion fund.

Capital Projects (Private Sector Investment)

23. **Mr. Thomason:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he will make a further announcement about encouraging private sector involvement in capital projects.

Mr. Portillo: In order to encourage the private sector to bring forward proposals, we released our guidance provided to Government Departments on implementing the initiative announced in the autumn statement.

Mr. Ancram: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will take further steps to promote private sector investments in public sector projects.

Mr. Lamont: I announced some important changes in the use of privately raised finance in the autumn statement.

Bloodstock Industry

24. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what further representations he has received about the effect of value added tax rates on the bloodstock industry; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope: A wide range of representations continue to be received about VAT and bloodstock and the introduction of the single market. We are working hard with industry representatives to ensure that they are fully aware of the new VAT arrangements so that no one is unnecessarily disadvantaged by them. Officials stand ready to consider any proposals from the industry to ease the potential problems they face.

Economy

25. **Ms. Abbott:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent representations he has received from the CBI concerning the health of the British economy.

Mr. Portillo: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer and I have frequent contact with representatives of industry, including the CBI, and pay close attention to their views on the economy. We have taken careful note of their concerns and proposals as well as the broad welcome given to the autumn statement.

Interest Rates

26. **Mr. Nigel Evans:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the current bank interest rate in each EC country.

Mr. Nelson: Three-month market interest rates in EC countries were as follows at close of business on 3 December.

	3 December (per cent.)
United Kingdom	7·2
Germany	8·9
France	10·8
Italy	14·7
Spain	16·0
Netherlands	8·9
Belgium	8·9
Denmark	18·8
Ireland	20·0
Greece	24·5
Portugal	19·1

Wage Settlements

Mr. Cran: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received from the Confederation of British Industry on the need for moderate and affordable wage settlements.

Mr. Nelson: My right hon. Friend has met representatives of the CBI on a number of occasions to discuss a variety of economic matters.

Credit Card Debt

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the confidentiality of credit card debts and the rate of interest demanded.

Mr. Nelson: The legal principle that a banker owes a duty of confidentiality to his customer and should not disclose to any third party information about a customer's personal affairs—the "Tournier" rules—was established by a legal case in 1924. In addition, the Data Protection Act 1984 requires that data should be collected fairly and lawfully; held only for for specified purposes; not disclosed other than in accordance with those purposes; and held in conditions of appropriate security to prevent unauthorised access. The interest rates charged by credit card companies are a matter for their own commercial judgment.

World Economy

Mr. Garnier: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made on the effect of the world economy of the linking by certain countries in south-east Asia of their own currencies to the United States dollar; and what action he proposes to take.

Mr. Nelson: The Treasury makes regular assessments of recent developments and prospects for the world economy. A forecast of the world economy was published at the time of the autumn statement.

VAT Collection Office

Mr. French: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to review customer service in the VAT collection office.

Sir John Cope: It is intended to conduct at least two customer surveys during 1993, one specially for the VAT central unit, and a more general one covering the VAT business including services provided by local VAT offices. Some local offices are carrying out separate surveys to review and improve the service they provide.

In addition, quality service indicators define standards for customer service at all levels within Customs and Excise and they are reviewed regularly.

Pools Industry

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much accrued in tax to the Treasury in 1991-92 from the pools industry.

Sir John Cope: Revenue from pools betting duty in 1991-92 was £319·5 million.

VAT Returns

Mr. French: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what formula is adopted when deciding the penalty for late payment of VAT returns.

Sir John Cope: Under the Finance Act 1985 liability to default surcharge arises where a taxpayer persistently fails to render a return or pay any VAT due on time. After two defaults have occurred within twelve months, a third default within 12 months of the second results in a liability to a surcharge of 5 per cent. of the unpaid tax. The level of surcharge increases for subsequent defaults, but cannot exceed 20 per cent. for defaults incurred after 1 April 1992. The maximum surcharge was previously 30 per cent.

Council Tax

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was *(a)* the total cost of the valuation of properties in (i) Pendle and (ii) Lancashire for the purposes of introducing the council tax and *(b)* the cost per property in (i) Pendle and (ii) Lancashire.

Mr. Nelson: The total cost of the valuation banding of domestic properties was £63,045 in Pendle and £1,105,833 in Lancashire. The average valuation banding cost per property was £1·76 in Pendle and £1·90 in Lancashire.

Bank Accounts

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will investigate the qualifications laid down by the major banks regarding the ability of young people aged between 16 and 22 years to open bank accounts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson: I have no plans to investigate this issue. The principles that banks will follow when allowing people to open accounts, and when providing credit to young people, are set out in the code of banking practice which was published in December 1991.

Treasury Income

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the total income to the Treasury since May 1979 from (a) privatisation and *(b)* North sea oil revenues.

Mr. Nelson: Between 1979-80 and 1992-93, privatisation proceeds are expected to amount to £50 billion, and North sea oil revenues to £72 billion.

Bankruptcy

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to avoid placing small firms into bankruptcy for unpaid VAT or income tax, where the Government's legal and administrative costs of so doing are expected to be greater than the assessed likely recovery of moneys; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope *[holding answer 4 December 1992]:* In all cases, civil recovery through the courts is only taken as a last resort. Where a VAT registered taxpayer has ceased trading and the tax debt is not expected to increase, Customs policy is that legal action should only be taken where there is a prospect of recovering sufficient tax to make this action cost effective.

However, for those VAT-registered taxpayers who continue in business but fail to meet their VAT liability and where all other options for payment have been explored without success, Customs has no recourse other than to take legal action in order to prevent the VAT debt from increasing.

Inland Revenue policy is to take bankruptcy proceedings only as a last resort when all other attempts to encourage payment of tax debts have failed. The Revenue does, however, have to consider its duty to the Exchequer, employees who have had tax deducted from their wages and to the general body of taxpayers who pay their tax on time.

House Prices

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the percentage change in regional house price to earnings ratios in each region between the most recent quarter in 1992 for which information is available and the corresponding quarter of 1991.

Mr. Nelson: The latest published information on regional average earnings is for April 1992. The information requested, relating to the second quarter of 1992 and the corresponding quarter of 1991, is in the table:

	Average house price to earnings ratio		
	Quarter 2 1991	*Quarter 2 1992*	*Percentage change*
Region			
United Kingdom	4·12	3·87	−6·1
North	3·28	3·38	+3·0
Yorkshire and Humberside	3·92	3·66	−6·6
East Midlands	4·09	3·76	−8·1
East Anglia	4·23	3·79	−10·4
South East			
Greater London	4·50	4·01	−10·9
Rest of South East	5·02	4·53	−9·8
South West	4·53	4·10	−9·5
West Midlands	4·31	3·95	−8·4
North West	3·74	3·77	+0·8
England	4·25	3·95	−7·1
Wales	3·49	3·52	+0·9
Scotland	3·46	3·36	−2·9
Northern Ireland	2·59	2·63	+1·5

Mortgage Interest Tax Relief

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the cost of mortgage interest relief at source payments in each region in each year since 1979-80 and as a proportion of the total MIRAS payments for that year.

Mr. Dorrell: The available information is given in my reply to the hon. Member for Angus, East (Mr. Welsh) on 17 June 1992, *Official Report*, columns *537-38*.

Personal Debt

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what percentage of personal disposable income was made up of personal sector debt in each region in each year since 1987.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 9 December 1992]:* The information is not available.

Autumn Statement

Mr. Hargreaves: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what reaction he has received from business organisations to his autumn statement.

Mr. Portillo: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the hon. Member for Tiverton (Mrs. Browning).

Ministers (Personal Matters)

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer under what guidelines the Treasury press office responds to inquiries about personal matters concerning Ministers; how many such inquiries were received by the Treasury press office on 13 April 1991; what action was taken; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson: The Treasury press office responds to inquiries about personal matters concerning Ministers by seeking guidance from the Ministers in question, and then taking follow-up action as appropriate. A large number of such inquiries were received on 13 April 1991. As my right hon. Friend the Chancellor has already explained, the nature of the allegations made on that evening made it necessary for him to issue an immediate press statement, based on legal advice, and for related inquiries to be handled by the solicitors.

HEALTH

In-patient Waiting Lists

Ms. Glenda Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish her plans for reducing in-patient waiting lists in London before implementation of the Tomlinson report.

Dr. Mawhinney: The report notes that significant progress has been made in reducing waiting times in London. In the year to 31 March 1992, the total number of patients waiting in inner London fell by nearly 10 per cent.

We shall ensure that the proposals arising from the report continue this trend.

Travellers Abroad

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what steps Her Majesty's Government took to alert British travellers to Malta about the outbreak of gastro-enteritis in Malta between December 1991 and January 1992;

(2) what is her policy with regard to alerting British holiday makers about epidemics in major overseas holiday destinations.

Dr. Mawhinney: When an outbreak of an infectious disease comes to the attention of the Department any action must take account of the nature of the disease, the number of cases, the certainty of the diagnosis and the strength of any connection with one site or area.

In December 1991 the Department received a report of an outbreak of gastro-enteritis which affected individuals staying in a particular hotel in Malta. As we had no evidence of a more widespread or ongoing problem, it was not appropriate to issue specific advice to travellers to Malta at that time.

General health advice to travellers is contained in a leaflet issued by the Department, T4 "Health Advice for Travellers", copies are available in the Library. If more specific advice is needed, action may include addition of a special message to the DH "Health Advice for Travellers" on the Prestel network, and similarly by the travel advice unit of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, which is received by many travel agents; issuing a press statement; alerting the Association of British Travel Agents (ABTA) which will then relay the information to travel agents; or, in the case of a major outbreak which makes travel to a destination unwise, the Chief Medical Officer would consider issuing a public warning.

Septic Arthritis

Mr. Pope: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many registered cases of septic arthritis there have been in the United Kingdom over the last five years broken down by district health authority; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Information on registrations of this condition are not held centrally. The table shows the estimated number of cases of septic arthritis treated in national health service hospitals in each regional health authority in England for the last five available years. The numbers of treatments are too small to make reliable estimates at district level.

Septic arthritis—discharges and deaths/hospital episodes

	1982	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1989-90*
Northern	100	90	160	100	96
Yorkshire	90	110	70	110	96
Trent	200	180	160	190	208
East Anglia	60	130	100	30	60
North West Thames	60	40	80	60	64
North East Thames	80	50	30	110	108
South East Thames	130	140	100	90	128
South West Thames	70	80	30	60	88
Wessex	60	80	100	50	100
Oxford	70	40	80	100	64
South Western	90	70	140	80	68
West Midlands	230	280	230	120	224
Mersey	90	90	110	40	64
North Western	80	200	110	130	164
SHAs	0	0	20	10	12
Totals	1,410	1,580	1,520	1,280	1,544

Sources: 1982-85 Hospital In-Patient Enquiry (HIPE).
1989-90 Hospital Episode System (HES).

"Who Cares?"

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what contribution her Department made to the "World in Action" programme, "Who Cares?" broadcast on 30 November.

Mr. Yeo: None.

Care Leavers

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will now review local authority support for young care leavers.

Mr. Yeo: We are monitoring how local authorities are exercising their powers and duties under the Children Act 1989. A report will be presented to Parliament in the new year.

Disabled Employees

Mr. Elletson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many *(a)* physically disabled and *(b)* sensorily disabled people are employed in her Department; and what percentage they are of the total work force.

Mr. Sackville: At 7 December 1992, the latest figures available, the Department employed 74 people who were registered disabled, of whom 37—0·7 per cent. of the work force—are known to have physical disabilities and 13—0·3 per cent.—to have sensory disabilities. In addition, a number of staff have a disability but are not registered disabled.

Child Care Facilities

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps she will take to give further encouragement to employers to provide child care facilities for employees' children.

Mr. Yeo: It is for employers to consider the business case for providing a child care service, to help recruit, retain and support the career development of the work force.

The new review duty, introduced by the Children Act 1989, provides a legislative framework for local child care

plans, which involve all local interests, including employers and parents, in looking at the existing child care services and identifying priorities for future expansion.

The Department of Health is spending £1½ million over three years starting in 1992-93 to pump prime expansion of child care services for school age children. The Employment Department is planning to spend up to £45 million over three years starting in 1993-94 through training and enterprise councils in promoting child care for school age children.

Community Care

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps she is taking to ensure that users of community care provisions are enabled to have a genuine choice of services after April.

Mr. Yeo: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State intends to issue a statutory direction requiring local authorities to place someone assessed as needing residential care into the accommodation of their choice, subject to practical conditions such as cost, availability and suitability. The statutory direction will also make it clear that authorities should use their discretion in a way which respects users' wishes when arranging the provision of any community care service.

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when her Department will issue the guidance referred to in paragraph 3.31 of the policy guidance, "Community Care in the Next Decade and Beyond", on the power of local authorities to make discretionary charges for welfare services under section 17 of the Health and Social Services and Social Security Adjudications Act 1983.

Mr. Yeo: We intend to issue guidance before April 1993.

Private Ambulance Services

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations her Department has received in the last five years on the regulation of private ambulance services; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: We have, from time to time, received letters from hon. Members and from the public. In each case the response has been that private ambulance services and their staff are not subject to any specific statute or regulation. It is for the prospective purchaser of private ambulance services to satisfy themselves that operators are competent to provide the required service.

Dr. Kypros Loucas

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what plans she has to investigate allegations of professional misconduct by Dr. Kypros Loucas while he was working at Horton hospital in Epsom, Surrey, and the circumstances in which he was appointed to the post; and if she will make a statement;

(2) what plans she has to review the powers available to the Mental Health Act Commission; and if she will make a statement;

(3) when her Department first became aware of the Mental Health Act Commission's concerns over possible breaches of the Mental Health Act 1983 by Dr. Kypros Loucas while he was employed at Broadmoor hospital; what representations her Department received from the commission on Dr. Loucas's activities at Broadmoor hospital; and if she will make a statement;

(4) what plans she has to review the effectiveness of the Mental Health Act 1983 following reports by the Mental Health Act Commission on the treatment of patients at Broadmoor hospital.

Ms. Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many past Secretaries of State were approached through their private offices about Dr. Kypros Loucas and his treatment of psychiatric patients;

(2) if she will now set up an independent inquiry into the activities of Dr. Kypros Loucas with a view to publishing a report;

(3) to how many internal Department of Health inquiries Dr. Kypros Loucas consultant psychiatrist has been subject;

(4) what action has been taken against Dr. Kypros Loucas following the Mental Health Act Commission's reports to her Department.

Mr. Yeo: The Mental Health Act Commission first expressed concern to the Department about compliance by Dr. Loucas with part IV of the Mental Health Act in 1985. This and subsequent reports by the commission were followed up by the Department with local management at Broadmoor hospital and with the local hospital board. Ministers were involved as necessary and the commission was kept fully informed of the action being taken, which concluded with Dr. Loucas's early retirement from Broadmoor in 1989. In that year the commission stated in its third biennial report:

"the Department of Health has remedied the situation in a way which fully satisfied the Commission's insistent call for official action".

It is not clear that the reported events demonstrate an inadequacy in the Mental Health Act 1983 or in the powers of the Mental Health Act Commission, but we are ready to consider any proposals for changes in this area. We do not believe that a general inquiry into these matters would serve a useful purpose, but we are considering whether any steps need to be taken on particular issues raised.

The decision to employ Dr. Loucas at Horton hospital was taken by the Riverside health authority. We have received a copy from the authority of the report of its internal inquiry into the death of a patient at Horton in 1990 and we are considering urgently whether this calls for any further action.

Questions relating to the professional conduct and competence of doctors are for the General Medical Council to consider. We have drawn the council's attention to the allegations about Dr. Loucas and will do all that we can to assist any investigation that it may decide to undertake.

Medical Manpower Standing Advisory Committee

Mr. Alexander: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she expects the Medical Manpower Standing Advisory Committee to make its first report.

Dr. Mawhinney: I am pleased to announce that the Medical Manpower Standing Advisory Committee has completed its first report. It is published today and copies have been placed in the Library.

Long-term manpower planning is an important issue for health care and it is not too soon to be thinking about the manpower requirements for the next century. We are grateful to Professor Campbell, the chairman, and to the members of the committee for their consideration of a wide range of issues. We will be studying their recommendations very carefully.

Sunderland Health Authority

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many *(a)* administrative, *(b)* nursing and *(c)* other staff were employed by Sunderland health authority in 1987 and 1991.

Dr. Mawhinney: The figures, where available, are given in the table.

	Whole-time equivalent	
	1987	*1991*
Administrative and clerical	618·4	[1]—
Nursing and midwifery	2,609·4	2,656·4
Other professional	449·5	494·7
Other non-professional	1,103·9	[1]—

[1] Not available (for DHA).

Notes:

1. Excludes medical and dental staff.
2. Includes agency nurses.
3. *Source:* Non-medical Manpower Census.
4. 1991 figures for administrative and clerical and other non-professional staff are not available centrally for Sunderland district health authority.

Bradford Hospitals Trust

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received from the Bradford hospitals trust to approve the closure of Bradford royal infirmary, Woodlands and Bierley hospitals; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: I have received no such representations.

Tobacco

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what will be the dimensions of the warning notices required by section 4 of the Children and Young Persons (Protection from Tobacco) Act 1991.

Dr. Mawhinney: In the light of consultation on the draft regulations, we shall shortly be making regulations which will provide that the notice for display at premises where tobacco is sold is to be not less than 297 mm × 420 mm (A3), and the lettering is to be not less than 36 mm high. The notice to be affixed to cigarette vending machines is to be not less than 60 mm × 100 mm, and the lettering not less than 6 mm high.

TRANSPORT

Transport Council

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the result of the Transport Council held in Brussels on 7 and 8 December.

Mr. MacGregor: The Transport Council met in Brussels on 7 and 8 December. There was constructive discussion of a very full agenda on aviation, maritime and inland transport issues. On the outstanding measures needed for completion of the single market in transport, full agreement was reached on the regulation on airport slot allocation, thus completing the single market in aviation; and good progress was made on the liberalisation of road haulage cabotage. This will be discussed further at an additional special Transport Council on 21 December. There was also unanimous agreement on a directive to ensure better information when dangerous and polluting goods are carried into and out of Community sea ports.

Airport Slot Allocation

The Council agreed a regulation on airport slot allocation to come into force early in 1993. It will put into place a fair and uniform system for allocating slots at Community airports. The regulation will provide preferential treatment for new entrants on intra-Community routes, and also introduces stricter penalties on airlines that fail to use their slots. The Council will review the operation of the regulation after three years. The completion of the single market in aviation will assist air travellers across Europe by promoting competition and choice.

Aviation External Relations

Useful preliminary discussions took place on the Commission's communication on aviation external relations. There was general agreement that a case-by-case examination will be needed before the Community negotiates collectively with any third country. The forthcoming Danish presidency agreed to take this forward.

Air Traffic Control Issues

The Council emphasised the importance of co-operation by the Commission with Eurocontrol and the European Civil Aviation Conference (ECAC). It called for the adoption as soon as possible of the Commission's proposal for a directive on standards for air traffic management (ATM) equipment and systems. It encouraged the Commission to ensure the continuation of the EURET research programme and to make provisions for research to support the development of the future ATM system for Europe, in close co-operation with ECAC and Eurocontrol.

State Aids Resolution

The presidency proposed a draft resolution urging tighter control of state aids in the single market for transport, to which we have attached great importance. This is a matter which lies within the Commission's competence, and the resolution was supported by the Commission. There was support from most member states. But there were objections in principle from certain member states so it was not possible to adopt the resolution. I am hopeful that the matter will be pursued by the Danish presidency.

Road haulage fiscal harmonisation and cabotage

Further discussions took place on these linked and difficult issues. Good progress was made, but without conclusion. In view of the importance and urgency of these items the Council agreed to adjourn and resume discussions at a further meeting on 21 December, in order to reach agreement before the end of the year because the current transitional scheme runs out on 1 January 1993.

Inland waterways

Agreement was reached on a Commission mandate on the opening of negotiations with Danubian countries on inland waterways.

Transit with Slovenia

The Commission reported on the negotiations for a Community transit agreement with Slovenia. The Council was not satisfied that an agreement could yet be initialled.

EC tranport infrastructure funding

The draft regulation to succeed the current infrastructure funding regulation had already received political agreement at the October Council. The December Council confirmed this and agreed to re-consult the European Parliament given the considerable differences between this text and the Commission's original proposal.

Dangerous goods at sea

We succeeded in getting unanimous agreement, after three years of Council deliberation, for a directive concerning the carriage of dangerous or polluting goods at sea. This will allow the Community to set in hand a practical scheme compatible with international law, to achieve a better flow of information about the carriage of dangerous and polluting goods into and out of Community ports.

Positive measures for shipping

The Council discussed ways of improving the competitiveness of Community fleets to guide the Commission's future work in this area. Three points were made in particular: state aids should not be mandatory; and there was widespread concern that aids distort competition, especially in some countries which could not afford to grant them, and that manning arrangements should be kept as flexible as possible.

Maritime external relations

The Council agreed the presidency paper which encourages the Commission to produce a strategy and working arrangements for Community action on external relations for shipping.

Maritime safety

There was a useful general discussion on the Community's approach to maritime safety during which the United Kingdom emphasised the importance of achieving the right standards on ferry stability.

Shipping liberalisation

The Commission presented a report which shows that some member states are not complying fully with their obligations under the regulation liberalising shipping between member states and third countries.

White Paper

Commissioner Van Miert presented the wide-ranging Commission White Paper "The Future Development of the Common Transport Policy". The Danish presidency will take forward discussion of the paper.

Rail Freight

Mr. Nicholls: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will take the legislative or other steps necessary to place an immediate moratorium on the rates British Rail charges to its freight customers as part of the preparations for privatisation of British Rail's freight operations.

Mr. Freeman: The rates British Rail charges to freight customers are not matters that the Government can control. The Government intend to bring forward legislation under which a regulator would be appointed to supervise track charges to railway operators.

Nuclear Material

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to introduce legislation to enforce the British Railways Board "List of Dangerous Goods Class 7: radioactive material", 1977 edition.

Mr. Freeman: This issue is under consideration by the Department as part of the safety regime to be put in place following the privatisation of British Rail.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent changes have been made to the Chicago convention to cover the air freight of nuclear material.

Mr. Norris: None. Annex 18 to the convention already lays down provisions for the safe transport by air of dangerous goods, including radioactive material.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information his Department has regarding accidents involving *(a)* air transport, *(b)* sea or water course transport, *(c)* road transport and *(d)* rail transport of nuclear materials in the European Community since 1979.

Mr. Norris: Details of accidents in the United Kingdom and their radiological consequences are given in National Radiological Protection Board reports M206, M230 and M310, commissioned jointly by the Department of Transport and the Health and Safety Executive.

The Department does not hold details of accidents in other member states of the European Community.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what petitions he has received in his position as President of the European Council of Transport Ministers relating to the risks associated with the transportation of radioactive materials; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: No such petitions have been received.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list all published and unpublished reports, commissioned and retained by his Department on the safety and the security of the transport of nuclear materials, and place in the Library those not otherwise available.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The following safety studies have been commissioned by the Department:

Radiation exposure from the normal movement of irradiated fuel elements by road and rail from Magnox power stations: March 1983

Review of the radiological consequence resulting from accidents and incidents during transportation in and from the United Kingdom: December 1984

Derived limits for surface contamination of transport packages: February 1987

The radiological impact of releases from a Magnox fuel flask damages by a hypothetical fire in the summit tunnel: December 1988

Review of the radiological consequences resulting from accidents and incidents involving the transport of radioactive materials in the United Kingdom from 1964 to 1988: March 1990

Radiological impact of the normal transport of radioactive materials by air: March 1990

Transport of radioactive materials between the United Kingdom mainland and gas and oil platforms in the North sea: March 1990

Radiological consequences resulting from accidents and incidents involving the transport of radioactive materials in the United Kingdom—1989 review: July 1990

Radiological consequences resulting from accidents and incidents involving the transport of radioactive materials in the United Kingdom—1990 review: July 1991

All the above studies were carried out by the National Radiological Protection Board.

In addition, the Department of Energy commissioned a confidential security study in 1980 on the consequences of a terrorist attack on an irradiated fuel flask.

I will place in the Library copies of the listed safety reports that are not already there.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list those United Kingdom ports which have been used for the transportation of separated plutonium since January 1989.

Mr. Norris: Radioactive material transported in approved packages may be moved through any port. Consignors are under no regulatory obligation to give this information to the Department.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proportion of the research undertaken at his Department's Road Research Laboratory since its inception has been devoted to safety assessment of the transportation of nuclear materials by road.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: None: such research is the responsibility of the consignors.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information on the import and export of plutonium port authorities are required to provide to his Department.

Mr. Norris: None.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he or his officials have had with the European Transport Commissioner or his officials on the import and export of nuclear materials into *(a)* the European Community and *(b)* the United Kingdom.

Mr. MacGregor: None.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent discussions he has had with his German counterparts in regard to the air freighting of plutonium fuel from Germany to Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: No discussions have taken place.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what categories of information relating to the transport of plutonium it is his Department's practice not to publish.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: It is a decision for the consignors whether or not to publish operational details of plutonium transport.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport on what occasions his Department has proposed a preference since June 1986 on the optimum mode of transport for plutonium.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: No such preferences have been expressed.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consideration the Health and Safety Executive has given since 1991 over the transportation of *(a)* plutonium, *(b)* uranium, *(c)* spent nuclear fuel and *(d)* nuclear waste; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The safe transport of radioactive material is a matter for the Department of Transport.

Road Salting

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what monitoring and evaluation Her Majesty's Government have carried out of alternatives to the use of salt for de-icing of roads and pathways; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The Department has commissioned the Transport Research Laboratory to conduct research into alternative de-icing chemicals—including salt with corrosion inhibitors.

The research project has the objective of assessing the performance of alternative de-icing chemicals in relation to their effectiveness as a de-icer, corrosive effect on steels and concrete, skid resistance properties, contamination of the environment, handling and storage characteristics and cost effectiveness.

The project has already assessed five principle alternative de-icers, comprising: calcium chloride, calcium magnesium acetate, urea, glycol and potassium acetate. The original project has been extended to allow completion of research on corrosion inhibitors following an American study on salt additives—commissioned by the United States strategic highways research program. An interim report is scheduled for the end of this month, with a final report due in June 1993.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information his Department has on the affect of salt used during cold weather on *(a)* trees, *(b)* grass verges and *(c)* concrete; what research his Department has commissioned or carried out on these matters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The latest information available to the Department about the effects of de-icing salt on trees and other vegetation is contained in the Forestry Commission bulletin "De-icing Salt Damage to Trees and Shrubs", which was published in 1991. It was commissioned by the Department of the Environment and compiled in consultation with the Department of Transport's environment branch, with reference to earlier Transport and Road Research Laboratory studies on roadside vegetation and the DOT's winter maintenance statement of service and code of practice.

The Forestry Commission is now following up with a survey of salt damage to roadside trees in London, which is partially sponsored by the Department of Transport. A preliminary report has been issued and the final report is due for publication later this month and will be considered by my Department.

The Transport Research Laboratory is also currently carrying out research on alternative de-icing chemicals, as described in my reply to the hon. Member's earlier question today.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will estimate for each of the next 10 years how much will be spent on repairing existing motorway carriages and bridges; if he will estimate what proportion of this expenditure he expects to be attributable partly or wholly to salt penetration; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The amounts to be spent on repairing trunk motorway carriageways and bridges will

depend on the funds available and the continuous reappraisal of priorities for maintenance, renewal and reconstruction in the light of the latest survey and inspection data.

There is no evidence that carriageway repairs will be required as a consequence of salt penetration, but the Department currently estimates that about £700 million will need to be spent over the 10 years from 1993-94 onwards for preventive treatment and repair of concrete bridges on motorways and all-purpose trunk roads to deal with problems associated with salt penetration. This figure could vary depending on the solutions adopted.

The work is being carried out as part of a strategic 15-year bridge rehabilitation programme which is being planned and programmed to ensure that work is carried out at the appropriate time to produce the most cost-effective solutions, and which includes assessment and strengthening of older bridges to current standards as well as work to safeguard bridges against deterioration.

Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list by grade, the number of staff employed by DVLA, Swansea.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The number of staff employed at DVLA, Swansea, on 30 November 1992 was as follows:

	Number
Grade 3	1
Grade 5	3
Senior medical officer	1
Grade 6	6
Medical officer	9
Grade 7	24
Senior executive officer	37
Higher executive officer	117
Executive officer	250
Administrative officer	797
Administrative assistant	1,548
Support, secretarial and technical	288
Total	3,081

Red Route

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what has been the change in the rate of accidents on the pilot red route since its inception; and what are the figures for comparable routes in adjacent London boroughs.

Mr. Norris: Casualties in the pilot corridor have fallen by some 17 per cent. in the 18 months since the start of the scheme, compared with the equivalent period leading up to the launch in January 1991. The latest figures for the boroughs through which the pilot route runs show an average reduction of about 7 per cent.

Airports

Mr. Hasselhurst: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the progress made in the work of the RUCATSE—runway capacity in the south-east—working group on runway capacity in the south-east.

Mr. Norris: The RUCATSE working group has made good progress in its study of the wider implications of the provision of additional runway capacity to serve the south-east. Starting from the 10 sites identified by the Civil Aviation Authority in its report CAP570, four—Bristol/Filton, Bristol/Lulsgate, Bournemouth and Southampton—were judged unlikely to make a substantial contribution to meeting demand and were therefore remitted for further consideration by the group's regional airports sub-group. Further work is being undertaken to assess the contribution that Lydd and Manston could make; and Gatwick, Heathrow, Luton and Stansted are now subject to a detailed examination, covering the notional runway alignments identified in CAP570 and others, environmental impacts, noise and surface access issues. In addition, the promoters of an off-shore airport in the Thames estuary—Marinair—have made a presentation to RUCATSE and have undertaken to do some further detailed work. It is intended that a report on Marinair will be submitted to me in parallel with the final RUCATSE report.

RUCATSE hopes to complete its work by next summer in the form of a report which can be expected to set out the advantages and disadvantages of development at a number of sites. I intend to publish the report as soon as it is ready and at that stage there will be a full public consultation on the group's findings. It will ultimately be for promoters rather than Government to make specific proposals, which would in turn be subject to the normal planning processes.

Ship Design

Mr. Lidlington: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when the Government expects to publish its response to the report "Safety Aspects of Ship Design" from the House of Lords Select Committee on Science and Technology.

Mr. Norris: The Government response to the Select Committee on Science and Technology's report was published today. Copies of the response have been placed in the Libraries.

Vehicle Testing Stations

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has about the current performance of vehicle testing stations; and what criteria he uses to evaluate their performance.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: My right hon. Friend monitors the performance of the vehicle inspectorate against financial and service quality targets quarterly. The performance of individual testing stations is a management matter for the chief executive.

Minicabs

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he has to enforce registration and training upon minicabs in London; if he will set a national vocational qualification to achieve this; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: I am currently considering the future structure of the minicab trade in London in the light of a working party report on the safety of users of taxis and minicabs in London which was presented to me in July. In

the course of my review, I have met with a range of organisations whose views I am taking fully into account. I hope to make an announcement shortly.

Severn Bridge

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many hours delay have been reported on the Severn bridge since 15 November due to repair work; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Emergency repairs to the anti-skid surfacing made it necessary to restrict westbound traffic to one lane only from the afternoon of 30 November until early morning on 4 December. Delays of up to two hours at peak times were reported. There were much shorter delays on 5 December when a lane was again closed for the work to be completed.

There have been no other delays to traffic due to repair work during the period in question.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will bring forward proposals whereby tolls on the Severn bridge will be suspended while travellers are delayed due to road closures because of repairs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The Severn Bridges Act 1992 allows the concessionaire, at his discretion, to suspend tolls. We have no plans to seek amendments to the relevant provisions. Recent repairs to the bridge took less than one week to complete.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will introduce proposals to amend the Severn Bridges Act 1992 in respect of the level of tolls.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: No. The toll levels in the Act were fully debated in Parliament. The current tolls are contributing directly to the provision of the much needed second Severn bridge.

SCOTLAND

School Inspections

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the number and dates of Her Majesty's inspectorate school inspections in each primary and secondary school in Scotland over the last 10 years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is extensive. A copy of it has been placed in the Library. It refers only to inspections of primary and secondary schools which led to published reports since publication started in 1983. The lists do not include inspections of nursery, special or independent schools, colleges of further education or colleges of education which led to published reports within the same period; nor do they include the further inspections conducted 12 to 18 months after each full inspection to follow up the recommendations contained in the published report. In addition, visits have taken place on a regular basis to educational institutions for a range of other purposes including follow-up to specific inquiries, gathering evidence for published reports on various aspects of learning and teaching, monitoring implementation of curricular advice, and the incorporation of further education colleges.

Cunninghame District Council

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will compensate Cunninghame district council because of the error in calculating the authority's non-domestic rate income for 1991-92.

Mr. Lang: Yes. I propose to make an ex-gratia payment of £250,000 to Cunninghame district council towards the additional interest costs which it has incurred, pending an adjustment of revenue support grant, as a result of the fact that, in estimating the council's non-domestic rate income in respect of 1991-92, my Department used incorrect rateable valuation data. The council has accepted my offer of this payment.

Parliamentary approval to this new expenditure will be sought in a supplementary estimate for the revenue support grants, Scotland vote—class XV, vote 20. Pending that approval, this urgent expenditure will be met by a repayable advance from the Contingencies Fund.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Gallie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will announce the 1993-94 grant-aided expenditure figures for each Scottish local authority.

Mr. Lang: The GAE figure for each local authority for 1993-94 is set out in the table. Each authority's allocation of the GAE total has been determined having regard to the client group methodology which is agreed with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities in the distribution committee of the working party on local government finance. The table excludes figures for urban programme GAE which is not allocated to individual authorities. The addition of this amount—£63·255 million—brings the GAE total to the previously announced sum of £5,086·4 million.

Regions and Islands	*GAE 1993-94 (£000s)*
Borders	94,642
Central	220,101
Dumfries and Galloway	131,903
Fife	279,251
Grampian	405,795
Highland	203,988
Lothian	575,445
Strathclyde	1,960,221
Tayside	331,039
Orkney	27,022
Shetland	26,237
Western Isles	43,041
Total	4,298,686

Districts	*GAE 1993-94 (£000s)*
Berwick	2,135
Ettrick and Lauderdale	3,809
Roxburgh	4,035
Tweeddale	1,692
Clackmannan	7,318
Falkirk	18,537
Stirling	12,845
Annandale and Eskdale	4,161
Nithsdale	6,763
Stewartry	2,772
Wigtown	3,669
Dunfermline	17,764

Districts	*(£000s)*
Kirkcaldy	20,941
North East Fife	9,672
Aberdeen	28,435
Banff and Buchan	11,680
Gordon	10,543
Kincardine and Deeside	6,810
Moray	11,660
Badenoch and Strathspey	1,377
Caithness	3,123
Inverness	7,305
Lochaber	2,464
Nairn	1,173
Ross and Cromarty	6,598
Skye and Lochalsh	1,645
Sutherland	1,940
East Lothian	11,995
Edinburgh	62,245
Midlothian	10,876
West Lothian	20,574
Argyll and Bute	10,466
Bearsden and Milngavie	5,258
Clydebank	5,648
Clydesdale	8,363
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	8,373
Cumnock and Doon Valley	5,883
Cunninghame	19,397
Dumbarton	10,233
East Kilbride	10,982
Eastwood	7,413
Glasgow	129,058
Hamilton	14,373
Inverclyde	12,355
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	10,857
Kyle and Carrick	15,688
Monklands	15,299
Motherwell	20,158
Renfrew	29,716
Strathkelvin	11,615
Angus	12,783
Dundee	26,153
Perth and Kinross	17,836
Total	724,459
All Scotland Total	5,023,145

Conifers (River Pollution)

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement regarding the recent finding of a committee of the Forestry Commission on a link between conifer trees and river acidification.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 7 December]:* None of the Forestry Commission's committees has made a recent finding of this kind.

An expert workshop jointly sponsored by the Forestry Commission and the Department of the Environment concluded in June 1990 that the primary cause of surface water acidification was the deposition of airborne sulphur and nitrogen pollutants, but that there was also an association between trees and acidification resulting from the effectiveness of trees in scavenging these airborne pollutants. Whether the latter phenomenon would result in increased surface water acidification depended, however, on the sensitivity of the geology and soil in any given catchment area.

The members of the Forestry Commission's north Scotland regional advisory committee recently considered this and other scientific evidence presented to them in the course of considering planting grant applications over which objections had been raised on environmental grounds. They advised the commissioners that, in their opinion, there was sufficient doubt about the effect that tree planting on the specific sites concerned would have on surface water acidification as to prevent their recommending that the applications should be approved at this stage. In the light of this advice, the Forestry Commissioners have decided to delay taking a decision on these applications pending further monitoring of the sensitivity of the sites to further acid inputs from the atmosphere.

Health Spending

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much of the planned spending on health for 1993-94 will be spent on promotion of health.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 8 December]:* The responsibility for allocating resources to health promotion rests with health boards.

In addition, the Health Education Board for Scotland received resources totalling £6·441 million in 1992-93. The board will shortly be informed of its allocation for 1993-94.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much he expects to save on the 1993-94 health budget from the 1·5 per cent. ceiling on health workers' pay increases.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 8 December]:* There will be no saving on the 1993-94 budget for the national health service in Scotland as a consequence of the ceiling of 1·5 per cent. on pay increases for national health service staff. The effect of this ceiling will be to free resources for direct patient services and investment in new hospitals and clinics.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much of the planned provision for health in 1993-94 will be spent on implementing the patients charter.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 8 December]:* My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made it clear on launching the citizens charter that charters would be taken forward within existing resources. Thus there is no earmarked budget within resources for health in 1993-94 for the continued implementation of the patients charter: all parts of the national health service in Scotland will deploy their allocated resources to develop services in accordance with charter principles.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a breakdown of the planned £744 per head spending on health in Scotland, showing how much will be allocated to *(a)* introduction of trust status for those units which have successfully applied, *(b)* management and administration of trusts, implementation of the patients charter and *(c)* promotion of health and illness prevention.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 8 December]:* It is not possible to provide the analysis requested.

Hospital Beds

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list for every health authority *(a)* the total number of hospital beds and *(b)* the number of acute hospital beds as at March 1991.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 8 December]:* The information requested is shown in the table. The table shows information on bed complement. This is the number of beds approved by health boards. Beds in day bed units, borrowed beds and temporary beds are excluded.

NHS—bed complement; all and acute hospital beds; by health board of treatment; as at 31 March 1991

	Bed complement	
	All specialties	*Acute specialties*
SCOTLAND	52,738	16,538
Argyll and Clyde	4,130	1,282
Ayrshire and Arran	2,937	1,104
Borders	939	352
Dumfries and Galloway	1,407	451
Fife	3,006	806
Forth Valley	2,871	641
Grampian	5,149	1,419
Greater Glasgow	12,667	3,978
Highland	1,885	717
Lanarkshire	4,938	1,578
Lothian	7,633	2,374
Orkney	155	61
Shetland	148	51
Tayside	4,651	1,636
Western Isles	222	88

Health Service Trusts

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much of the planned provision for health in 1993-94 will be spent on the introduction of trusts.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 8 December]:* Spending in 1993-94 on the introduction of trusts will depend on the number of expressions of interest in trust status and the number of applications which are subsequently approved.

Abortion

Ms. Janet Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many NHS hospitals in Scotland providing day-care abortion services are offering early medical abortion services in the first nine weeks of pregnancy with mifepristone and prostaglandin.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 9 December]:* From April to December 1991, five hospitals performed early medical abortions in the first nine weeks of pregnancy with mifepristone, and with or without prostaglandin.

Forestry Commission Land

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the Forestry Commission lands in Scotland already sold for which no access agreements have been concluded.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 25 November]:* The information is as follows:

Region	*Name of Woodland*	*Area (Hectares)*
Strathclyde	Carrick (part)	68
Dumfries and Galloway	Springkell (part)	19
Dumfries and Galloway	Dromore	86

This list does not include those woodlands which were sold before the arrangements for securing continued public access to Forestry Commission woodlands after sale were introduced in October 1991, nor those sales which were too far advanced at that time to be included for consideration under those arrangements.

EMPLOYMENT

Wages Councils

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will place in the Library a copy of the research commissioned by her Department on the effect of the abolition of wages councils.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: There has been no recent research into the effects of abolition of wages councils. However, in the early 1980s the Department published research into six councils, five of which were abolished by Labour, and copies will be placed in the Library, as soon as this can be arranged.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations she has received from people in Wales regarding the abolition of wages councils; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: There is no separate information available about representations received from people in different parts of Great Britain.

Disabled Trainees

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will make it her policy to ring-fence money for training and enterprise councils to secure specialist equipment to assist disabled trainees with their placements.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The funding arrangements between the Employment Department and TECs take into account the higher costs incurred in providing support arrangements, for example, specialist equipment.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has no plans to change these arrangements which give TECs the flexibility to meet the needs of individual providers and trainees as they arise.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will make it her policy to instruct training and enterprise councils to give guaranteed training placements to all unemployed disabled people.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Under employment training, people with disabilities who are unemployed qualify for places regardless of the length of their unemployment and are included in the aim group. People with disabilities will have a priority for places in training for work, to be introduced in April 1993. Under youth training, the Government extend their guarantee of a place to those young people who are aged over 18 years who were not previously able to join the programme because of disability or ill-health, or who had to leave the programme for the same reasons and are seeking re-entry.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will instruct training and enterprise councils to undertake local needs surveys on an annual basis in order to ascertain numbers of disabled potential trainees.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Training and enterprise councils (TECs) are required to assess the training needs of their local area each year in consultation with other local interests including the Employmnent Service. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State ensures that, in particular, the needs of people with disabilities are taken into account before a TEC's annual business plan is agreed.

Disabled Employees

Mr. Elletson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many *(a)* physically disabled and *(b)* sensorily disabled people are employed in her Department; and what percentage they are of the total work force.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information is not available in the form requested, but 1,964 registered disabled people —3·3 per cent. of the total work force—were employed in July 1992, the latest date for which figures are available. The Department also employs other people with disabilities who have chosen not to register.

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what unspent revenues TECs had at the end of 1991-92; and what percentage of their overall budget this represented.

Mr. McLoughlin: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is unable to respond on behalf of my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and for Wales, who now have responsibility for the delivery of programmes in those areas.

TECs in England are required, under the operating agreement, to produce audited accounts within four months of the end of the financial year.

These accounts reveal the total operating surplus as at the end of the financial year and on a cumulative basis; however, this information is not published as a percentage of the overall budget.

The accounts for the financial year ending 31 March 1992 are now in the public domain and available from individual TECs.

The need for this information on an aggregated basis has been recognised and the format of the Employment Department appropriation account for 1993-94 onwards has been amended to take this into account.

Trade Unions

Mr. Ottaway: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will make a statement about the future of the schemes which subsidise trade union ballots and training for trade union officials.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I have reviewed the operation of the trade union ballot funding scheme, which allows unions to reclaim certain costs associated with secret postal ballots, and the trade union education and training grant, which supports training for trade union officials and representatives.

The ballot funding scheme was set up in 1980 to encourage the voluntary practice of secret balloting at a time when there were no statutory requirements for unions to ballot their members before calling strikes or when electing their leaders. Since then, there have been major changes in industrial relations law and practice.

Secret ballots of union members on the major issues affecting their interests are now generally accepted and in the most important respects are required by law. The scheme now operates largely as a public subsidy for ballots which unions are required to carry out to meet their obligations under the law. The Government therefore believe that the time has come to bring the scheme to an end.

The trade union education and training grant was first paid in 1976 and has subsequently been renewed on an annual basis. It was intended to provide training for union officials to ensure that they were well qualified to carry out their collective bargaining duties, with a view to improving industrial relations and reducing strikes. Industrial relations have improved greatly, and strikes are now at their lowest level since records began. At the same time, fewer than 50 per cent. of employees now have their pay determined, directly or indirectly, by negotiations between employers and trade unions. More and more employees negotiate their pay directly with their employer on an individual basis, taking account of performance and skills. In these circumstances, the Government believe that there is now no justification for continuing to support this training from public funds.

However, I have decided against immediate abolition of these schemes. Funding for both schemes will therefore be phased out over three years to allow trade unions time to find alternative sources of finance for these activities.

In 1993-94, the Government will meet the cost of 75 per cent. of each qualifying claim under the ballot funding scheme, and the trade union education and training grant will be set at 75 per cent. of the 1992-93 per capita figure. In 1994-95 these levels of support will be reduced to 50 per cent. and in 1995-96 they will be reduced to 25 per cent. Both schemes will cease to operate from 1 April 1996.

DEFENCE

Used Tyres and Waste Oil

Mr. Jopling: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list those defence establishments which make a practice of disposing of used tyres and waste oil by burning into the atmosphere; what effect he estimates this practice has on the environment; and what steps he intends to take to eliminate this practice.

Mr. Aitken: Used tyres and work oil are disposed of not by burning but in accordance with the duty of core requirements relating to waste embodied in the Environmental Protection Act 1990 (EPA), through contracts with appropriately qualified contractors. The only exceptions to this policy are small amounts of both materials which may be burnt during fire-fighting training. This is carried out under strictly controlled conditions and is permitted under the exemptions granted to my Department from the statutory nuisance provisions of the EPA.

Reactor Cores

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) *Official Report*, 27 November, column *895*, he will set out the route used to transport the nuclear core from Rosyth to Sellafield.

Mr. Aitken: For security reasons, it is not our practice to comment on the routes used in the movement of nuclear submarine reactor cores.

Channel Islands (War Records)

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many records from the small number of files relating to the wartime Nazi occupation of the Channel islands that have been held by his Department on extended closure have been passed to prosecuting authorities in the United Kingdom or in Germany; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It has been the practice of the Ministry of Defence to make all papers, whether open or closed, available to any official prosecuting authority investigating alleged war crimes.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many of the small number of files relating to the wartime Nazi occupation of the Channel islands, that have been held by the Ministry of Defence on extended closure, relate in any way to allegations of war crimes or atrocities that may have been committed by *(a)* United Kingdom citizens and *(b)* non-United Kingdom citizens on the island of Alderney; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The small number of papers relating to the wartime Nazi occupation of the Channel islands still held by my Department remain properly closed under the provisions of section 5(1) of the Public Records Acts of 1958 and 1967.

It has been the practice of successive Governments not to disclose the contents of records which are so withheld from public release, but the papers will be made available to any official prosecuting authority investigating alleged war crimes.

Royal Naval Stores Depot, Eaglescliffe

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if a decision has been taken on the proposal to relocate 182 Ministry of Defence headquarters' posts from the royal naval stores depot at Eaglescliffe in Cleveland.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My Department has consulted very thoroughly on the proposal to colocate 182 headquarters posts currently at Eaglescliffe with the integrated headquarters of the new Naval Support Command in the Bath region. During the course of the consultation process I visited the establishment to see the facilities there and to hear the views of management, staff and trade unions. I have studied very carefully the helpful comments and views expressed by them, hon. Members and others. I have concluded that the proposal to move these posts in 1995-96, which is expected to produce net savings around £12 million over 10 years, represents the best value for money for the taxpayer as well as producing real operational benefits. Discussions will now take place with the trades unions on implementation of the moves in 1995-96. The royal naval stores depot itself will not be affected.

Redundancies

Dr. Goodson-Wickes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current position on redundancies in the *(a)* Royal Navy, *(b)* Army and *(c)* Royal Air Force; and if he will make a further statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I announced the second phase of the Royal Navy's redundancy programme in my answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Wimbledon (Dr. Goodson-Wickes) on 3 June 1992, *Official Report*, columns *568-69*. A total of 436 officers and 836 ratings have now been selected for redundancy. The vast majority are volunteers although, regrettably, it has been necessary to select 69 officers and 80 ratings who did not put their names forward. All individuals have been notified and will leave between 1 April and 30 November 1993. The need for a third phase is under careful consideration.

For the Army, as foreshadowed in my answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham (Mr. Merchant) on 8 July 1992, *Official Report*, column *185*, a total of 1,311 officers and 5,150 soldiers will be selected for redundancy in 1993-94. I am pleased to say that all the 5,150 soldiers to be selected have volunteered for redundancy. Almost 60 per cent. of the officers will also be volunteers, but it will unfortunately be necessary to select 623 officers for compulsory redundancy. All those declared redundant will be notified on 25 February 1993. The size of the third phase for 1994-95 will be considered in due course.

The first tranche of the RAF redundancy scheme that I announced in my answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire) on 22 May 1992, *Official Report*, column *292*, was oversubscribed by applicants and no compulsory redundancies are necessary to meet the full target of 750 places in 1993-94. In addition, some 210 individuals who also volunteered for redundancy have indicated their willingness to leave before 31 March 1993. The size of the second tranche of the scheme in 1994-95 will be reviewed next year in the light of the latest manpower forecasts.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 11 December 1992

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Unconventional Medicine

Mr. Tredinnick: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, what consideration his Department has given to COST project B4—"Unconventional Medicine", originated in Switzerland; and if he will make it his policy to consider supporting any formal proposal submitted to the United Kingdom Government.

Mr. Jackson: My Department has recently been notified that COST project B4 is now formally open for signature. The proposal has been circulated and we have already received a response from an interested party. As with all COST projects, the United Kingdom will need to be satisfied that prospective participants will be able to fulfil their commitment for the full term of the project before undertaking to sign the memorandum of understanding.

Royal Family

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what publicity services relevant to the royal family are covered by the Central Office of Information; when COI became responsible for this expenditure; and from what sources it was financed before it became a charge on the COI.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Central Office of Information currently provides press liaison facilities to the royal household under class XVIII vote 15.

The chief executive of the Central Office of Information informs me that he has established that such services have been provided since financial year 1948-49 but that without disproportionate cost he has been unable to establish what arrangements, if any, existed before that year.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Retrials

Dame Angela Rumbold: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what new arrangements have been put in place to ensure that section 8 of the Criminal Appeals Act 1968 is complied with so that retrials are listed within two months.

Mr. John M. Taylor: No new arrangements have been made by the Lord Chancellor's Department because I am satisfied with the existing procedures by which the Registrar of Criminal Appeals himself immediately notifies the chief clerk of the Crown court centre concerned of retrials ordered by the Court of Appeal and of the necessity to arraign the defendant within two months. Existing departmental instructions are that defendants in such cases must be arraigned within two months. Listing guidelines to be issued in the new year, which will cover a wide range of subjects, will re-emphasise the necessity of dealing with such cases expeditiously.

Private Prosecutions (Legal Costs)

Mr. Morley: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what are the hourly rates which apply to the taxing of legal rates when costs are awarded to individuals who successfully pursue private prosecutions; what account is taken in such cases of the actual rates charged for legal costs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: There are no set hourly rates applied to these cases. Determining officers have to assess what is considered to be reasonably sufficient to compensate the applicant for any expenses properly incurred by him in the proceedings. Thus an order that a private prosecutor's costs be paid from central funds may not be a complete indemnity against all the costs incurred, whatever their nature.

Repossession Proceedings

Mr. Battle: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what were the numbers of *(a)* actions entered for repossession, *(b)* possession orders made and *(c)* suspended orders made for the years ended (i) April 1979, (ii) June 1987, (iii) October 1991 and (iv) October 1992 by *(x)* court circuit in England and Wales and *(y)* county court in England and Wales.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The 1978-79 and 1986-87 figures are not available. Because of the lengthy nature of the other material, I will separately write to the hon. Member with the information requested and place a copy of the data in the House of Commons Library.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what were the numbers of *(a)* actions entered for repossession, *(b)* possession orders made and *(c)* suspended orders made for (i) November 1991 to 1992 and (ii) May to October 1992, (x) by court circuit in England and Wales and (y) by county court in England and Wales.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Because of the lengthy nature of the material, I will separately write to the hon. Member with the information requested and place a copy of the data in the House of Commons Library.

Domestic Violence

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, pursuant to his oral answer of 30 November, *Official Report*, columns 19-20, when he is proposing to introduce legislation on the matter of domestic violence; and which organisations he is consulting on this matter.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor is considering the Law Commission's recommendations for reform of the law governing civil remedies for domestic violence in consultation with other interested Departments. He has no immediate plans for legislation but he welcomes any views on the appropriate response to these recommendations.

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, pursuant to his oral answer of 30 November, *Official Report*, columns 19-20, what inquiries his Department is making into the question of domestic violence and its effects on women; and what consultations he has had with law centres on this matter.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor is considering the Law Commission's recommendations for reform of the law governing civil remedies for domestic violence and how they would affect women in consultation with other interested Departments. The Law Commission consulted widely before reporting and the Government have received some further comments since the publication of the Law Commission's recommendations. The Lord Chancellor welcomes any views, including those of law centres, on the appropriate response to these recommendations.

Legal Aid

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what are the estimated savings from figures previously projected for 1993-94 of the cuts proposed to expenditure announced in his answer of 12 November, *Official Report*, columns *863-64*, in respect of *(a)* the reduction of the civil legal aid lower disposable income limit, *(b)* the increase from one quarter to one third in the contribution taken from income above the lower disposable income limit and below the upper disposable income limit, *(c)* the proposed changes from 1 April 1993 to green form legal advice and *(d)* the proposed changes in financial eligibility to criminal legal aid announced in the same parliamentary answer.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Government's expenditure plans 1992-93 to 1994-95 for the Lord Chancellor's and Law Officers Departments [Cm. 1910, published 14 February 1992] showed planned expenditure on legal aid in 1993-94 of £885 million. Estimated outturn for 1992-93 is £1100 million. The new plan for 1993-94 is for expenditure of £1285 million. Without the changes to the financial eligibility conditions for civil legal aid and to the level of contributions which were announced on 12 November 1992 [House of Commons *Official Report*, columns *863-64*] expenditure in 1993-94 would have risen by a further £39.5 million and without the changes to legal advice and assistance by a further £3.7 million. I do not expect the changes to criminal legal aid to have a significant effect on expenditure.

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will give the timetable for the Lord Chancellor's review of financial eligibility for legal aid following the announcements in his answer of 12 November, *Official Report*, columns *863-64*; what is the current composition of the review team; and on what dates the review team has met since 1 January.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor will shortly issue a consultation paper on changes to criminal legal aid regulations. This consultation will complete the criminal stage of the financial conditions review. The responses to the consultation paper issued at the end of the civil stage of the review indicated that there was no consensus in favour of the proposals put forward. In the light of that, and of the plans for legal aid eligibility generally which were announced on 12 November, the Lord Chancellor has decided that it would not be appropriate to pursue the civil proposals for the time being. The third stage of the review was to have covered financial eligibility for advice and assistance and legal aid in matrimonial cases. Against the current background, including the Lord Chancellor's consideration of the report of the Law Commission on the ground for divorce, he has decided that a separate review of financial eligibility in this area would not be appropriate. The team conducting the review is composed of officials of the Lord Chancellor's Department, who work together on a regular basis.

Domicile Law

Mr. Renton: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department whether, following the representations he has received, he will consider not proceeding with changes in the law of domicile.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Only a few of the representations on the Law Commission report on the law of domicile call for it not to be implemented, and the Government's intention to introduce legislation, which was announced by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, when he was Attorney-General, *Official Report*, 17 October 1991, column 177, is unchanged. My noble and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor is considering the representations which have been made on specific aspects of the report.

EDUCATION

Private Sector Colleges

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement on his Department's policy on the Higher Education Funding Council funding for private sector colleges.

Mr. Forman: Under the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 the Higher Education Funding Council for England is empowered to fund only universities, higher education corporations and designated institutions. My right hon. Friend does not currently designate new institutions because public funding for them would have to be found at the expense of existing higher education institutions.

Royal Holloway College

Mr. Trend: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what information Royal Holloway college supplied to his Department through the court of the university of London in respect of its financial needs for preservation, refurbishment and reservicing of its grade 1 listed buildings for the period 1989 to 2000.

Mr. Forman: My right hon. Friend has received no financial information about the Royal Holloway college's grade 1 buildings, either from the college or through the court of the university of London. This is a matter for the university of London and the college, involving the Universities Funding Council as necessary. Higher education institutions are autonomous bodies responsible for their own financial affairs.

Engineers

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what studies his Department has carried out to assess future demand by *(a)* British industry and *(b)* the teaching profession for (i) engineers in general and (ii) electrical engineers in particular; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forman: The Department has not carried out a specific study to assess future demand for engineers by British industry or the teaching profession. As announced in the Government's White Paper "Higher Education: Meeting The Challenge" (Cm 114, 1987), the Department participated in the Interdepartmental Review which reported on prospective needs for new graduates in general by industry, commerce and the public services ("Highly Qualified People: Supply and Demand" HMSO 1990). The Engineering Council is currently undertaking a review of the formation of engineers. One part of this review will address needs, demands and supply of engineers, and concentrate on industrial and economic issues. I look forward to the report of this work—expected in spring 1993.

ACCOMMODATION AND WORKS COMMITTEE

Energy Bill

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Chairman of the Accommodation and Works Committee what steps have been taken to reduce the energy bill for the Palace of Westminster and its precincts.

Mr. Powell: As part of a continuing programme of energy-saving measures in the Palace of Westminster and the parliamentary estate, low-energy light fittings have been installed in many areas. Where these have been installed they have contributed over the past two years to savings of some 65 per cent. in the consumption of electricity. During the same period, over 300 "occupancy sensors" have been installed, which automatically switch off lights when areas are vacated. Old style steam radiators are being replaced by modern low-temperature hot-water radiators. All new radiators are fitted with thermostatic valves; and all pipework, fittings and valves are being insulated to reduce heat loss.

EMPLOYMENT

Redundancy Pay

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the level of the current redundancy payment recoverable from Government funds; and what it would be if it had been increased each year since its introduction by the levels of *(a)* earnings and *(b)* prices.

Mr. McLoughlin: The rebate recoverable by employers against statutory redundancy payments was abolished in January 1990.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Benefit Claims (Ex-service Personnel)

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what assessment he has made of the implications of the development of commercial agencies which propose to charge fees in order to pursue claims for benefit from ex-service personnel.

Miss Widdecombe: There is nothing to prevent an individual or commercial agency charging a fee to ex-service personnel for the provision of advice on claims for benefit. However, such advice on social security benefits is available free from the Benefits Agency and on war pensions from the War Pensions Directorate and a number of ex-service organisations. It is a matter of personal choice which service is used.

Benefit Disqualification

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of those disqualified from receiving benefit because of dismissal from their jobs were refused benefits for less than the maximum period in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Burt: The information requested is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Disability Allowances

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the total spent on advertising of the disability living allowances and the disability working allowances *(a)* before their introduction and *(b)* in every month since then.

Mr. Scott: The total cost of advertising in the press and on television before the introduction of the new benefits in April was £3,044,909.

The latest figures for advertising month by month since then are in the table.

	£
April	Nil
May	Nil
June	240,740
July	Nil
August	Nil
September	587
October	2,144

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) when the chief executive of the Benefits Agency will reply to the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford's letter concerning the delay in processing the disability living allowance claim of *(a)* R. Collumbell, *(b)* Ms. McVitie, *(c)* P. Morgan, *(d)* R. Edwards, *(e)* B. Siblon, *(f)* L. Heat and *(g)* S. Goodwin;

(2) when the chief executive of the Benefits Agency will reply to the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford's letter concerning the delay in processing the disability living allowance claim of the people with NI numbers *(a)* SM290692B, *(b)* JE542286C, *(c)* WK555651A, *(d)* KB331945D, *(e)* JE466288A, *(f)* ZW558243D and *(g)* ZX002165B.

Mr. Scott: The administration of disability living allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from M. Bichard to Ms. Joan Ruddock, dated 10 December 1992:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Questions to the Secretary of State for Social Security concerning your correspondence about claims to Disability Living Allowance for R. Collumbell, Ms. McVitie, P. Morgan, R. Edwards, B. Siblon, L. Heat, S. Goodwin and those with NI numbers SM290692B, JE542286C, WK555651A, KB331945D, JE466288A, ZW558243D and ZX002165B.

I am now in a position to confirm that adjudication officers have made decisions on all but one of the claims. The case outstanding is waiting for further evidence from the customer. I have already replied separately, and in greater detail, about each case.

I offer my sincere apologies for any delay in dealing with the claims and also for the delay in replying to your correspondence. My letter of 19 October to all MPs set out the problems we have encountered since the successful launch of the new benefit and the positive steps taken to improve the situation.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the *Official Report*. Copies are also being placed in the Library.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Television Licences

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many people were affected by the change in television licence rules for those living in sheltered housing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: This is a matter for which the Department of National Heritage is now responsible. People who had the concession when the regulations were changed in 1988 have kept it. The regulations included a provision which preserved the rights of existing beneficiaries for their lifetime, provided they continued to live in accommodation which would have qualified under the old regulations.

PRIME MINISTER

Agencies

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list all Next Steps agencies currently operating and all new agencies expected to be introduced before the end of 1993.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply. Full information on all existing agencies and currently announced candidates was included in the Next Steps Annual Review 1992, published on 2 December (Cm. 2111), a copy of which has been placed in the House of Commons Library.

EC Council Agendas

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Prime Minister if he will ensure that the agenda for each meeting of the EC Council is published in detail at least seven days in advance, and that this information is made available to hon. Members.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply. The monthly business statement printed in the *Official Report* gives details of all forthcoming Council meetings that month and the items likely to be on the agenda of each.

This generally provides a reliable guide, particularly on the main issues to be discussed, although the final agenda may be subject to change up to the day of the meeting itself.

Council of Europe and WEU

Sir John Hunt: To ask the Prime Minister if he will place in the Library a copy of the information bulletin on the activities of the United Kingdom delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the Assembly of Western European Union.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply. I have done so today.

EC Regional Funds

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister what discussions he has held with his counterparts in the European Council on the possible ways of disbursement of funds under the proposed committee on the regions to be established under the treaty of European Union.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply. Article 198(a) of the Maastricht treaty makes it clear that the Committee of the Regions is an advisory body. It will therefore have no responsibility for disbursing funds.

Disclosure of Information

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister what assessment Her Majesty's Government have made of the treaty on European Union in regard to its proposals to increase provisions for prohibition on the disclosure of information from the institutions of the European Community.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply. The Maastricht treaty says nothing on the question of disclosure of information. A declaration adopted at Maastricht calls on the Commission to report to the Council of Ministers on measures designed to improve public access to information held by Community institutions.

In February 1992 the Commission proposed a Council regulation on the security of classified information. As my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster told the hon. Member on 7 July, the Government consider the draft regulation in its present form to be unworkable.

Somalia

Mr. Michael: To ask the Prime Minister what offer of help in Somalia his Government have made in the light of President Bush's offer of military intervention on the subsequent decision of the UN Security Council.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply. We are providing two RAF C130 transport aircraft accompanied by supporting personnel, to the unified military task force in Somalia. On 4 December, my noble Friend Baroness Chalker of Wallasey, the Minister for Overseas Development, announced a further £4·5 million of

bilateral humanitarian aid to Somalia for immediate disbursement once conditions permit. This brings United Kingdom aid to Somalia this year to nearly £31·5 million, including our share of EC aid.

Ministers (Legal Costs)

Mr. Morley: To ask the Prime Minister what assessment is made of value for money provided by the level of legal charges to Ministers in connection with personal matters where part of the costs are met from public funds; and if he will make it his policy to limit reimbursement of expenses in such cases to the limits applied by taxing authorities in legal aid cases.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply. The Government are always concerned to ensure value for money in all their activities.

Ministerial Dress

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: To ask the Prime Minister what advice is given to ministers concerning appropriate standards of dress for Ministers representing Her Majesty's Government in acts of remembrance for service men and women killed on active service.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply. There is no general guidance. The normal practice is for Ministers to follow whatever indication is given by the organisation responsible in each case.

HEALTH

Homeopathic Medicines

Mr. Tredinnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will provide a comparative average costing of an NHS homeopathic medicine prescription with that of an NHS standard drug prescription.

Mr. Sackville: The net ingredient cost per prescription of a national health service homeopathic medicine prescription in 1991 was £3·33 compared with £6·20 for an NHS standard drug prescription. These figures are for prescriptions dispensed by community pharmacists and appliance contractors, dispensing doctors and prescriptions submitted by prescribing doctors for items personally administered in England.

Financial Information Project Systems Ltd.

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the payments made to Financial Information Project Systems Ltd. by the West Midlands regional health authority.

Dr. Mawhinney: The question of payments to Financial Information Project Systems Ltd. is currently under investigation by the district auditor.

Paediatric Neurologists

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many paediatric neurologists there are in the West Midlands regional health authority; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: There is one paediatric neurologist in the West Midlands regional health authority, according to the Department of Health's medical and dental census at 30 September 1991.

There is currently a rapid expansion in the number of consultants specialising in paediatrics, of which paediatric neurology is a small sub-specialty. Appointment of medical staff is a matter for local employing authorities.

Dr. Kypros Loucas

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on her Department's policy concerning reports from the Mental Health Act Commission on the employment of Dr. K. Loucas as psychiatrist at Broadmoor hospital and Horton hospital; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Members for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) and for Rochdale (Ms. Lynne) on 10 December.

NHS Management Executive

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what were the production and distribution costs of the NHS Management Executive's annual report for 1990, 1991 and 1992; and how many reports were printed in each of those years.

Dr. Mawhinney: The chief executive of the National Health Service Management Executive, in describing the operations of the £26 billion NHS, produced an annual report at a total cost including design, printing and distribution amounting to £107,241. 35,000 copies of the report were distributed, mostly in the NHS. No report was published in 1990 or 1991.

Private Sector Work

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the updating of the survey of private sector work across the country.

Mr. Sackville *[holding answer 9 December 1992]*: I assume that the hon. Member is referring to research into the number and type of operations carried out in the independent sector. We have no plans at present to commission further research into clinical activity in the independent sector.

Health Promotion

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on her proposals for the funding of health promotion among general practitioners from July 1993 showing (i) the cash limit on health promotion, (ii) the maximum income available under her proposed banding scheme, (iii) her assumptions on the number of general practitioners qualifying for payment in each band and (iv) her plans for consultation.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 30 November 1992]*: The profession has been consulted, initially on proposals in principle and subsequently on the details of new health promotion arrangements in the general practitioner contract, and has agreed to the proposed new scheme. Action is now in hand to finalise arrangements for implementation. We expect funding of the order of £80

million for Great Britain to be available for the scheme on a full year basis from the totality of resources available for GP remuneration. Payment levels within this will be finalised in the light of further consultation between the Health Departments and the profession once better information is available on take-up of the new scheme.

DEFENCE

Cheshire Regiment

Mr. Miller: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received from members of the Cheshire Regiment serving in Bosnia, whose families are in Germany, regarding the reduction of allowances; and what action he intends to take.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Service personnel based in Germany are paid an allowance in view of the high cost of living there. A similar allowance is not necessary in Bosnia, where food and accommodation charges are waived, but members of the Cheshire Regiment retain a significant element (70 per cent. for married personnel, 40 per cent. for single personnel) of the German allowance in recognition of their continuing financial commitments in Germany.

RAF Chivenor

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many sorties have been flown from RAF Chivenor in each of the last six years.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Defence will write to the hon. Member.

Army Training Land

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what response he has given to the National Audit Office report entitled "Ministry of Defence: Management and Control of Army Training Land"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: By convention, National Audit Office reports are agreed with Departments before publication. The report is to the House of Commons and it is for the Public Accounts Committee (PAC), in the first instance, to decide whether to take evidence from the Department and report further. The Accounting Officer will speak for the Department should the PAC call him to give evidence.

Operation Granby

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 16 November, *Official Report*, column *47*, what were the original amounts of money expected from each country contributing towards the costs of Operation Granby.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Cash contributions were entirely voluntary and the Government are most grateful for the generosity of those who contributed.

Historic Buildings

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 1 December, *Official Report*, column *168*, what proposals he has to improve the treatment within and around Bruce's Craigie hall outside Edinburgh.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Craigie hall is an historic building and is subject to regular inspection and maintenance. This is done in agreement with Historic Scotland.

Shropshire Regimental History Museum

Mr. Conway: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what advice and assistance he has given to the trustees of the Shropshire regimental history museum following the IRA bombing of Shrewsbury castle.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Shropshire regimental museum in Shrewsbury castle doese not belong to the Ministry of Defence; security advice is therefore the responsibility of the police. Nevertheless, the Ministry of Defence recognises that such museums contain property belonging to regiments and offers to supplement police advice where practicable.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Drug Trafficking (Confiscation)

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 19 October, *Official Report*, column *262*, when he expects to secure the £20 million which is still outstanding and which has been ordered to be confiscated under the Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986; what proposals he intends to introduce to improve the confiscation procedures of the Act; and what additional guidance will be provided to magistrates courts by his Department.

Mr. John M. Taylor: I have been asked to reply.

The Criminal Justice Bill currently before Parliament, for which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department has lead responsibility, contains measures which will improve the enforcement of confiscation orders. In particular, a county court will be able to appoint receivers, which should facilitate their use, and the debt arising from the non-payment of a confiscation order will not be expunged even if a term of imprisonment in default is served.

That apart, as my right hon. Friend said on 19 October, the realisation of confiscation orders can be an extended process, and where, for example, orders are the subject of appeal or offenders have been given extended time to pay, there will inevitably be some delay before magistrates courts can bring their powers of enforcement to bear. Additional guidance to magistrates courts on the operation of the existing and proposed legislation is under consideration.

President-elect Clinton

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he first knew that inquiries had been made by his Department into whether Mr. Clinton had at some stage applied for United Kingdom citizenship.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) on 9 December, *Official Report*, columns *662-63*, to which I have nothing to add.

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department who was the most senior official involved in his Department who knew that inquiries were being made to see if Mr. Clinton had at any time applied for United Kingdom citizenship.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The head of information of my Department.

Police (Firearms)

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many armed officers are involved in the current action to stop terrorism in London; and if he will make a statement;

(2) where and by whom the decision was taken to allow armed officers to set up road blocks in London; and if he will make a statement.

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what constraints have been placed on the use of sub-machine guns and other firearms by the police in setting up road blocks; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The decision whether to deploy armed officers in support of police operations is an operational matter and as such falls within the discretion of chief officers. A copy of the Home Office Guidelines for the Police on the Issue and Use of Firearms, which apply in such circumstances, has been placed in the Library. It would not be in the public interest to reveal the number of armed officers deployed in counter-terrorist operations in London.

Crime and Drug Prevention

Mr. Sumberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what crime prevention and drug prevention initiatives from his Department are presently operating in the Greater Manchester area.

Mr. Jack: The Home Office is currently operating safer cities crime prevention projects in Salford and Rochdale which between them have so far spent £17·6 million in supporting over 2,800 local crime prevention projects.

As part of their response to the Department's initiative on car crime prevention year, Greater Manchester Police have organised and participated in a number of projects, including the promotion of vehicle watch schemes, the distribution of information packs on car security, the setting up of a special police unit to tackle car crime, and the development of an autocrime project aimed at certain secondary schools. In the 12 months ending June 1992 Greater Manchester police reported a fall in the level of car crime.

The Department has encouraged those districts within the Greater Manchester area which have successfully bid for city challenge status—Manchester (Hulme), Bolton and Wigan—to develop crime prevention strategies and programmes as part of their action plans.

Since February of this year we have also operated local drugs prevention teams in Salford and Manchester, which so far, including their efforts for European drugs prevention week in November, have supported 39 local projects and committed some £128,000 in grants.

Betting Shops

Mr. McKelvey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consultations he has held with betting shop employees on the extension of their working hours; and with what results.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) on 8 December 1992, *Official Report*, column *552*.

Criminal Justice Act 1991

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he intends to bring into effect the provisions of the Criminal Justice Act 1991 relating to curfew orders and electronic monitoring.

Mr. Jack: Current spending priorities do not permit the early introduction of the arrangements under sections 12 and 13 of the Criminal Justice Act 1991 for monitoring curfew orders. Before determining the way forward, I intend first carefully to review and assess the operation of existing community penalties as a whole in the new context created by the Act.

Squatting

Mr. Raymond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he plans to introduce changes to legislation affecting squatting in residential property; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: At present, I have nothing to add to the reply that I gave on 17 June 1992, *Official Report*, columns *522-25*, in answer to questions from the hon. Member on this subject. Work is continuing to fulfil the objectives outlined in those questions.

Racial Discrimination

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions he has had with other EC member states on introducing legislation against racial discrimination; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Government are opposed absolutely to discrimination on grounds of race, and this position is reflected when such matters come up in discussions with our European partners. The legislative arrangements in other member states, however, are a matter for them, taking account of their particular circumstances.

Advisory Council on Race Relations

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the names of those he has appointed to his Advisory Council on Race Relations and the organisations they represent; on what matters the council has given recent advice; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The membership of the Advisory Council on Race Relations is 22. Membership falls into two categories; individual members appointed for a two-year period by the Home Secretary, and representative members who are nominated by certain designated

organisations. The individual members are Miss Salome Asamoah, Mrs. Salma Ahmed, Mr. David Bryan, Mr. Thomas Chan, Mr. Chris Kavaliares, Dr. Zaka Khan, Mr. Ravi Mooneeram, Dr. Dwain Neil, Mr. Shantilal Ruparell, Mr. Iqbal Sacranie, Mr. Tufail Shaheen, Mr. Jack Shieh, Ms. Anesta Weekes and Mr. Ranbir Singh Suri. Representative members are nominated by the Commission for Racial Equality, the TUC, the CBI, the London Boroughs Associations, the Association of Metropolitan Authorities, the Association of County Councils, the Association of District Councils and the National Association of Racial Equality Councils.

Recent topics for discussion have included immigration; race relations and the armed forces; community languages and culture; housing; ethnic minority appointments to public bodies; the terms of reference of the advisory council; the citizens charter; and ethnic monitoring in the criminal justice system.

I attach great importance to the work of the advisory council and welcome its contribution to current issues of policy.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Somalia

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress he has made since September in achieving continuity and speed in the work of mine clearance in the north of Somalia, Republic of Somaliland.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: In 1991 Britain made available £300,000 as its contribution to a multi-donor mine clearance operation in northern Somalia, which ended in November 1992. There have been problems in funding the operation. Following interventions by ODA, proposals are being formulated to extend the operation until February 1993 and to resolve the funding difficulties. Meanwhile, we have committed an additional £40,000 to ensure that operations continue. A UNDP mine-clearance coordinator is currently preparing proposals for a new mine clearance project in northern Somalia from February 1993. We shall consider this in due course.

World Bank

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the annual United Kingdom contribution to the World bank.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The United Kingdom's contribution to the World Bank Group in 1990-91 was £159 million and in 1991-92 £228 million.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the current position on the 10th replenishment of the World bank's International Development Association.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Negotiations on the size of the tenth replenishment of the International Development Association are continuing. The next meeting is on 14-15 December.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what response he has made to the Wappenhans report on the success rate of World Bank projects.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have welcomed bank management's initial positive response, and its intention to propose further changes to the bank's policies and practices to improve effectiveness.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what voting share the United Kingdom has on the World bank.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The United Kingdom's voting share at the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development is 5·35 per cent.; and at the International Development Association 5·39 per cent.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what policy guidance is given to the British executive director of the World bank.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Our executive director to the International Monetary Fund and the World bank is provided with policy guidance as appropriate.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to make available access to information about World bank affairs along the lines of that given in the United States under the Pelosi amendment.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: At present the World bank circulates monthly an operational summary containing information about all projects which it is considering for possible financing, and a summary of environmental assessments. As I told the hon. Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Denham) on 8 December, this is available in the House of Commons Library. It also publishes all financial decisions made by the board and a wide range of technical and policy papers. An assessment of any significant environmental impact is made available to non-governmental organisations in the borrowing country well in advance of consideration of the project in the board. We have supported a proposal to make the assessments more widely available.

Narmada Dam, India

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on the number of arrests which have occurred in India since 23 October in connection with the Narmada dam project.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We understand that a number of arrests were made in Bombay on 14 November following a demonstration involving members of a local non-government organisation. We understand that all those arrested were released on 17 November.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what British financial or industrial development there is in the Narmada dam project in India.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: There have been no construction contracts awarded to British firms. One consultancy contract was awarded to Mott MacDonald for a ground water study in 1983.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs following the recent continuation by the World bank of the Narmada dam project, how the British Government will satisfy themselves that adequate consultation with local people has been held, to avoid violations of the rights of tribal or other affected people.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Government's commitment to a resolution of the problems identified in an independent review of the Narmada projects, is demonstrated by our decision to provide up to £1 million of technical co-operation funds to finance work which is aimed at attempting to ensure that the performance benchmarks agreed by the World bank and the Indian authorities are met in full.

As our executive director said at the October board meeting, we believe that, unless there is full and constructive consultation with the people to be affected by the projects, the benchmarks will not be met.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what attention to past and future human rights questions were considered by the independent review of the Narmada dam project in India.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: That is not a matter for Her Majesty's Government. The report has been published.

Sardar Sarovar Projects

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the total disbursement of World bank funds on the Sardar Sarovar projects up to the World bank executive directors' meeting on 23 October; what it will be by the April 1993 meeting; and what is the estimated total expenditure.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: World bank loans for the Sardar Sarovar projects amount to $450 million. Disbursements to October 1992 were $230 million and projected disbursements between November 1992 and March 1993 are $40 million.

Mahogany

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has discussed a scheme of certification of mahogany from sustainable sources to apply across all EC points of entry within the Council of Ministers.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: There is no reliable way at present of identifying timber imported from unsustainable sources. Well designed and implemented labelling schemes would enable consumer choice and provide the basis for implementation of import controls, but none exists at present. This view is widely shared by our EC partners. The Overseas Development Administration is supporting work on incentives for sustainable timber production, including labelling schemes, in co-operation with the timber trade and non-governmental organisations.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he has taken to identify bona fide producers of mahogany from properly managed sustainable forestry estates; and whether such producers are encouraged to mark and certify their timber as such.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: There is at present no reliable means of identifying mahogany or other tropical timber produced from unsustainable sources, or of confirming the authenticity of timber marked or certified as such by producers. Effective identification of timber produced from sustainable sources depends on the introduction of sustainable forest management practices in producer countries and the development of reliable and practical labelling systems. The Overseas Development Administration is supporting both objectives through our forestry programmes and through support to reform of the International Tropical Timber Organisation, which brings together producers and consumers of tropical timber.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Invalidity Benefit

Mr. Knox: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the tax expenditure savings if people receiving invalidity benefit were not allowed the option of continuing to receive it during the first five years after reaching state pension age.

Mr. Dorrell: It is estimated that if all recipients over retirement age received taxable retirement pension instead of invalidity benefit the tax yield, at 1992-93 levels, would be about £80 million.

Green Issues

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer who in his Department has been appointed to oversee and develop green issues; how many civil servants have been allocated new or additional responsibilities to deal with the management and development of green issues; and what additional allocation of resources has been made to support programmes related to green issues in his Department.

Sir John Cope: I have responsibility for "green issues". Environmental issues are treated as an integral part of policy consideration. As envisaged in the First Year Report on "This Common Inheritance" (Cm 1655), the Treasury has prepared a strategy for environmental "good housekeeping". Resources are allocated as necessary to ensure the efficient despatch of business.

Inheritance Tax

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the revenue forgone in his recent extension of reliefs in inheritance tax in a full year; and if he will break down this figure by each category of additional relief.

Mr. Dorrell: The estimated reduction in the yield of inheritance tax for transfers in 1992-93 resulting from the changes to business and agricultural relief made in the Finance (No. 2) Act 1992 is £45 million in a full year. Of this total £25 million relates to the extension of agricultural relief and £20 million to the extension of business relief.

Tobacco and Alcohol Smuggling

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimates he has received regarding the potential annual revenue loss from smuggling tobacco products and

alcoholic beverages from European Community member states where the prices of such products are lower, following the completion of the single market; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope: The Financial Statement and Budget Report published on 10 March estimated a full year loss of £250 million from increased cross-border shopping in the single market. It is very difficult to estimate the likely scale of smuggling. We are alert to the risks, however, and Customs and Excise have allocated additional staff for inland controls, including intelligence-based targeting and enhanced checks at likely outlets for smuggled goods.

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has obtained on the extent of cigarette smuggling into other European Community member states, with particular reference to Germany; what is the likely revenue impact in the United Kingdom following the completion of the single market; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope: Smuggling of cigarettes takes place in several EC countries—for example, by land into northern Italy and by sea into western Spain. Since German reunification, smuggling has developed between Poland and Germany. The Tobacco Advisory Council has estimated that 10 per cent. of the German and Italian cigarette markets can be attributed to smuggling.

It is difficult to estimate the likely extent of cigarette smuggling into the United Kingdom in the single market. The 1992-93 Financial Statement and Budget Report published in March 1992 contained an estimate of £250 million for the revenue loss associated with the increased levels of legitimate cross-border shopping of all excise goods in the single market.

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what measures he will take to protect against revenue loss from the smuggling of tobacco products from lower-taxed European Community member states in the light of the changed role of the law enforcement agencies following the completion of the single market next year.

Sir John Cope: The Finance (No. 2) Act 1992 introduced new offences to meet the threat of increased smuggling of revenue goods following the completion of the single market. The offences carry penalties up to seven years' imprisonment. Customs and Excise are also implementing new control procedures to catch and deter commercial bootleggers, including:

the recruitment and training of 120 excise verification officers for intelligence-based targeting and enhanced checks at likely outlets for smuggled goods;

increasing the excise intelligence resources within the customs investigation division;

increased mutual assistance with other member states, including the appointment of liaison officers in Netherlands, Belgium and France; and

opposing the renewal of "on" and "off" licences, where appropriate, as the result of revenue offences involving the licensee.

VAT (Farmers)

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether a decision has been made on the compensation addition for the flat-rate VAT scheme for farmers; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope: The flat rate percentage addition will be set at 4 per cent. It is intended to compensate a flat rate farmers for the VAT they spend on purchases, which they cannot reclaim as they are not registered for VAT. There is no restriction on the size of farmer who may qualify for the flat rate scheme. However, as it has been introduced to assist small farmers, a restriction has been written into the scheme to prevent some farmers from making a substantial financial gain. Farmers who would stand to gain £3,000 or more a year over what they would have been able to claim as input tax had they remained registered for VAT will not be able to qualify as flat rate farmers. Small farmers whose annual turnover is £70,000 or less will not be affected by this restriction and it is expected that about 90 per cent. of farmers with a turnover of up to £300,000 will be able to join the scheme if they wish.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Gale: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he expects to lay the orders implementing the transitional arrangements for the collection of value added tax after 1 January 1993; and whether all aspects of the new system will come into force at the same time.

Sir John Cope *[holding answer 7 December 1992]:* The remaining orders implementing the transitional arrangements for the collection of VAT from 1 January 1993 will be laid before the Christmas recess. It is intended that all agreed aspects of the new system will begin on 1 January 1993.

Market Testing

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a timetable showing when he plans to market test those activities listed for testing before 30 September 1993.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 9 December 1992]:* "Citizen's Charter, First Report: 1992" (Cm 2101) lists the nine Treasury services to be market tested in 1992-93. These are the library, stationery, reprographics, training, economic model building, consultancy inspections services division, recruitment, internal audit and the Treasury security guard (subject to a review). The timetable for completing the market testing exercise for all nine services, as set out in Cm 2101, is September 1993: not all the services will however be tested simultaneously. A start has already been made on testing the first four listed; the intention is to have completed these by spring 1993.

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer to which of those of his Department's activities due to be market tested by 30 September 1993, the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 and the EC acquired rights directive 77/189/EEC will apply.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 9 December 1992]:* The application of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 (TUPE) and the EC Acquired Rights Directive 77/189/ECC has to be determined in the light of the individual circumstances surrounding each of the services to be market tested. The Treasury is currently considering, in consultation with the Treasury Solicitor's Department, those services in its 1992-93 market testing programmes to which TUPE will apply.

SCOTLAND

Hospitals

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total number of hospitals in Scotland in 1979, 1991 and 1992.

Mr. Stewart: The information requested is shown in the table:

Number of hospitals in Scotland; by type; as at 31st March

Year	[1]NHS	[1,2]Joint user and contractural	[3]Independent acute
1979	348	[4]20	[5]—
1991	289	18	8
1992	283	18	8

1. Hospitals with an approved bed complement.
2. Joint user hospitals are local authority institutions in which accommodation is made available to health boards in terms of the sixth schedule of the National Assistance Act, 1948. Contractual hospitals are institutions where health boards have customer arrangements with voluntary bodies for the use of beds.
3. Institutions subject to the Nursing Homes Registration (Scotland) Act, 1938, of the Mental Health Acts, 1938, or the Mental Health Acts 1960/1984, that provide surgical acute care.
4. As at 30 September 1979.
5. Not available.

Council Tax

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of the £28 million for council tax transitional relief will be allocated to each band.

Mr. Stewart: No specific allocation will be made to each band. Relief will be awarded in accordance with the rules of the scheme which will be implemented under regulations which will be laid before the House.

Training

Mr. Kynoch: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what public expenditure provision has been made available in respect of expenditure in 1993-94 by Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise on youth training and the new training for work programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: The provision derived from the Great Britain planning figures for the relevant programmes in 1993-94 which has been included in the total budgets proposed for Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise, is as follows:

£ million

	Youth training	Training for work programme
Scottish Enterprise	78·7	86·5
Highlands and Islands Enterprise	5·6	5·2

The formulae for deriving the figures for 1993-94 from the Great Britain planning totals for the relevant programmes concentrate on labour market indicators. Scotland, which has the lowest unemployment rate of the four countries of the United Kingdom, is receiving over 10 per cent. of the provision for Great Britain compared to its 8·9 per cent. share of unemployment.

Provision for youth training takes account of demographic trends and estimated staying on rates for potential schoolleavers. It will remain a contractual requirement for local enterprise companies to meet the Government's youth training guarantee.

The training for work programme will provide broadly the same number of opportunities for unemployed people in Scotland in 1993-94 as are being provided by the employment training programme in the current year.

In addition to the specific funds for training, local enterprise companies have access to operating surpluses and can use the general arrangements for transferring resources within their budgets if necessary.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Iraq

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what decisions were taken by Her Majesty's Government on 19 July 1990 in regard to export control guidelines for Iraq.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given on 9 December 1992 at column *660* to the hon. Member for Neath (Mr. Hain).

Yugoslavia

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when it is planned that the airport at Tuzla should be opened for humanitarian aid deliveries.

Mr. Goodlad: The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has no plans to open Tuzla airport at this time.

According to the European Community monitoring mission, the town is supplied efficiently by a system of land convoys to and from central Bosnia and food is not scarce.

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he is yet in possession of evidence which can form the basis for trial by the International Court of Justice of persons responsible for, and participating in, the operation of concentration camps for Muslim people in Serbia and Bosnia.

Mr. Goodlad: No. But we are considering how best to gather substantiated evidence of breaches of international humanitarian law committed in the former Yugoslavia, to submit to the United Nations Commission of Experts in Geneva (established by United Nations Security Council Resolution 780).

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on the numbers of prisoners in concentration camps run by the Serbian authorities.

Mr. Goodlad: The International Red Cross (ICRC) estimate that 4,100 are currently held in detention camps run by the Bosnian Serbs.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) which factors in the environmentally sensitive area programme account for the savings to common agricultural policy expenditure, in order of their costs;

(2) if he will collate and tabulate the total savings in common agricultural policy expenditure arising from the environmentally sensitive area scheme since its inception per year and in total for each scheme and for England as a whole.

Mr. Gummer: The environmentally sensitive area schemes (ESAs) generally encourage more extensive farming systems, but the main provisions generating savings in common agricultural policy payments are those encouraging reversion from arable production to grassland and reductions in livestock grazing. Savings arising in the first five ESAs introduced in 1987 are recorded in the published monitoring reports deposited in the Library. The reports for the remaining ESAs introduced in 1988 will be published shortly.

Cereals

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his estimate of weighted average yields for cereals in each EC country.

Mr. Curry: Based on information from Eurostat the weighted average yields for cereals (in tonnes per hectare and excluding rice) in each EC member state in 1991 were as follows:

	Average Yield
Belgium	6·57
Denmark	5·88
Germany	5·99
Greece	4·17
Spain	2·41
France	6·54
Ireland	6·26
Italy	4·24
Luxembourg	5·10
Netherlands	6·99
Portugal	1·43
United Kingdom	6·46
EC 12	5·03

Source: Eurostat Crop Production Quarterly Statistics No. 3 1992.

Fishing Industry

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what estimate he has made of the effect on employment in the fishing industry as a result of meeting the latest multi-annual guidance targets in respect of *(a)* beam trawl, *(b)* demersal trawl, *(c)* nephrope trawl, *(d)* seiners and *(e)* shellfish mobile.

Mr. Curry: The aim of the latest multi-annual guidance programme targets is to bring the various segments of the fleet into a better balance with the fish stocks that they exploit. A detailed breakdown of employment in the various segments of the fleet is not available but it is inevitable that fleet reductions, through decommissioning which the industry has demanded, will mean some loss of jobs in the industry. However, if stocks are allowed to collapse the jobs of all fishermen will be at risk.

Slaughterhouses

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what permission he has sought for the slaughter of casualty livestock in excess of the weekly quota subject to derogation under EC requirements;

(2) whether he will seek to exclude casualty livestock from the 12 livestock unit allowance for small slaughterhouses.

Mr. Soames *[holding answer 8 December 1992]:* As my right hon. Friend the Minister told the House on 2 December, *Official Report*, columns 223-24, he is arranging for the Council of Agriculture Ministers to discuss the question of small slaughterhouses at its meeting on 14-16 December.

I recognise the importance of ensuring that suitable facilities are available for the slaughter of animals which are suspected of being diseased or injured, and the State Veterinary Service will monitor the position carefully. Officials will take a sensible approach towards isolated instances where the weekly throughput limit is exceeded because of any emergency slaughter.

TRANSPORT

European Passenger Services Ltd.

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what conclusions he has reached on the method of transferring European Passenger Services Ltd. to the private sector.

Mr. Freeman: Options for transferring international services to the private sector are under discussion within British Rail and Government. It is too early to say when we will be in a position to make decisions on the way forward.

Channel Tunnel

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will ensure that domestic commuter rail services are not curtailed on either the Tonbridge or the Maidstone East line to London in order to make way for through channel tunnel passenger trains.

Mr. Freeman: British Rail gave an assurance to Parliament during the passage of the Channel Tunnel Act 1987 to the effect that existing domestic services would not be adversely affected by the introduction of international services through the channel tunnel. British Rail has every intention of standing by that assurance.

Network SouthEast

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will maintain the subsidy paid to Network SouthEast at its current level in real terms; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The specific allocation of the planned external financing limits for British Rail between 1993-94 and 1995-96 between grant and borrowing has yet to be agreed and will be announced, as usual, in due course.

Construction Materials

Mr. Dover: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will require independent quality assurance certification for both the manufacture and the erection of any structural steelwork imported for use in the construction of any major transport construction projects, including the second Severn bridge crossing and the second M6 Thelwall viaduct.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The supply, fabrication and erection of the steelwork for Departmental schemes must comply with the Department's Specification for Highway Works and the national bridge code British Standard 5400. There are no specific independent quality assurance certification requirements for the fabrication of steelwork in the Specification at present, but the Department will shortly be discussing with the British Constructional Steelwork Association (BCSA) the recognition of an independent QA scheme for structural steelwork. Once a scheme has been recognised it will be included in the specification for future projects.

The second Severn crossing is a privately financed project, although it must comply with the Department's requirements. There is a specific requirement for QA for the project. A QA scheme was proposed by Laing/GTM and approved by the Government agent, who will from time to time check compliance. The steelwork subcontractor's own QA scheme may be accepted, if it is deemed to be equal to that of Laing/GTM.

While there is no specific QA requirement for Thelwall viaduct, full compliance with the Specification will be insured by inspection and testing of both the fabrication process and the steelwork itself. If the latter is produced abroad, this checking will be carried out by the Department's representative in the country of manufacture, as well as during site erection.

Rail Traffic

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what changes have occurred during the last 10 years in the share and volume of traffic carried on railways within the United Kingdom; and what detailed policies he is pursuing to promote this form of transportation.

Mr. Freeman: Figures for rail passenger and freight traffic are published in tables 1.1 and 1.9 of Transport Statistics Great Britain 1992 (HMSO), a copy of which is in the Library.

Rail passenger kilometres increased by 12 per cent. between 1981 and 1991 while tonne kilometres fell by 13 per cent. The rail share of passenger kilometres fell slightly from 7 to 6 per cent. while the rail share of tonne kilometres fell from 10 to 7 per cent.

The White Paper, "New Opportunities for the Railways" published in July 1992, set out the Government's proposals for making better use of railways.

Railways (Orders)

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will estimate the publicly-owned railways orders for *(a)* signalling, *(b)* rolling stock and *(c)* other capital spending (i) made and (ii) for work in each year from 1984 to 1996.

Mr. Freeman: The information is not available in the form requested. The table shows the figures for investment in railway rolling stock and infrastructure for the years 1985-86 to 1991-92.

£ million cash

	1985-86	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*
British Rail							
Rolling stock	90	81	107	208	209	265	331
Infrastructure	309	318	419	337	487	593	674
Total British Rail	399	399	526	545	696	858	1,005
Other Rail							
Rolling stock	63	71	72	77	131	157	178
Infrastructure	155	166	246	239	342	550	486
Total other rail	218	237	318	316	473	707	664
Total Rail	617	636	844	861	1,169	1,565	1,669

Notes:

1. Other rail comprises London Underground, Docklands Light Railway, Manchester Light Rapid Transport and South Yorkshire Supertram.
2. Figures for other rail rolling stock include an allowance for investment in wagons privately owned by BR customers. However, as information is only available on end year stock, estimates have been made based on this and assumptions on scrappage rates and the cost of a private wagon. The resultant estimates have a large range of error. Therefore, an estimate, £50 million per annum, an average based on the last five years, has been calculated and included as a tentative estimate.

A6, Stockport

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to hold the further public inquiry into the A6 Stockport north-south bypass.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Not before next autumn. We are currently looking at the design of the Offerton road junction in order to reduce its impact. This work is taking longer than expected. I am conscious of the need to keep any further delays to a minimum.

Vehicle Inspectorate

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list by grade and office, the number of staff employed by the Vehicle Inspectorate agency.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Following is a list by grade and office, showing the number of full-time and part-time staff currently employed by the Vehicle Inspectorate.

1992-93 Staff in Post (as per Payroll)—October 1992

Grade	Staff in post Actual	Man year equivalent
Grade 4	1·00	1·00
Grade 5	1·00	1·00
Grade 6	5·00	4·22
Grade 7	25·00	25·00
Senior Professional and Technical Officer	40·00	40·00
Higher Professional and Technical Officer	100·00	100·00
Professional and Technical Officer	449·00	447·63
Assistant Vehicle Examiner	91·00	91·00
Enforcement Manager	7·00	7·00
Senior Traffic Examiner	31·00	31·00
Traffic Examiner	172·00	172·00
Senior Executive Officer	11·00	11·00
Higher Executive Officer	21·00	21·00
Executive Officer	57·00	55·73
Administrative Officer	210·00	195·53
Administrative Assistant	288·00	232·37
Senior Personal Secretary	2·00	2·00
Personal Secretary	3·00	2·68
Typist	54·00	33·92
Support Grade Band 1	1·00	1·00
Support Grade Band 2	9·00	6·28
Stores Officer Grade D	1·00	1·00
Casual Typist	1·00	0·54
Casual Administrative Assistant	60·00	49·04
Casual Administrative Officer	2·00	1·68
Vocational Sandwich Course Student	1·00	0·20
Total Non Industrial	1,643·00	1,533·82
Tester/Craftsman	279·00	275·70
Handyperson	45·00	31·41
Auxillary B	3·00	3·00
Storekeeper	2·00	2·00
Casual Industrial	2·00	1·03
Total Industrial	331·00	313·14
GRAND TOTAL	1,974·00	1,846·96

Part-time Staff

Grade	Actual	Man year equivalent
Grade 6	1·00	0·22
Professional and Technical Officer	2·00	0·63
Executive Officer	3·00	1·73
Administrative Officer	32·00	17·99
Administrative Assistant	133·00	77·37
Personal Secretary	1·00	0·68
Typist	48·00	27·92
Support Grade Band 2	3·00	0·28
Casual Administrative Officer	2·00	1·22
Casual Administrative Assistant	25·00	14·04
Casual Typist	1·00	0·54
Vocational Sandwich Course Student	1·00	0·20
Tester/Craftsman	5·00	1·70
Handyperson	25·00	11·41
Casual Industrial	2·00	1·08
TOTAL	284·00	156·96

Driving Standards Agency

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list by grade and location, the number of staff employed by the Driving Standards Agency.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The Driving Standards Agency's staff in post at 31 October 1992 is shown in the attached table by DSA regional or HQ location. Part-time staff are included as full-time equivalents.

Driving Standards Agency—staff in post at 31 October 1992

Grades	Headquarters Nottingham	Cardington Training Establishment	North East	North West	West Midlands	Eastern Nottingham	Eastern Cambridge	South Wales	Western	South East	Scotland	Metropolitan	Total
Grade 5	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Grade 6	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Chief Driving Examiner	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Grade 7	6	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	6
Deputy Chief Driving Examiner	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2
Senior Executive Officer	4	—	1	1	1	1	—	1	—	1	1	1	12
Assistant Chief Driving Examiner	11	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	12
Higher Executive Officer	15	—	1	1	1	1	1	—	1	1	1	1·5	24·5
Supervising Examiner	—	—	13	14	9	9	5	4	8	11	9	18	100
Senior Driving Examiner	—	4	48	48	38	26	15	13	30	42	29	61	354
Driving Examiner	—	—	142	145	98	88	58	43	91	104	91	186	1,046
Executive Officer	17·6	1	4	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	5	39·6
Administrative Officer	37	1	14	6·5	6	6·5	3	1	5	7	5	20	114·0
Administrative Assistant	21	—	23·5	18	11·5	11	6·5	5	8·25	13·5	12	41·5	173·5
Personal Secretary	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2
Typist	4	0·5	1	—	—	0·5	—	—	—	—	—	1·5	7·5
Support Grades	3	—	5·3	4	1·6	2	0·8	2	1·7	2·6	4·9	7	34·9
Plant Keeper	1	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	0	—	—	2
Industrials	—	3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3
Telephonists	1	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2
Total	127·6	10·5	253·8	239·5	167·1	150	90·3	71	143·95	186·1	153·9	342·5	1,938·25

Casualty Reduction Schemes

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much money he is allocating to casualty reduction schemes by local highway authorities.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The Secretary of State will announce the amount shortly, as part of the transport supplementary grant settlement.

Vehicle Testing Stations

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) whether safety will be the prime issue in determining the future of vehicle testing stations following his consultation paper;

(2) what criteria he will use to assess the various options for the future of vehicle testing stations contained in his consultation paper;

(3) how many responses he has had to his consultation paper on options for the future of vehicle testing stations; what types of organisation have responded; and what were their views;

(4) what other options he considered before issuing his consultation paper on the future of vehicle testing stations; and for what reasons they were rejected;

(5) what steps he took to *(a)* inform the general public about and (b) to circulate his consultation paper on options for the future of vehicle testing stations;

(6) when he expects to make an announcement on the future of vehicle testing stations following his consultation paper on options for the future.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 10 December 1992]:* As part of the review of the Vehicle Inspectorate's framework document my right hon. Friend re-examined the scope for abolition, privatisation and contracting out. Abolition, and the privatisation of the agency's enforcement activities, were judged to be inappropriate. A public consultation paper was issued on 14 September 1992 and sought views from a range of motor transport, safety, staff and other interests. There was an accompanying press notice. There have been 55 responses from organisations and individuals representing motor transport industry, police, road safety, motoring, local authority, environmental, staff and other groups; my right hon. Friend and I have also received correspondence from 68 hon. and right hon. Members. Comments dealt with cost, road safety and staff issues, and the availability of testing services. A variety of views were expressed for and against each option.

My right hon. Friend is currently considering the responses and representations and will make an announcement in due course. Road safety remains a key Government objective; as the consultation paper makes clear, we are determined that the standard of vehicle testing under all options should be maintained and, where possible, improved.

Drink Driving

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to extend the availability of the Christmas and new year drink driving wrecks lives campaign on television so as to reach a wider audience; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The Department of Transport's drinking and driving wrecks lives commercial is running on television throughout December.

To extend the campaign to reach a wider audience I should particularly like to acknowledge the initiative of the Portman Group, an organisation funded by the drinks industry to promote sensible drinking, who have paid for the screening of the Department's commercial in cinemas in Great Britain and Northern Ireland in December and January.

The Department makes every effort to ensure that its campaign message reaches the broadest possible audience and liaises with local authority road safety officers, the police, voluntary bodies and private sector organisations. I welcome their involvement in taking forward the campaign.

British Rail

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on his Department's policy towards the relative weight to be given to the provision for passenger traffic and for freight traffic in British Rail's objectives and investment plans.

Mr. Freeman: The objectives set by the Government for British Rail for the three years to March 1993 can be found in the board's annual report and accounts for 1989-90. My right hon. Friend will in due course be setting objectives for the period from 1 April 1993. The Government attach great importance to the efficient provision of both passenger and freight services.

WALES

Training

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many training places have been made available by each training and enterprise council in Wales for special needs trainees in each of the last three years.

Sir Wyn Roberts: TECs have not yet been in existence for three years and comparable information is only available by TEC for the 1991-92 financial year.

The information available is for numbers of those with special needs starting training rather than numbers of training places, and is provided in the following table.

Special training needs starts

TEC	*1991-92*
Gwent	849
Mid Glamorgan	933
North East Wales	214
North West Wales	727
Powys	299
South Glamorgan	680
West Wales	2,660

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much money has been allocated for employment training special needs programmes by each training and enterprise council in Wales in each of the last three years.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The information requested is not available because within the overall unit price for employment training negotiated with training and enterprise councils, they are required to ensure that suitable high quality training is available for all trainees who are shown by assessment to have disabilities or other significant personal disadvantages which give rise to special training needs.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the average unit cost per month of training young people on youth training schemes in Wales in each of the last five years.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The information requested is set out in the table.

Youth training
Average unit cost per training month

Financial year	Cost £ per month
[1]1988-89	186
[1]1989-90	185
[1]1990-91	217
[1]1991-92	229
[2]1992-93	213

[1] Outturn.
[2] Planned.

Travel-to-Work Areas (Employment)

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people were employed in each travel-to-work area in Wales in *(a)* agriculture, *(b)* production, *(c)* construction, *(d)* service industries and *(e)* total, at the most recent available date.

Mr. David Hunt: Data for travel-to-work areas can be obtained from the NOMIS database in the House of Commons Library, subject to the confidentiality restrictions of the Statistics of Trade Act 1947.

Schizophrenia

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people with schizophrenia in Wales have killed themselves or been convicted of manslaughter after returning to the community since April 1991.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. Apart from those who have discharged themselves voluntarily, only a small number of long-stay patients have been discharged. This has only been on the basis of medical and other appropriate professional advice and where a care plan and appropriate alternative facilities are in place.

Farmers

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the total payments made to farmers for each year encompassing existing and new entrants as a whole within each designated environmentally sensitive area and for Wales in total.

Mr. David Hunt: The information is as follows:

ESA payments to farmers

Financial year	Cambrians (original) (came into operation 1 March 1987) £	Cambrians (extension) (came into operation 1 January 1988) £	Lleyn Peninsula (came into operation 1 January 1988) £	Wales total £
1987-88	21,864	—	—	21,864
1988-89	310,292	—	64,066	374,358
1989-90	366,339	111,488	227,661	705,488
1990-91	476,882	120,723	284,102	881,707
1991-92	613,130	493,442	351,867	1,458,439

Bellwin Scheme

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how he defines eligible expenditure under the Bellwin scheme; and if he has reviewed his definition in the light of the circumstances surrounding the recent flooding in Wales;

(2) when and how he formally announced that Bellwin assistance would be made available to Welsh local authorities; on what date relevant expenditure became eligible; and when he proposes the closing date for applications for assistance submitted under the present scheme;

(3) if he will allow capital expenditure on repair and replacement work to be eligible for Welsh Office funding under the Bellwin formula;

(4) if he will make a statement on the application of the Bellwin formula in providing assistance to Welsh local authorities following the recent flooding;

(5) on what basis he calculates the threshold level for financial assistance under the Bellwin scheme; and if he will publish a table showing the current threshold levels for local authorities in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: The Government are applying the Bellwin scheme for emergency financial assistance for local authorities affected by flood and storm damage following the severe weather in Wales last week.

My officials are writing to confirm to county and district councils in south Wales that they are entitled to claim grant at the rate of 85 per cent. on eligible expenditure above a prescribed threshold. Eligible expenditure includes emergency works to safeguard life and property, damage clearance and repairs arising from the floods and storms between 30 November and 2 December. Capital works are not eligible for grant. Emergency works under the scheme need to be completed by 1 February 1993. Initial claims should be submitted by 1 March 1993 and final audited claims by 1 June 1993.

Since 1990-91, thresholds for the Bellwin scheme have been calculated on the basis of £2.00 (1990-91) per adult on the community charge register, uprated by the annual September increase in the retail price index, and apportioned between county and district authorities according to their tier shares based on standard spending assessments. I will be placing a table showing thresholds for each local authority in the Library of the House, together with a copy of the letter to south Wales authorities referred to above.

EC Environment Council

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will attend the Environment Council of the EC meeting on 15 and 16 December to represent Welsh environmental interests.

Mr. David Hunt: I will not be attending the December meeting of the EC Environment Council; in accordance with long established practice, the environmental interests of the United Kingdom will be represented at that meeting by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Traffic Survey, Caernarfon

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales on what date he was given the traffic figures arising out of his traffic survey undertaken in the vicinity of Caernarfon in the early summer of 1992 in relation to a possible outer bypass from Griffith's Crossing on the A487; if he will now make these figures available to Gwynedd county council; and if he intends to publish them.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I am expecting to be advised of the main conclusions of the traffic survey shortly. It is not intended to publish the figures but the relevant traffic information will be made available to Gwynedd county council when I make my announcement on the outcome of the investigations.

EC Agriculture Council

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will attend the Agricultural Council of the EC meeting between 14 and 16 December to represent Welsh farmers.

Mr. David Hunt: I will not be attending the meeting of the Agriculture Council. In line with long established practice, my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food takes the lead in European community discussions and negotiations. I know that my right hon. Friend has the interests of Welsh farmers clearly in mind in that context and I am in regular contact with him.

Business Rates

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to introduce an incentive for local authorities to notify the Valuation Office of new non-domestic property in their area to ensure that rating lists are kept up to date.

Mr. David Hunt: I am introducing arrangements which will allow billing authorities to retain until the end of the year the benefit of any additional rates they collect when non-domestic property is improved or first included in the rating list. This change should give authorities more incentive to notify the Valuation Office quickly of any new or improved property in their area. The new provisions will be made in regulations which will be laid shortly and will apply from 1 April 1993.

ENVIRONMENT

Pest Bird Licensing System

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what mechanisms he will put in place to monitor operation of the pest bird licensing system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: Monitoring will be an integral part of the pest bird licensing system. The Government's statutory scientific advisers, the Joint Nature Conservation Committee, will set up the monitoring arrangements and will report their findings annually to my Department. The report will identify changes in overall population levels and distribution of the species.

Waste

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will make a statement on Government policy regarding the importation of recyclable waste material from packaging from European sources;

(2) what representations he has received regarding the dumping of recyclable waste from packaging;

(3) what consideration the Government have given to reducing the levels of imported recyclable waste from Germany;

(4) what representations he has received in respect of the impact of German packaging legislation and the Duales Systems Deutschland on European and United Kingdom markets for recyclable materials.

Mr. Maclean: The Government believe that the movement of waste for recovery, which provides valuable substitutes for raw materials, should continue, subject to the appropriate environmental controls.

However, my Department and the Department of Trade and Industry have received a considerable number of representations from British companies and others about restrictions on trade and the distortion of competition resulting from the 1991 German Packaging Ordinance. Many representations relate to the distortion of competition in the markets for recyclable materials. The Government share the concerns expressed in these representations. We have therefore formally asked the European Commission to consider whether the German measures contravene the provisions of the treaty of Rome on trade and competition; and will continue to press for an early decision by the Commission.

The Government are also negotiating for a harmonising European directive on packaging and packaging waste, to prevent member states from erecting trade barriers or distorting competition.

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is Government policy regarding the use of United Kingdom landfill sites for the dumping of European waste.

Mr. Maclean: The Government's policy is that developed countries should be self-sufficient and dispose of their own waste. The new EC Waste Shipments Regulation which was agreed on 20 October will enable member states to ban imports for final disposal from other member states unless they produce hazardous waste in such a small quantity that it would be uneconomic for that country to provide their own specialised disposal facilities.

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if the Government propose to adopt the Duales Systems Deutschland in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Maclean: We have no current plans to do so. However, the Government is currently considering whether the economic framework for recycling and waste in the United Kingdom should be modified. We intend to publish a consultants' report on economic instruments for solid waste shortly and aim to announce our conclusions later in 1993.

Private Water Supplies

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to impose taxes in respect of private water supplies.

Mr. Maclean: None. We announced, however, in "This Common Inheritance: The Second Year Report" in October that we are preparing a consultation paper on charging for water abstraction: that would need to explain to what extent any proposals would apply to private water supplies.

Home Energy Efficiency Scheme

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will bring forward proposals to abolish the client contribution element of the home energy efficiency scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The Energy Efficiency Office has received representations recommending the abolition of the client contribution. Abolition would mean that the size of individual claims for grant would increase and that fewer households could benefit overall from the scheme.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many households have been assisted under the home energy efficiency scheme in each region in each year since the scheme began; and what level of expenditure, as a total and percentage of the national total, has been undertaken by region.

Mr. Maclean: For 1991-92, the only full year of the scheme so far, the figures are:

	Number of homes	*Grant paid £000s*	*Grant paid as percentage of total (rounded)*
Scotland	34,391	3,762	15·8
North East	14,822	1,724	7·2
North West	25,199	3,401	14·3
East Midlands	19,288	3,057	12·9
London	6,166	804	3·4
South East	10,011	1,593	6·7
South West	8,145	1,227	5·2
Wales	10,651	1,501	6·3
West Midlands	26,650	3,780	15·9
Yorkshire and Humberside	22,683	2,904	12·2

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the environment what has been the expenditure on the home energy efficiency scheme in each region; and what was the budget allocation for each region in each year since the scheme began.

Mr. Maclean: There are no regional allocations under the home energy efficiency scheme; allocations are made to individual installers. In 1991-92, the first full year of operation, the expenditure in each of the scheme's administrative regions was:

	Grant paid £000s
Scotland	3,762
North East	1,724
North West	3,401
East Midlands	3,057
London	804
South East	1,593
South West	1,227
Wales	1,501
West Midlands	3,780
Yorkshire and Humberside	2,904

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of jobs undertaken under the home energy efficiency scheme have cost more than the maximum grant figure; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The grant maxima for allowable work under the home energy efficiency scheme were increased on 1 April this year. Since then the proportions of claims in excess of the grant maxima have been, for draughtproofing 21 per cent. and for loft insulation 14 per cent.

Air Pollution Monitoring

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the monitoring reference manual being produced by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution to give guidance to local authorities on industrial air pollution monitoring techniques will be published; how much the manual has cost to produce; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The monitoring reference manual is now being prepared for publication by HMSO in the new year. It will appear as one of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution's new series of technical guidance notes, and its full title will be "Monitoring of emissions of pollutants at source". This guidance note is based on a report produced on contract by Warren Spring Laboratory at a cost of £26,400. Further costs of production will be borne on the overall budget for HMIP's research and publication programme.

A copy of this report will be placed in the House Library as soon as it is published.

Contaminated Land

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to issue regulations under section 143 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 governing the compilation of public registers of land which may be contaminated; when the regulations will take effect; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: We are grateful to the more than 450 individuals and organisations who responded to our consultation paper and draft regulations under section 143 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 for registers of

contaminative uses of land. We are carefully considering these responses before deciding the next steps on the proposed regulations and their terms and application.

Engagements

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list his official engagements in the months of October and November that took place before 9 am.

Mr. Howard: My official engagements before 9 am in October and November were as follows:

Monday 5 October
8.30 am—Meeting with Sir Brian Hill, Chairman of the Construction Industry Employers Council.
8.45 am—Interview—"Helping the Earth Begins at Home" launch

Monday 12 October
8.45 am—Internal departmental meeting

Thursday 15 October
8.30 am—Cabinet Committee meeting

Wednesday 21 October
8.15 am—Launch of "London First"

Wednesday 28 October
8.15 am—Internal departmental meeting

Thursday 29 October
7.50 am—Interview with Radio Kent

Wednesday 4 November
8.30 am—Photocall for "Watch Your Waste Week"

Thursday 5 November
8.15 am—Internal departmental meeting

Monday 9 November
7.30 am—CBI "Environment" breakfast

Friday 13 November
8.30 am—Internal departmental meeting

Thursday 26 November
8.30 am—Internal departmental meeting

Friday 27 November
8.10 am—Interview with LBC radio
8.20 am—Interview with BBC TV "Breakfast Time"

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Imports

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what international agreements the United Kingdom is party to which encourage discrimination against imported products which are produced by *(a)* slave labour and *(b)* child labour; and what representations he has had in 1992 on this subject.

Mr. Needham: No international agreements encourage discrimination of this sort. There are severe practical difficulties in identifying goods allegedly produced using such labour given the varied and complex channels of production and distribution which exist in international trade. My Department receives occasional representations that goods produced under such conditions represent unfair trade.

Coal Industry (Redundancies)

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) whether the present redundancy scheme for coal miners will be extended beyond the current March deadline for all those collieries in the current moratorium on closure;

(2) what plans he has to improve the present redundancy scheme for coal miners.

Mr. Eggar: Details of British Coal's redundancy schemes are a matter for British Coal.

Toys

Mr. Cox: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what has been the quota of toys made in China that have been allowed into the United Kingdom in each of the last five years;

(2) what is the present yearly quota of toys made in China that is allowed into the EC.

Mr. Needham: There are no Community-wide quotas on toys imported from China. Two member states impose national quotas. The United Kingdom does not do so.

Mining Records

Mr. Clapham: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what are the reasons for the transfer of mining records from the keeping of the British geological survey to his Department; and what arrangements are being made to make them available to the public.

Mr. Eggar: I have no plans to transfer any mining records from the keeping of the British geological survey to my Department. British Coal is under a statutory obligation to make available plans of coal workings in its possession.

Electricity Generation

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will estimate the effect on the public sector borrowing requirement, employment and emissions of substituting coal generation of electricity for Magnox stations.

Mr. Eggar: These issues are relevant to the review currently being undertaken by my Department. I cannot pre-judge the outcome of the review.

Nuclear Policy

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what matters with regard to nuclear policy were discussed and decided upon at the European Energy Council on 30 November.

Mr. Eggar: Nuclear research and development matters are dealt with by the Research Council. Nuclear policy issues have in recent years been dealt with by the Foreign Affairs Council. The Energy Council on 30 November did not discuss any nuclear-related issues.

Oil Exploration Cardigan Bay

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will revoke the licence granted to Hamilton Oil to drill in Cardigan Bay; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Hamilton Oil is the operating company on licences granted in the 12th offshore round on blocks 107/1 and 107/6, which lie northwest of the Lleyn peninsula. It recently received approval to drill one exploratory well in block 107/1. Hamilton is not in breach of any aspect of these licences, nor of the special conditions attached to them. There are therefore no grounds on which these licences can be revoked.

Industrial Electricity

Mr. Churchill: To ask the President of the Board of Trade by how much in percentage terms industrial electricity prices have increased between April 1989 and April 1992 in respect of *(a)* large users, greater than 10 MW and *(b)* small users, less than 10 MW.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 10 December 1992]:* The available information is for four sizes of consumer. In real terms the percentage changes in prices between the second quarter of 1989 and the second quarter of 1992 have been as follows:

Size of consumer[1]		*Average percentage increase/ decrease*[2]
Small	Less than 880 kWh	+9·3
Medium	880 kWh to 8,800 kWh	−11·5
Moderately large	8,800 kWh to 150,000 kWh	−15·9
Extra large	Greater than 150,000 kWh	−11·0

[1] The size bands for consumers are defined in terms of the approximate annual purchases by the consumers within them.
[2] The percentage increase/decrease has been converted to real terms by excluding the effect of general inflation as measured by the GDP deflator at market prices.

Source: Energy Trends table 25.

Mr. Churchill: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the average price paid for electricity by large industrial electricity consumers (over 10 MW per site); and what are the equivalent tariffs among the United Kingdom's principal EC competitors.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 10 December 1992]:* The available information is given below. The prices relate to a standard consumer of 50 gigawatt hours per annum with a maximum demand of 10 megawatts for 5,000 hours a year. Prices are as at 1 July 1992 and have been calculated using average rates of exchange for July 1992.

	ECUs per 100 kilowatt hours	*Pence per kilowatt hour*
Netherlands	4·41	3·15
Luxembourg	4·62	3·30
France	4·81	3·44
Belgium	4·87	3·48
Greece	5·21	3·72
Ireland	5·27	3·76
United Kingdom	5·40	3·86
Italy	7·09	5·06
Spain	7·92	5·66
Germany	8·14	5·81
Denmark	8·22	5·87
Portugal	8·27	5·91

Source: Eurostat: Rapid Report Energy and Industry 1992/31.

It should be noted that prices paid by consumers using more than 50 gigawatt hours per annum, both in the United Kingdom and overseas, may vary according to the size of consumer and their pattern of use.

Coal Reserves

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make it his policy to publish estimates of the recoverable reserves from each of the 31 pits on the closure lists before any of them are closed.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 10 December 1992]:* The recoverable coal reserves at individual pits are a matter for British Coal. J. T. Boyd Company are considering the extent of the recoverable reserves at the 21 pits which are being examined by the coal review. Their conclusions will be published early in the New Year.

Post Office

Mr. Hain: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the Post Office's negative external finance limits for each year since 1979-80 up to and including the new plans to 1995-96; and what is the cumulative total at constant prices to 1992-93.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 10 December 1992]:* The actual and planned negative external financing limits of the Post Office for the period are as follows:

Actual	*£ million*
1979-80	34·0
1980-81	7·7
1981-82	13·4
1982-83	59·7
1983-84	61·5
1984-85	99·5
1985-86	74·7
1986-87	93·1
1987-88	80·0
1988-89	102·0
1989-90	101·9
1990-91	nil
1991-92	74·0
Planned	
1992-93	66·0
1993-94	181·0
1994-95	176·0
1995-96	158·0

The cumulative total from 1979-80 to 1995-96, expressed in 1991-92 prices, would be £1,636·129 million.

Grants and Loans

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the total value of grants and loans that authorities in the Wirral and Chester travel-to-work area have received since 1984; how much of this money has been regional selective assistance, regional enterprise grants, regional development grants, expenditure by the English Industrial Estates Corporation or other sources; or if he will provide the information by local authority.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 3 November 1992]:* No grants and/or loans made by the Department to

authorities in the Wirral and Chester travel-to-work area take the form of regional selective assistance, regional enterprise grants and/or regional development grants. Information on any other form of grants or loans by my Department to such authorities could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

INDEX TO THE

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 215**

SESSION 1992–93

30th November—11th December 1992

SCOPE OF THE INDEX, ARRANGEMENT AND ABBREVIATIONS

This index is derived from the House of Commons Library's Parliamentary On-Line Information System (POLIS), and the subject terms used are based on those used in POLIS. There are often changes in column numbering, etc, between the daily part or weekly Hansard (which simply collects together the daily parts without revision) and the bound volume. The index for the bound volume is revised to take account of these changes and cannot therefore, be used in connection with the daily part or weekly Hansard. For these versions use the Fortnightly Index.

Scope and arrangement of the Index

Oral and Written Parliamentary Questions are indexed under subject headings and the names of Members asking and Ministers replying to them. Questions are not listed under the names of Departments replying. Departmental listings can be arrived at indirectly by looking under the names of the Minister(s) of that Department. There are, however, the headings 'Northern Ireland', 'Scotland', and 'Wales' under which one can find not only most Questions answered by the Northern Ireland Office, Scottish Office, Welsh Office but also Questions about these areas of the United Kingdom which are answered by other Departments. Ministerial statements are indexed under subject headings, under 'Ministerial statements' and the names of Ministers making them and Members speaking on them. General debates are indexed under broad subject headings and under the names of all Members and Ministers taking part. Debates on legislation (Bills, Orders, Regulations etc.) are indexed under the name of the Bill, Statutory Instrument etc, under subject headings and under the names of those taking part.

Rulings and Statements by Speaker and deputies are brought together under the heading Speaker's rulings and statements.

Other contributions by Speaker and deputies appear under the heading Speaker.

Opposition Day Debates, Estimates Day Debates and Standing Order No. 10 applications are listed under those respective headings and under subject headings too.

The date of each item except Parliamentary Questions is inserted immediately before the reference.

Members' names are given in the form by which they prefer to be known and are printed in bold italics. Under their names, entries are arranged under one of the two headings *Debates etc* (to include interventions on statements, points of order and so on) or *Questions*.

Abbreviations

Bills 1R = first reading, 2R = second reading, Money res = money resolution, Com = Committee stage, Rep = Report stage, 3R = third reading, amendt/amendts = amendment/amendments, * = matter taken formally, without debate.

Column numbers followed by the letter W refer to Written Questions. These appear at the end of each daily part or volume with their own sequence of column numbers printed in italics.

A1
Motorways 203w

A5
Surveys 202w

A6
819-20w

A12
Dual carriageways 94w

A27
Road construction 91-2w

A34
Road traffic (08:12:92) 820-6

A38
Surveys 204w

A487
Bypasses 245w

A494
Road traffic 761w

Abbott, Ms Diane
Debates etc.
Banking Coordination (Second Council Directive) Regulations 1992 (10:12:92) 1060
Questions
AIDS, Dentistry 74-5w
Bereavement counselling, Government grants 75w
Economic situation 768w
Hospital waiting lists 678
Housing, Inner city areas 839
Judiciary, Training 195w

Abortion
RU486 126w
Scotland 789w

Absent parents
4
Maintenance 422w

Access to buildings
Accident & emergency departments 690w

Access to countryside
Forestry Commission 194w, 789-90w

Accident & emergency departments
324w
Access to buildings 690w
Greater Manchester 145w

Accidents
Transport of radioactive materials 780w

Accounting officers
306w

Accrington
Hard core unemployed 730w

Adley, Mr Robert
Debates etc.
Unfair competition (30:11:92) 25
Questions
Citizen's Charter, Public sector 465w
Educational finance, OECD countries 559w
Further education, Age participation rates 558-9w
Grant maintained schools, School transport 560w
Higher education admission, OECD countries 560-1w
Literacy, Young people 559w
Motorway service areas 693-4w
NHS trusts, Ambulance services 687w
Railway freight transport 466-7w
School choice 560w
School meals, Contracts for services 560w

Administration of justice
Magistrates' courts 15-6
Women 4w

Adoption of Roads (Compulsory Procedures) Bill 1992/93
Debates etc.
2R order read (11:12:92) 1174

Adult education
Community care 641-2w
Greater London 692w

Advanced Channel Express
285w

Advanced Technology Institute
64w

Advertising
Cars 257w
NHS trusts 505w

Advisory Committee on NHS Drugs
319w, 641w
Public appointments 78w

Advisory Committee on Safe Transport of Radioactive Material
465w

Advisory Conciliation & Arbitration Service
133, 727w
Expenditure 726w
Manpower 726-7w
Privatisation 132-3

Advisory Council on Race Relations
808-9w

Advisory Group on Older Workers
Public appointments 418-9w

Advisory services
Leasehold housing 207w

AEA Technology
see United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority

Aerospace industry
252w

Africa
Overseas aid 591-2

African Development Bank
Forest protection 492w, 494w
Manpower 494w

"Agenda for Peace"
(04:12:92) 499-564

Aggravated Vehicle Taking Act 1992
Questions
661w

Agricultural Development & Advisory Service
427w
Fees & charges 26w
Wales 26w

Agricultural Inspectorate
613-4w, 723-6w
Manpower 179w, 722w
Scotland 179w

Agricultural land
Land use 380
Lime 607-8w
Planning permission 382
Set-aside schemes 382-3
Wales 607-8w

Agricultural machinery
Capital investment 158w

Agricultural policy
Sustainable development 754w

Agricultural production
58-9w
Cereals 134w
Eggs 368-9w
GATT 383-4
Poultry 368-9w

Agricultural products
EC trade with developing countries 159w

Agricultural research
Scrapie 622-3w, 713w

Agricultural subsidies
Mushrooms 383
Oil seed rape 159w, 224w, 370w

Agricultural Training Board
379-80
Finance 379

Agriculture
EC law 511-3w
Overseas aid 591-2

Agri-environment action plan
712w
Sustainable development 712w

AIDS
82w, 520w
Dentistry 74-5w
Government grants 142-3w

Ainger, Mr Nick
Debates etc.
Fisheries (09:12:92) 890, 921-2, 932
Sea Fish (Conservation) Bill, Lords amendts (09:12:92) 958-9
Questions
Disability living allowance, Administrative delays 67w

Ainsworth, Mr Robert
Questions
A5, Surveys 202w
Citizen's Charter 201w
Federation of Civil Engineering Contractors 92-3w
Local government finance 702w
Railway travel 11w

Air force
Contracts for services 239w

Air force bases
Schools 363w

Air pollution
830w

Air pollution control
Channel tunnel 10w
EC law 288w, 572w
Government grants to local authorities 288w
Incinerators 289-90w
Industrial wastes 293w
Methyl bromide 577-8w
Pollution monitoring 291w

Air pollution monitoring
Manufacturing industries 391w

Air safety
Transport of radioactive materials 780w

Air transport
Insurance 89-90w

Aircraft noise
Helicopters 719-20w
Northern Ireland 719-20w

Airports
Bosnia-Herzegovina 816w
Local government revenue 210w
South East region 783-4w

Airports (Town & Country Planning) Bill 1992/93
Debates etc.
2R order read (04:12:92) 565, (11:12:92) 1175

Aitken, Mr Jonathan, Minister of State for Defence Procurement
Debates etc.
Rolls-Royce, Redundancy (04:12:92) 570-4
Questions
Air force, Contracts for services 239w
Amphibious forces, Warships 62w
Armed forces, Clothing 543-4w
Armed forces deployment, Waste disposal 792w
Arms to Iraq Inquiry 64w
Arms trade, Argentina 364-5w
Arms trade, Disclosure of information 364w
Arms trade, Iraq 63-4w, 166w

Aitken, Mr Jonathan—continued
AWACS, Offset arrangements 365w
AWE Aldermaston, Radioactive wastes 717-8w
Clyde submarine base, Compensation 544w
Defence equipment, Iraq 168w
Defence Research Agency, Official visits 240w
EH101 helicopters 60w
Helicopter carriers, Defence procurement 62-3w, 364w
HMS Challenger, Defence expenditure 364w
Merchant ships, Ship chartering 542w
Meteorological Office, Official visits 240-1w
Military aircraft, Defence procurement 721w
Ministry of Defence, Chlorofluorocarbons 239-40w
Ministry of Defence, Civil service dispersal 610w
Ministry of Defence, Civil service manpower 541w
Ministry of Defence, Contracts for services 720-1w
Nuclear submarines, Decommissioning 364w
Nuclear submarines, Nuclear reactors 792-3w
Nuclear weapons, Nuclear safety 719w
Nuclear weapons tests, Exservicemen 64-5w
RAF Support Command Maintenance Group, Official visits 241w
Royal Ordnance 611w
Shipbuilding, Defence contracts 59-60w
Space Research Corporation 169w
Technology transfer, Iraq 168w
UN Special Commission on Iraq, UK contributions 64w
Underwater Test & Evaluation Centre 545-6w
Warships, Repairs & maintenance 365w
Weir Group, Defence contracts 610w

Albania
Arms trade 4w, 651-2w
Human rights 567w
Overseas trade 116w

Alcoholism
629w
Community care 77w
Residential care 521w, (11:12:92) 1177-84

Alcohols
365w

Alexander, Mr Richard
Questions
Business questions 1002
Local government staff, Pay 837
Standing Advisory Committee on Future Medical Manpower 776-7w

Alison, Rt Hon Michael, Second Church Estates Commissioner
Questions
Baptism, Fees & charges 12w
Church Commissioners, Investment 363w
Church Commissioners, Sportsgrounds 363w
Church Commissioners, Women 12w
Clergy, Pensions 12w
RAF Elvington, Property transfer 402w
Unemployment, Selby 615w
Women clergy 12w, 13-4

Allason, Mr Rupert
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (02:12:92) 297
Fisheries (09:12:92) 889
Sea Fish (Conservation) Bill, Lords amendts (09:12:92) 943-4
Questions
Public holidays 136
Television licences, Fees & charges 679w

Allen, Mr Graham
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (01:12:92) 228-9
Questions
Clinton, Bill 734w
Immigrant detainees, Prison population 660-2w
Kidlington Prison, Immigrant detainees 551w

Alternative energy
256w, 347w
Energy research 255w

Alternative medicine
632w
Drugs 520-1w
Family doctors 629w, 685w
Health education 685w
Medical education 692w
Patient's Charter 685
Science & technology research 795w

Alternatives to prison
Legal aid 586
Prosecutions 586
Young offenders 230w, 662-4w

Alton, Mr David
Debates etc.
Unemployment (08:12:92) 712-3, 729-34
Questions
Business questions 1001
Consumer credit, Debts 767w
Merseyside Training & Enterprise Council, Finance 126
Parcelforce, Privatisation 674w
Red Star, Privatisation 393-4w, 674w

Alyn & Deeside
Urban programme 762w

Ambulance services
323w
NHS trusts 687w
North Wales 763w
Private sector 320-1w, 432w, 775w
West Midlands 76w

Amess, Mr David
Questions
Food industry, Basildon 384

Ammonium nitrate
Fertilisers 737w

Ammunition
Seas & oceans 543w
Waste disposal 542-3w

Amphibious forces
Warships 62w

Ancient monuments
Local authorities 576
Repairs & maintenance 575

Ancram, Mr Michael
Questions
Deregulation initiative 496w
GATT, Cereals 755w
GATT, Set-aside schemes 755-6w
Hospitals, Rural areas 628w
Income support, Mortgage interest rates 581w
Petroleum production, Bureaucracy 257w
Private investment 767-8w

Anderson, Mr Donald
Questions
Coal mine closures, Redundancy 672w

Anderson, Ms Janet
Questions
Abortion, Scotland 789w
Accident & emergency departments, Access to buildings 690w
Council tax, Residential care 472w
Local government revenue 206w

Anglo-Irish talks
Northern Ireland government 141

Angola
Peace negotiations 567-8w

Animal cruelty
Seals 23-4w

Animal experiments
554w
Cosmetics 114w
Genetic engineering 554w
Marine animals 336w

Animal feed
GATT 383

Animal welfare
Departmental responsibilities 466w
Poultry 754w
Shamrock Farms 215-6w
Transport of animals 756-7w

Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986
Questions
555w

Annual reports
Citizen's Charter 395w
Disabled Person's Transport Advisory Committee 694-5w
Next steps initiative 228-9w
NHS Management Executive 804w

Appeals
Privy Council 339-41w

Apples
EC grants & loans 623-4w
Tree felling 623-4w

Arable area payments scheme
380

Arbroath Infirmary
186w

Archaeological sites
Wootton Creek 453w

Architectural conservation
Kirkstall Abbey 575
Royal Holloway & Bedford New College 798w

Archives
BBC 457-8w
Local government reform 709w

Argentina
Arms trade 364-5w
International Atomic Energy Agency 568w
Overseas trade 350w

Armagh
Street lighting 597w

Armed conflict
Bosnia-Herzegovina 85-6w, 391-2, 589-90, 993, 995

Armed forces
Clothing 543-4w

Armed forces casualties
Inquiries 611-2w

Armed forces deployment
Bosnia-Herzegovina 60-1w, 166w, 391
Diego Garcia 63w
NATO 714w
Postal services 60-1w
United Nations 652-4w
Waste disposal 792w
Windsor Castle 716w
Yugoslavia 63w, 543w

Armed forces discharges
794w

Armed forces housing
Property transfer 168w
South Yorkshire 168w

Armed forces pay
Bosnia-Herzegovina 805w

Armed forces training
Brecon Beacons National Park 62w, 541-2w

Armed forces training—continued
Defence land 805w
Iran 544w
Iraq 544w

Arms control
Chemical weapons 459-61w
Riot control weapons 459-60w

Arms experts
Matrix Churchill 20w

Arms to Iraq Inquiry
31w, 64w
Lawrence, Tess 307w

Arms trade
Albania 4w, 651-2w
Argentina 364-5w
Azerbaijan 655w
Departmental records 219-20w
Disclosure of information 219w, 364w
Iran 166w, 656w, 665w
Iraq 20w, 63-4w, 166w, 219-20w, 247w, 364w, 440-1w, 467w, 656w, 663w, 665w, 816w
Kosovo 2w

Armstrong, Ms Hilary
Questions
Hard core unemployed 135
Local government revenue, Durham County Council 150w

Army
716-8w
Defence equipment 544w

Army in Northern Ireland
63w

Army strength
Harrier aircraft 60w

Arnold, Mr Jacques
Questions
CFE Treaty 315-6w
Disability living allowance 7-8
Export credit guarantees, South America 252
Family doctors, Budgeting 630w
Invalid care allowances, Earnings rules 68w
Overseas aid 591

Arnold, Sir Thomas
Questions
Balance of trade, UK trade with EC 441w
Commercial Court, Judges 751w
Elephants, Nature conservation 207-8w
European Commission, Interpreters 316w
Fraud, Trials 198w
Hong Kong, Democracy 458w
Overseas investment, EC countries 441-2w
Stockport bypass, Public inquiries 819-20w
Tanzania, Ports 557w
UK membership of EC 429-30w
Young offenders, Convictions 412w

Arrest warrants
Community charge 192w

Arrests
410-2w
Narmada dam 810w
Scotland 508-9w

Art works
Insurance 324-5w
Royal residences 43w, 548w

Arthritis
773-4w

Arts Council
581, (11:12:92) 1123-33

Arts Council grants
Orchestras 455w

Arts finance
454w, 581-2
Ministerial statements (11:12:92) 1123-33

Asbestos
Health hazards 688w

Ascension Island
Cats 4w

Ashby, Mr David
Questions
Family doctors, Budgeting 629w

Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Debates etc.
Prince of Wales (09:12:92) 845-6
Questions
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed conflict 391-2, 993

Ashton, Mr Joseph
Debates etc.
Refugees, Bosnia-Herzegovina (30:11:92) 36
Questions
Betting & gaming duties, Football pools 306w
National lottery 326-7w
National lottery, Football pools 325-7w
National lottery, Premium bonds 326w

Ashworth Hospital
637-8w

Ashworth Hospital Inquiry
637-8w

Assisted areas
111w, 260-2
Brighton 587w
Coal mine closures 261
Wales 132w, 666w

Association for the Conservation of Energy
739w

Association of British Pharmaceutical Industry
77-8w

Asthma
76-7w

Astra Holdings
Documents 64w

Astra Training Services
Training & enterprise councils 132

Asylum & Immigration Appeals Bill 1992/93
Questions
555w

Ativan
321w

Atkins, Mr Robert, Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office
Questions
Bombings, Compensation 597-8w
Business premises, Downpatrick 737w
Business premises, Kilkeel 737w
Coastal erosion, Research 400-1w
Coastal protection, Expenditure 403w
Coastal protection, Northern Ireland 399-401w
Empty housing, House purchase 737-8w
Housing insulation, Northern Ireland 402w
Laganside Corporation, Audit 308-9w
Newry bypass, Road construction 683w
Northern Ireland Dept of Economic Development, Consultants 738w
Northern Ireland Office, Chlorofluorocarbons 133w
Northern Ireland Training & Employment Agency, Official visits 134w
NOW initiative, Northern Ireland 602-3w
Street lighting, Armagh 597w
Travelling people, Belfast 17-8w
Water meters, Northern Ireland 500-1w
Water supply, Northern Ireland 500-1w

Atkinson, Mr David
Debates etc.
Arts finance (11:12:92) 1130
Local Government (Overseas Assistance) Bill, 2R (11:12:92) 1118-21, 1142

Atkinson, Mr David—continued
Questions
Alcoholism 629w
Higher education, Private sector 798w

Atkinson, Mr Peter
Debates etc.
Public expenditure, Scotland (02:12:92) 276-7
Questions
Common agricultural policy 367w
Extradition, Republic of Ireland 451w
Foreign investment in UK, North East region 30w
Road construction, Expenditure 92w
Road safety, Expenditure 10w

Attendance allowance
Social security recipients 232w
Stoke on Trent 345w

Attorney General
Chlorofluorocarbons 195w
Ministerial duties 452w

Audio recordings
Taxation 497w

Audit
Cardiff Bay Development Corporation 305w
Laganside Corporation 308-9w
Student unions 120w

Audit Commission for Local Authorities in England & Wales
NHS finance 635w

Aujeszky's disease
511w

Austin-Walker, Mr John
Debates etc.
Racial Violence Bill, 1R (09:12:92) 852
Questions
AIDS 82w
British National Party, Publications 587
Dental services, Greenwich & Bexley Family Health Services Authority 630-1w
Dental services, NHS complaints 519w
Domestic wastes, Waste disposal 287w
Electricity generation, Refuse derived fuel 256w
Energy review 347w
Incinerators, Air pollution control 289-90w
Non-fossil fuel obligation 256-7w
School population, Thamesmead 477w

Autumn statement
772w
Business 990-1
Employment opportunities 135

Average earnings
174w
House prices 771w

AWACS
Offset arrangements 365w

AWE Aldermaston
Radioactive wastes 717-8w

Axle weights
Lorries 244-5w

Azerbaijan
Arms trade 655w

Badgers
Pest control 56-8w

Baker Committee
see Empty Government Residential Properties Task Force

Balance of payments
Libyan Arab Republic 449-50w
Treaty on European Union 989

Balance of trade
Mining equipment 590w
UK trade with EC 441w, 448w

Baldry, Mr Tony, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of the Environment
Questions
Battersea power station 295-6w

Baldry, Mr Tony*—*continued
Building regulations, Fees & charges 393-4w
Caravan sites 292-3w
Council house rents, Rent arrears 294-5w
Council house sales 296-300w, 578w
Council housing, Empty housing 294w
Homelessness 472w, 740-1w
Homelessness, Local government expenditure 741w
House condition survey 290w
Housing 842
Housing & elderly, Heating 573w
Housing associations, Empty housing 572w
Housing construction 393w
Housing construction, Essex 710w
Housing Corporation, Government grants 843
Housing improvement, Council tenants 394-5w
Housing investment programmes, Macclesfield Borough Council 844
Planning appeals, Opencast mining 301-2w
Planning permission, Charities 148w
Public buildings, Fires 156w
Public sector housing, Housing construction 740w
Rent arrears, Northamptonshire 150w
Rented housing, Housing associations 842
Sheltered housing 211w
Sheltered housing, Housing revenue accounts 152w
Sleeping rough, Greater London 573w
Solar power, Government buildings 206w
Succession 431w
Tenant's Charter, Languages 571w
Tenants' incentive scheme 473w
Town & country planning 151w
Town & country planning, Planning authorities 292w
Travelling people, Caravan sites 703w, 833-4

Ballots
Grant maintained schools 40w, 751w
National Parks 840-1
Peak Park Joint Planning Board 832-3

Bananas
EC external trade 157w

Bangladesh
Overseas aid 309w

Bank loans
Tax allowances 469-70w

Bank of Credit & Commerce International
105w
Price Waterhouse 105w

Bank of Credit & Commerce International Inquiry
Disclosure of information 105w

Bank of England
105w, (10:12:92) 1051-73

Bank services
Newspaper press 101-2w
Young people 770w

Banking Coordination (Second Council Directive) Regulations 1992
Debates etc.
(10:12:92) 1051-73

Bankruptcy
Legal costs 770w
Small businesses 770w

Banks
Interest rates 983-4

Banks, Mr Matthew
Questions
Railway network, EC law 593w
Railway travel, Franchising 201w
UK trade with EC 51w

Banks, Mr Robert
Debates etc.
Package Travel, Package Holidays & Package Tours Regulations 1992 (10:12:92) 1091-2

Banks, Mr Robert*—*continued
Refugees, Bosnia-Herzegovina (30:11:92) 36-7
Questions
Ancient monuments, Local authorities 576
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Concentration camps 816w

Banks, Mr Tony
Debates etc.
Arts finance (11:12:92) 1133
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (01:12:92) 157
Fisheries (09:12:92) 923-4
Local Government (Overseas Assistance) Bill, 2R (11:12:92) 1113, 1141-51, 1157
Members' speeches, Points of order (02:12:92) 368
Mink Keeping Order 1992 (08:12:92) 794, 797, 805-8
Paintings, Points of order (30:11:92) 43-4
Parliamentary security, Points of order (07:12:92) 594
United Nations (04:12:92) 533-6
Questions
Arts finance 581
Battersea power station 295-6w
Clinton, Bill 734w
Councillors, Travelling expenses 295w
Falkland Islands, Penguins 757-8w
Historic Buildings & Monuments Commission for England, Windsor Castle 680w
Homelessness, Greater London 829
Livestock, Waste disposal 384-5w
London Residuary Body 295w, 741w
Marimuthu, Mullai 757w
Members' travel, Bicycles 339w
Ministerial statements 593w
Mink, Farms 385-6w
Mink, Transport of animals 386w
Police firearms, Stop & search 735w
Prescription charges 142
Public buildings, Fires 156
Royal residences, Expenditure 457w
Royal residences, Fire prevention 457w
Seals, Animal cruelty 23-4w
Social Fund, Social security benefits rules 343-4w, 423-4w
USA, Elections 994
Windsor Castle, Fire prevention 95w
Windsor Castle, Fires 456w

Baptism
Fees & charges 12w

Barbecy Island
Marine nature reserves 131w

Barley
Food exports 368w

Barnes, Mr Harry
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (01:12:92) 175, 179-80, 234, (02:12:92) 349, 352
Refugees, Bosnia-Herzegovina (30:11:92) 33-4
Questions
Business questions 408, 1005
Council tax, Valuation 842
GATT, Common agricultural policy 382-3

Barron, Mr Kevin
Questions
Coal, Imports 251w
Coal mine closures, Assisted areas 261

Barrow in Furness
Unemployment 131-2

Basel Convention
835-6

Basildon
Food industry 384

Bates, Mr Michael
Debates etc.
Brotton & Skelton bypass, Public petitions (08:12:92) 819
Commercial Debt Settlement Bill, 1R (02:12:92) 287-9

Bates, Mr Michael*—*continued
Unemployment (08:12:92) 771-5
Questions
Hospital waiting lists, Patient's Charter 628w

Batiste, Mr Spencer
Debates etc.
Trade Boycotts Bill, 1R (09:12:92) 849
Questions
EC Consumer Affairs Council 254w
Electricity supply industry, Environment protection 255

Battered women
Legal aid scheme 18-20

Battersea power station
295-6w

Battle, Mr John
Questions
Family credit, Lone parent families 172w
Flats over shops initiative 706w
Housing, Inner city areas 839-40
Kirkstall Abbey, Architectural conservation 575
Local government revenue 706w
Maintenance, Social security benefits rules 171-2w
Repossession orders 796w
Right to buy 707-8w
Right to buy, Defective housing 708w
World Decade for Cultural Development, UK contributions 654w

Bayley, Mr Hugh
Debates etc.
Railway transport, Public petitions (30:11:92) 118
Questions
Citizen's Charter, Annual reports 395w
Council tax, Valuation 701w
Forestry Commission, Land acquisition 184-6w
Out-patients, Hospital waiting lists 628w
York Crown Court, Administrative delays 17

BBC
453w, 679w
Archives 457-8w
Broadcasting finance 576-7
Local broadcasting 583
S4C 584
Television licences 583

BBC External Services
652w
Cost effectiveness 652w

BCCI
see Bank of Credit & Commerce International

Beaches
Scotland 22w
Sea pollution 22w

Bechtel Corporation
28-9w, 415w

Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Questions
Business statements 402-3, 997-8
Council tax 138
Treaty on European Union 992-3

Bed & breakfast accommodation
Social security benefits 995

Beer
Measurement 677w

Beggs, Mr Roy
Questions
Electricity tariffs 254
Industrial energy prices 112w
Major Energy Users' Council 112w
Northern Ireland Dept of Economic Development, Consultants 738w
School administration, Northern Ireland 500w

Beggs, Mr Roy—continued
Steiner Schools Foundation 565w
Tibet, Human rights 670-1w

Beith, Rt Hon A J
Debates etc.
Banking Coordination (Second Council Directive) Regulations 1992 (10:12:92) 1052, 1065-7
Coastal protection (10:12:92) 1014
Fisheries (09:12:92) 859
Sea Fish (Conservation) Bill, Lords amendts (09:12:92) 959
Unfair competition (30:11:92) 23-4
Questions
House of Commons staff, Legal costs 682w
Interest rates 981-2
Palace of Westminster, Industrial health & safety 200-1w
Sunday trading 99w

Belfast
Social Fund 499-500w
Travelling people 17-8w

Belfast City Council
17w

Bell, Mr Stuart
Questions
Export credit guarantees 252-3
Homelessness 740-1w
Homelessness, Local government expenditure 741w
Primary education, Kent 750w
Public sector housing, Housing construction 740w

Bellingham, Mr Henry
Questions
Coastal protection, Nature conservation 226-7w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food, Staff canteens 366w
Older workers, Employment opportunities 131
Tipping of waste, Licensing 572w
Waste Management Industry Training & Advisory Board 571-2w

Bellwin scheme
Wales 825-6w

Benefits Agency
see Social Security Benefits Agency

Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (01:12:92) 154-5, 161-2, 173, 182, 188, 195, 201, (02:12:92) 292, 304-5, 326-36

Bennett, Mr Andrew F
Debates etc.
Coastal protection (10:12:92) 1036-9
Ministerial statements, Points of order (10:12:92) 1010-1
Questions
Armed forces training, Brecon Beacons National Park 62w
AWE Aldermaston, Radioactive wastes 717-8w
Bangladesh, Overseas aid 309w
Certification Officer, Re-employment 229w
Civil servants' business appointments 726w
Factory Inspectorate, Recruitment 222w, 229w
Health & Safety Executive, Re-employment 229w
Higher civil servants, Performance related pay 305-6w
Mining equipment 255-6
Prosecutions, Alternatives to prison 586
Public libraries, Greater Manchester 455w

Bentley, Derek
Inquiries 334w

Benzene
391-2w

Benzodiazepines
321w

Bereavement counselling
Government grants 75w

Beresford, Sir Paul
Debates etc.
Local Government (Overseas Assistance) Bill, 2R (11:12:92) 1111-4, 1148-9

Bermingham, Mr Gerald
Questions
Crown Prosecution Service 586-7
Probation & aftercare, Prisoners' release 100w

Betting & gaming duties
Football pools 306w, 769w
Tax yields 769w

Betting shops
6w
Gaming machines 6-7w
National lottery 43w
Opening hours 550w, 808w

Betts, Mr Clive
Debates etc.
Urban programme (03:12:92) 489-93, 496
Questions
Local government revenue, Capital investment 155w
Motor vehicle testing 784w
Training & enterprise councils, Finance 791w
Urban development corporations 208w
Vehicle Inspectorate 823w

Bicycles
Members' travel 339w

Billing
Dept of Trade & Industry 252w
Small businesses 252w

Bingham Inquiry
see Bank of Credit & Commerce International Inquiry

Birds
Pest control 827-8w

Birmingham
Vacancies 416-7w

Birmingham City Council
Educational finance 313w

Bivalve molluscs
Irradiated food 378-9

Blackburn
Railway network 594w

Bladder cancer
681w

Blair, Mr Tony
Debates etc.
Refugees, Bosnia-Herzegovina (30:11:92) 31
Questions
Clinton, Bill 658-60w
Secure accommodation, Costs 318w
Young offenders, Alternatives to prison 230w, 662-4w
Young offenders, Prisoners on remand 411w
Young offenders, Secure accommodation 217w, 318w
Youth custody, Prisoners on remand 217w

Blakenhurst Prison
Contracts for services 337-8w

Blind
Concessionary television licences 746-7w
Severe disability premium 5-6

Blom-Cooper Inquiry
see Ashworth Hospital Inquiry

Bloomfield Committee
see Dental Remuneration Review

Blunkett, Mr David
Questions
Accident & emergency departments 324w
Ambulance services 323w
Ambulance services, Private sector 320-1w, 432w, 775w

Blunkett, Mr David—continued
Ashworth Hospital 637-8w
Codex Alimentarius Commission 639w
Dental services 525-30w
Dentists, NHS 529-38w
Dentists, Pay 146-8w
Family doctors, Health education 804-5w
Health education, Urban programme 320w
Hospital beds, Scotland 788-9w
Hospital beds, Wales 608-9w
Limited list prescribing 79-82w
Loucas, Kypros 681, 775-6w
Medical research, NHS 321w
Mentally disturbed offenders 321w
Motor vehicles, Warning lamps 389-90w
NHS, Contracts for services 323-4w
NHS, Leasing schemes 105w
NHS, Private investment 322w
NHS finance 643-50w
NHS finance, Regional health authorities 633-4w
NHS internal market 321-2w
NHS Management Executive, Annual reports 804w
NHS Supplies Authority 639-40w
NHS trusts, Capital investment 104w
NHS trusts, Public sector borrowing requirement 104w
Nurses, Manpower 640-1w
Nutrition & health, Catering 642-3w
Nutrition Task Force 642w
Pay beds 322-3w
Personal social services, Standard spending assessments 537-42w
Private health services, Public sector borrowing requirement 104w
Residential care of children, Hertfordshire 637w
Social security benefits uprating, Local government finance 318-9w
Surgery 638w, 643w
Wigs, Child patients 231w
Wigs, NHS charges 231w

Board & lodging charges
69w

Board of Inland Revenue
see Inland Revenue

Boarding schools
Residential care of children 230w

Boateng, Mr Paul
Debates etc.
Judicial Pensions & Retirement Bill (HL), 2R (03:12:92) 426, 433-40, 450-1, 455, 478-81
Questions
Legal aid 15
Legal aid scheme 797-8w

Body, Sir Richard
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (01:12:92) 190, 195-6, 210
Questions
Wheat, Food exports 368w

Boeing
365w

Bomb disposal
Somalia 809w

Bombings
Compensation 597-8w
Glengormley 597-8w
Immunity certificates 241w
Insurance 743w
Lockerbie 622w
Newtownbreda 133-4w, 598w
Public buildings 733w
Shrewsbury Castle 743w

Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (01:12:92) 156, 165-6, 183, 186, 191
Questions
NATO, Armed forces deployment 714w
PERIFRA programme 111-2w

Bonsor, Sir Nicholas—continued
Royal British Legion, Tidworth 168w

Booth, Mr Hartley
Debates etc.
Social Security Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & Means res (30:11:92) 94-6
Questions
Family doctors, Budgeting 681-2
Handicap benefits 68w
Prescribed industrial diseases 681w

Bosnia-Herzegovina
Airports 816w
Armed conflict 85-6w, 391-2, 589-90, 993, 995
Armed forces deployment 60-1w, 166w, 391
Armed forces pay 805w
Chemical weapons 759w
Civil servants' visits abroad 558w
Concentration camps 816w
Military aircraft 2-3w, 213-4w, 241-2w
Ministerial statements (30:11:92) 30-8
Overseas aid 589
Peace keeping operations 611w, 672w
Refugees (30:11:92) 30-8
United Nations 672w

Bottomley, Mr Peter
Questions
Africa, Overseas aid 592
Animal welfare, Departmental responsibilities 466w
British Rail, Competition 594w
British Rail, Expenditure 695w
British Rail, Finance 594w
Drinking & driving, Publicity 823-4w
Earnings rules, Social Security Benefit (Amendment) Regulations 1992 503-4w
Electricity generation, Magnox reactors 832w
Mass media, Ownership 585
Railway industry, Capital investment 463w
Railway transport, Capital investment 820w
Road safety, Government grants to local authorities 821-2w
Roman Catholic Church, Church administration 747-8w
Smoking, Death 628w
Standard spending assessments, Greenwich 290-1w
Standard spending assessments, Inner London boroughs 289-90w
Student unions 120-1w
Student unions, Audit 120w
Student unions, Finance 120-1w
Student unions, Political activities 120w
Student unions, Sabbatical leave 121w
Universities 236w
Wages councils 52w, 172w, 222w

Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia, Secretary of State for Health
Questions
Dental services 679-80
Family doctors, Budgeting 681-3
Family doctors, Pay 319w
"Health of the Nation White Paper" 680-1
Health service staff, Pay 679
Hospital waiting lists 682
Loucas, Kypros 680-1
NHS finance, Regional health authorities 632-3w
NHS trusts 629w

Boundary Commission for England
16w

Boutros Ghali, Boutros
(04:12:92) 499-564

Bovine spongiform encephalopathy
225-6w
Wales 246-8w

Bowden, Mr Andrew
Debates etc.
Mink Keeping Order 1992 (08:12:92) 795, 801
Questions
Assisted areas, Brighton 587w

Bowden, Mr Andrew—continued
Business, East Sussex 743-4w
Hard core unemployed 730w
Hard core unemployed, South East region 730w
Local government social services, Fees & charges 775w
Transport of animals, EC law 756-7w

Bowis, Mr John
Questions
Business questions 1003-4
Income support, Social security benefits rates 420w
Jubilee line, Employment opportunities 135
Orchestras, Young people 582
River Thames, Bridges 389w
Theatres, Repairs & maintenance 548-9w
Tobacco, Health warnings 777w
Urban programme, Expenditure 152-3w

Boyce, Mr Jimmy
Questions
Economic policy 996

Boyds Mining Consultants
495w

Bradford
Hospital closures 777w

Bradford Royal Infirmary
777w

Bradley, Mr Keith
Questions
Income support, Social security benefits reductions 343w
Income support, Social security recipients 342-3w
Non-contributory invalidity pension 343w
Severe disability premium 6-7
Youth training 327w

Braille
Community care plans 761w
Prescription drugs 318w

Brandreth, Mr Gyles
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (01:12:92) 159
Plain Language Bill, 1R (08:12:92) 696-8
Small businesses, Bureaucracy (07:12:92) 651-4
Questions
Autumn statement, Business 991
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Civil servants' visits abroad 558w
British residents abroad, Voluntary organisations 482w
Jobclubs, Performance standards 173-4w
National lottery, Charities 579

Bray, Dr Jeremy
Debates etc.
Public expenditure, Scotland (02:12:92) 274

Brazier, Mr Julian
Debates etc.
United Nations (04:12:92) 503, 536-40
Questions
Balance of payments, Treaty on European Union 989
Independent Living Fund 233w
RNSD Eaglescliffe, Relocation of employees 793-4w
School Curriculum & Assessment Authority 395-6w

Brazil
Forest protection 492-4w
International Atomic Energy Agency 568w
Wood 441w, 494w, 591w

Breast cancer
Screening 128-9w
Wales 128-9w

Brecon Beacons National Park
Armed forces training 62w, 541-2w

Bridges
Lancashire 203w
River Thames 389w

Brierly Hall Hospital Bradford
777w

Brighton
Assisted areas 587w

"Britain in Europe"
566w

British Broadcasting Corporation
see BBC

British citizenship
Clinton, Bill 806-7w

British Coal Corporation
248-9, 495w, 499w
Electricity generation 446-7w
Investment 350w
Privatisation 745w

British Geological Survey
Disclosure of information 832w

British Legion
see Royal British Legion

British Museum
Fire prevention 307w

British National Party
Publications 587
Racial incitement 587

British Rail
11w, 466-7w, 818w, 820w
Competition 594w
Expenditure 695w
Finance 594w
Franchising 285w
Occupational pensions 11w
Performance standards 824w
Privatisation 11w, 91-2w, (30:11:92) 118, 283-4w, 667w, 779w
Vacancies 285w
Wales 667w

British Railways (No 4) Bill 1991/92
Debates etc.
2R order read (03:12:92) 377, (10:12:92) 979

British residents abroad
Members' correspondence 748-9w
Voluntary organisations 482w

British Steel Corporation
Severn bridge 499w
Subsidies 447w
Trade barriers 746w

British Waterways Bill (HL) 1990/91
Debates etc.
2R order read (03:12:92) 377, (10:12:92) 979

British Waterways Board
302w
Water supply industry 151w

Broadcasting
455w

Broadcasting controls
Terrorism 45w, 576-7

Broadcasting finance
BBC 576-7

Broadleaved woodland grant scheme
608w

Broadleaved woodlands
Government grants 608w
Wales 608w

Broadmoor Hospital
775-6w

Bronchitis
Industrial injuries 591w

Brooke, Rt Hon Peter, Secretary of State for National Heritage
Debates etc.
Arts finance, Ministerial statements (11:12:92) 1123-33

Brooke, Rt Hon Peter—continued
Questions
Art works, Insurance 324-5w
Arts finance 581-2
BBC 453w
BBC, Archives 457-8w
BBC, Broadcasting finance 576-7
BBC, Local broadcasting 583
BBC, S4C 584
BBC, Television licences 583
Broadcasting 455w
Broadcasting controls, Terrorism 45w, 576-7
Children, Play facilities 325w
Concessionary television licences 679w
Concessionary television licences, Blind 746-7w
Dept of National Heritage, Civil service manpower 547w
Dept of National Heritage, Contracts for services 678w
Dept of National Heritage, Departmental correspondence 101w
Gymnastics, Government grants 42w
Hillsborough Stadium Inquiry 453w
Historic buildings, Fire prevention 327w, 409w, 456w
Historic Buildings & Monuments Commission for England, Listed buildings 43w
Historic Buildings & Monuments Commission for England, Windsor Castle 679-80w
Longford Hall, Repairs & maintenance 548w
National lottery 326-7w, 453-4w, 679w
National lottery, Betting shops 43w
National lottery, Football pools 325-7w, 547w
National lottery, Premium bonds 326w
National lottery, Scotland 547w
Newspaper press, Bank services 101-2w
Objects in lieu of tax 325w
Orchestras, Arts Council grants 455w
Royal residences, Art works 43w, 548w
Royal residences, Expenditure 457w
Royal residences, Fire prevention 101w, 457w
Rugby 454-5w
Television licences, Fees & charges 679w
Television licences, Pensioners 583-4
Television licences, Sheltered housing 801w
Visual arts 456w
Windsor Castle 43-4w
Windsor Castle, Building repairs 44w, 580-1
Windsor Castle, Fire prevention 101w
Windsor Castle, Fire services 747w
Windsor Castle, Fires 409w, 456w, 549w, 579-81
Windsor Castle, Insurance 101w
Windsor Castle, Public access 100w

Bretton & Skelton bypass
Public petitions (08:12:92) 819

Brown, Mr Gordon
Debates etc.
Legal costs, Standing order no 20 applications (30:11:92) 39-40
Questions
EC economic policy 982

Brown, Mr Michael
Debates etc.
Fisheries (09:12:92) 908-12
Refugees, Bosnia-Herzegovina (30:11:92) 38
Standing Order No 20 applications, Points of order (30:11:92) 40, 41
Questions
Coal mine closures, Redundancy pay 495w
Coal mining, Subsidies 258w

Brown, Mr Nicholas
Questions
Amphibious forces, Warships 62w
Helicopter carriers, Defence procurement 62-3w
VAT 986

Browning, Mrs Angela
Debates etc.
Refugees, Bosnia-Herzegovina (30:11:92) 33
Social Security Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & Means res (30:11:92) 96-9
Unemployment (08:12:92) 709
Questions
Autumn statement, Business 990-1
Family credit, Telephone services 66w
Potato marketing scheme 367w

Bruce, Mr Ian
Debates etc.
Unfair competition (30:11:92) 26
Questions
Fish diseases, Government laboratories 366w

Bruce, Mr Malcolm
Debates etc.
Package Travel, Package Holidays & Package Tours Regulations 1992 (10:12:92) 1074-3, 1080, 1088-91
Questions
Coal mine closures 250
Coal mine closures, Coal reserves 834w
Unemployment, EC countries 173w

Brunner, Alois
Extradition 749w

Budgen, Mr Nicholas
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (01:12:92) 150-1, 153, 162, 164, 167-8, 205-7, (02:12:92) 291, 312, 352-4, 357

Budgeting
Family doctors 629-30w, 681-3, 685-6
Prescriptions 81w, 689w

Budgeting loans
343-4w, 423-4w

Building industry
709w
Industrial accidents 612w

Building regulations
Fees & charges 393-4w

Building repairs
Windsor Castle 44w, 580-1

Building societies
Mortgage interest rates 48-9w

Building Societies Commission
(10:12:92) 1051-73

Building Societies (EFTA States) Order 1992
Debates etc.
(30:11:92) 44

Burden, Mr Richard
Debates etc.
Unemployment (08:12:92) 717
Questions
Business questions 1002-3
Financial Information Project Systems, West Midlands Regional Health Authority 81w, 803w
Hospital waiting lists 682
Low pay, Prosecutions 616-7w
Manufacturing industries, Redundancy 392
Midland Metro 11w
Wages councils 616w

Bureaucracy
Business 389
Petroleum production 257w
Small businesses (07:12:92) 651-74

Burglary
Car boot sales 95-6w
Lawrence, Tess 334w

Burns, Mr Simon
Questions
Cellular phones, Counterfeit manufacturing 32w
Disability living allowance, Social security recipients 67w

Burns, Mr Simon—continued
Farmers, VAT 813-4w
London International Financial Futures & Options Exchange, Tax allowances 431w
Speed limits 94-5w
Windsor Castle, Fires 456w

Burt, Mr Alistair, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of Social Security
Questions
Board & lodging charges 69w
Child benefit, Expenditure 505w
Child benefit, Multiple births 71w
Child benefit, Social security benefits uprating 343w
Child Support Act 1991 4
Child Support Agency 4-5
Child Support Agency, Low incomes 4
Child Support Agency, Manpower 342w
Child Support Agency, Publicity 68w, 680w
Child Support Agency, Social security claims 342w
Community care grants, Expenditure 749-50w
Dept of Social Security, Civil service dispersal 503w
Dept of Social Security, Civil service manpower 341w
Dept of Social Security, Disabled workers 749w
Dept of Social Security local offices, Computer applications 69w
Dept of Social Security local offices, Repairs & maintenance 501w
Disability living allowance, Administrative delays 680w
Family benefits 69w
Family credit, Earnings rules 66w
Family credit, Lone parent families 172w
Family credit, Social security claims 66w
Family credit, Surveys 171w
Family credit, Telephone services 66w
Housing benefits, Social security benefits rules 502-3w
Income support, Mortgage interest rates 581w
Income support, Residential care 71-2w
Income support, Social security benefits rates 420w, 680w
Income support, Social security benefits reductions 72w, 343w
Income support, Social security recipients 342-3w
Income support, Water charges 70w, 419-21w
Maintenance, Absent parents 422w
Maintenance, Social security benefits rules 170-2w
Means tested benefits, Take-up 344w
National Insurance Fund, Personal pensions 421-2w
National Insurance Fund, Treasury grant 421w
National Insurance Fund, Treasury supplement 421w
National Insurance Fund, Unemployment 421w
Personal income 504w
Social security benefits, Low incomes 67w
Social security benefits, Marginal tax rates 67w
Social security benefits disqualification 800w
Social security benefits rates 419w
Social security benefits rules, Travelling people 68w
Social security benefits rules, Young people 503w
Social security claims, Women 70-1w
Social security recipients, Water charges 70w
Wages councils 750w
War pensions, Social security benefits rules 422w

Bus lanes
Wales 130w

Bus services
Privatisation 286w
Traffic Commissioners 695w

Business
141-2, 690
Autumn statement 990-1
Bureaucracy 389
Debts (02:12:92) 287-9
East Sussex 743-4w

Business motions
(04:12:92) 566

Business premises
Downpatrick 737w
Kilkeel 737w

Business questions
403-12, 998-1009

Business statements
402-3, 997-8

Butcher, Mr John
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (01:12:92) 176, 184-5, 194-5, 198-9, (02:12:92) 336-7, 346, 350
Questions
Employment training, Age participation rates 221w
Overseas trade, USA 262-3

Butler, Mr Peter
Questions
Family benefits 69w

Butter
BC free food scheme 384-5

Butterfill, Mr John
Debates etc.
Banking Coordination (Second Council Directive) Regulations 1992 (10:12:92) 1054, 1058, 1067-8
Questions
Economic policy 988
Small businesses 767w

Buxton
Listed buildings 548w

Bye outs
Greater Manchester Buses 696w

Byers, Mr Stephen
Debates etc.
Judicial Pensions & Retirement Bill (HL), 2R (03:12:92) 446-51
Questions
British Rail, Privatisation 11w
Class sizes, Primary education 29w, 36-8w
Income support, Residential care 71-2w
Manufacturing industries, Northern region 249w
Schools, Educational standards 36w
Urban areas, Government grants 703w

Bypasses
A487 245w
Road construction 205w
Transport supplementary grants 205w

Caernarfon
Road traffic 827w

Calcium
Prescriptions 139-41w

Callaghan, Mr Jim
Questions
M66, Road construction 204w

Cameroon
Elections 440w
Human rights 316-7w
Overseas aid 427w
Political prisoners 311w

Cannell Label
405-6
Standing Order No 20 applications (02:12:92) 284

Campaign for Cold Weather Credits
571w

Campbell, Mrs Anne
Questions
Agricultural policy, Sustainable development 754w
Council tax, Students 843
Environmentally sensitive areas, Marginal land 624w
Hospitals 518w
Plutonium 346w

Campbell, Mr Menzies
Debates etc.
Fisheries (09:12:92) 857
Sea Fish (Conservation) Bill, Lords amendts (09:12:92) 968-70
Questions
Azerbaijan, Arms trade 655w
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Military aircraft 213-4w, 224w
Military aircraft, Defence procurement 721w

Campbell, Mr Ronnie
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (02:12:92) 339
Fisheries (09:12:92) 919-21
Unemployment (08:12:92) 712
Questions
Coal, Exports 137
Local government functions, Northumberland 705w
Training & enterprise councils, Finance 127-8

Campbell Committee
see Standing Advisory Committee on Future Medical Manpower

Campbell-Savours, Mr D N
Debates etc.
Arts finance (11:12:92) 1132
Health Select Committee, Points of order (08:12:92) 694
Local Government (Overseas Assistance) Bill; 2R (11:12:92) 1136-7, 1151
One stop shop initiative (03:12:92) 420
Unfair competition (30:11:92) 27
Questions
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed conflict 589
Broadcasting 455w
Business questions 1007
Employment level, Northern region 129-30
GATT 510w
GATT, Food prices 713w
GATT, Set-aside schemes 381
House of Commons staff, Legal costs 682w
Members' allowances 430w
Ministers, Legal costs 665w
Potato Marketing Board 712-3w
Scrapie, Agricultural research 622-3w, 713w
Slaughterhouses 626w
Slaughterhouses, EC law 625-7w
Slaughterhouses, Food hygiene 818w
VAT 986
Wildlife incident investigation scheme 383-4w
Wildlife incident investigation scheme, Finance 383w, 509w
Wildlife incident investigation scheme, Northern Ireland 308w
Wildlife incident investigation scheme, Scotland 23w

Canavan, Mr Dennis
Debates etc.
Public expenditure, Scotland (02:12:92) 275
Questions
Privatisation, Income 770w
Unemployment 173w

Cancer
Medical treatments 246w
North Wales 246w

Cancer hazards
Non-ionizing radiation 73w

Cann, Mr Jamie
Questions
EC economic policy 984-5
Hospital waiting lists 432w

Canthaxanthin
Food additives 623w

Capital investment
991-2
Local government revenue 155w, 570w

Capital punishment
Pakistan 85w

Car boot sales
Burglary 95-6w

Car industry
689

Car ownership
Wales 243-4w

Car tax
Tax yields 102w

Car Tax (Abolition) Bill 1992/93
Debates etc.
Royal Assent (03:12:92) 424

Caravan sites
292-3w
Gypsies 669w
Travelling people 703w, 763-4w, 833-4
Wales 763-4w

Caravan Sites Act 1968
Questions
292-3w

Cardiff Bay barrage
28-9w
Consultants 415w
Contracts for services 29w

Cardiff Bay Development Corporation
29w
Audit 305w
Consultants 28-9w

Cardiff Prison
Young offenders 759-60w

Cardigan Bay
Dolphins 667w
Petroleum exploration licences 832-3w

Carer structure
Women 177-8w

Carers
Citizen's Charter 82-4w

Caring Costs Campaign
1002-3

Carlile, Mr Alex
Questions
Agricultural land, Lime 607-8w
Assisted areas, Wales 132w
Broadleaved woodlands, Government grants 608w
Commonwealth of Independent States, Fascism 88w
Conifers, River pollution 506-7w, 787-8w
Dairy Crest, Factory closures 765w
Development Board for Rural Wales, Public sector housing sales 132w
District health authorities, Public appointments 132w
Floods, Wales 397
Germany, Fascism 88w
Illegal immigrants, Greater London 734w
Marine nature reserves, Bardsey Island 131w
Ministers, Legal costs 466w
National savings 104w
NHS trusts, Advertising 505w
NHS trusts, Contracts of employment 606w
NHS trusts, Public appointments 606-7w
Premium bonds 103w
Prison Service, Public appointments 478w

Carlile, Mr Alex—continued
River pollution, Wales 608w
Severn bridge, Road tolls 785w
Severn bridge, Road works 785w
Student accommodation, Housing associations 607w
Taxis, Greater London 784-5w
Tourism, Income 609w
Unemployment, Wales 765w
Wages councils 790w
Wind power, Electricity generation 497w
Wind power, Wales 744w

Carlisle
Youth employment 615w
Youth unemployment 173w

Carlisle, Mr John
Questions
National lottery 454w

Carlisle, Mr Kenneth, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of Transport
Debates etc.
A34, Road traffic (08:12:92) 822-6
Road Traffic (Driving Instruction by Disabled Persons) Bill, 2R (11:12:92) 1170-2
Questions
A1, Motorways 203w
A5, Surveys 202w
A12, Dual carriageways 94w
A27, Road construction 91-2w
A38, Surveys 204w
Bypasses, Road construction 205w
Bypasses, Transport supplementary grants 205w
Cars 697w
Catalytic converters 388-9w
Construction materials, Quality control 819-20w
Disabled passengers' scheme, Road tax 464w
Drinking & driving, Publicity 823-4w
Driver & Vehicle Licensing Agency, Manpower 783w
Driving Standards Agency, Manpower 822w
Exhaust emission controls, Motor vehicle testing 388w
Federation of Civil Engineering Contractors 92-3w
Health & Safety Executive, Transport of radioactive materials 781-2w
Ilkley bypass 695w
International Maritime Organisation, Transport of radioactive materials 462w, 597w
Lorries, Licensing 286w
M1, Road works 202w
M25, Road works 284w
M66, Road construction 204w
Motor vehicle registration 205w
Motor vehicle testing 784w
Motor vehicles, Warning lamps 389-90w
Motorcycles, Engines 698w
Motorcycles, Motor vehicle parts 389w
Motorcycles, Road accidents 596w
Motorway service areas 693-4w
Motorways, Road works 782-3w
Motorways, Telephones 202-3w
Parking offences, London boroughs 697w
Road construction 203-4w
Road construction, Expenditure 92w
Road construction, Sites of special scientific interest 694w
Road humps 202w
Road safety, Expenditure 10w
Road safety, Government grants to local authorities 821-2w
Road safety, Publicity 94w
Road salting & gritting, Research 782w
Road traffic 286w
Road traffic, Hypermarkets 93w
Road traffic control 93-4w
Road traffic control, Rutland County 698w
School transport, Road safety 463-4w
Severn bridge, British Steel Corporation 499w

Carlisle, Mr Kenneth—continued
Severn bridge, Road tolls 785w
Speed limits 94-5w
Speed limits, Hertfordshire 595w
Stockport bypass, Public inquiries 819-20w
Traffic Commissioners, Staffordshire 464w
Transport of radioactive materials 462-3w, 465w, 596-7w, 780-1w
Transport of radioactive materials, EC action 697w
Transport of radioactive materials, Plutonium 781w
Transport of radioactive materials, Road safety 781w
Transport of radioactive materials, Safety standards 463w
Transport of radioactive materials, Sea transport 596-7w
Transport of radioactive materials, Shipping accidents 597w
Vehicle Inspectorate 823w
Vehicle Inspectorate, Manpower 820-2w
Wyre Piddle bypass 595w

Carpal tunnel syndrome
681w

Carpet industry
Scotland 192w

Carrington, Mr Matthew
Debates etc.
Road Traffic (Driving Instruction by Disabled Persons) Bill, 2R (11:12:92) 1163, 1167-8
Questions
Council tax 701w
Energy review 446-7w
Visual arts 456w

Cars
697w
Advertising 257w

Carttiss, Mr Michael
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (02:12:92) 334

Cash, Mr William
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (01:12:92) 154, 159-60, 163, 176-7, 185, 187, 189, 199-200, 204-37, (02:12:92) 294-7, 309, 354
Questions
Alternative energy 347w
Coal mine closures 249-50

Casualties
Taking & driving away 7w

Catalytic converters
388-9w

Catamarans
Shipping safety 285-6w

Catering
Nutrition & health 642-3w

Cats
Ascension Island 4w

Cattle
Export of live animals 385w

CD-ROM
Official Report 201w

Cellular phones
Counterfeit manufacturing 32w

Central Office of Information
Royal family 795w

Cereals
Agricultural production 134w
EC countries 817w
GATT 755w
Northern Ireland 134w, 228w
Republic of Ireland 225w

Certification Officer
Re-employment 229w

Cervical cancer
Screening 75w

Cetaceans
Nature conservation 707w

CFE Treaty
315-6w

Chairman of Committee of the Whole House
Debates etc.
Amendments & new clauses (01:12:92) 148-50, 154, 155, 156, 159, 161, 164, 165, 166, 167, 168, (02:12:92) 293, (07:12:92) 601-2, 619, 623
Calling of Members (01:12:92) 158, 164, (02:12:92) 347
Calls to order (01:12:92) 218, (02:12:92) 290, 331, 336
House of Commons divisions (01:12:92) 161, 164, 167
Members' conduct (02:12:92) 341
Members' interventions (01:12:92) 187, 194, 195, 207, 229, 232, (02:12:92) 346, (07:12:92) 630
Members' speeches (01:12:92) 222, 223, 224, 232, (02:12:92) 290, 296
Members' speeches, Quotations (02:12:92) 294
Points of order (01:12:92) 148-68, 222, (02:12:92) 290-3, 336-7, 347-54, 358, 368
Scope of debate (01:12:92) 174, 184-5, 226, 230, 235-6, (02:12:92) 295, 334, (07:12:92) 616, 624

Challenge to jury
198w

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster
Contracts for services 657w

Chancellor of the Exchequer
see Treasury

Channel Islands
Drug crimes 987
Proceeds of crime 987
War crimes 7-8w, 611w, 735w, 793w

Channel tunnel
Air pollution control 10w
Railway freight transport 11w
Railway travel 818w
Transport of radioactive materials 697w

Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Questions
Agricultural products, EC trade with developing countries 159w
Bananas, EC external trade 157w

Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Debates etc.
A34, Road traffic (08:12:92) 820-2
Refugees, Bosnia-Herzegovina (30:11:92) 33
Questions
Manufacturing industries 259

Charities
Disqualifications 690w
Income 577-8
National lottery 577-9
Planning permission 148w
Scotland 690w
VAT 102w

Charterline
228w

Chemical & biological warfare
Defence research 160-3w
International conferences 164w
Military alliances 160-3w

Chemical weapons
164w
Arms control 459-61w
Bosnia-Herzegovina 759w
Yugoslavia 164w

Cheshire
Development areas 117w
Oil refineries 52w, 54w

Cheshire Regiment
805w

Child benefit
Citizen's Charter 393
Expenditure 505w
Multiple births 71w
Social security benefits uprating 343w

Child patients
Wigs 231w

Child Support Act 1991
Questions
4

Child Support Agency
4-5
Low incomes 4
Manpower 342w
Publicity 68w, 680w
Social security claims 342w

Child Support Fees Regulations 1992
Debates etc.
(07:12:92) 636

Child workers
Colombia 458w
Imports 831w

Children
Deaf 415w, 506w
Dental health 237w
Dental services 237w
Hospices 186-7w
Play facilities 325w
Smoking 565w
Vaccination 317-8w

Children & Young Persons (Protection from Tobacco) Act 1991
Questions
777w

Children in care
75w, 774w
Local government social services 677
Telephone services 25w
Wales 25w

Children's Homes Staff Selection Inquiry
524w, 1002

China
Nuclear Suppliers Group 436w
Toys & games 832w

Chisholm, Mr Malcolm
Debates etc.
Public expenditure, Scotland (02:12:92) 280

Chlorofluorocarbons
293w
Attorney General 195w
Dept for Education 121-2w
Dept of Employment 177w
Dept of Health 74w
Dept of National Heritage 41-2w
Dept of Social Security 341w
Dept of the Environment 149w
Dept of Trade & Industry 346-7w
Developing countries 302w, 395w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office 1-2w
Home Office 5-6w
Lord Chancellor's Dept 196w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 55-6w
Ministry of Defence 239-40w
Northern Ireland Office 133w
Scottish Office 619-20w
Treasury 48w
Waste disposal 573w
Welsh Office 126w

"Choice & Diversity: A New Framework for Schools"
606w

Chorley & South Ribble Health Authority
Dental services 631w

Christmas boxes
232w, 681w

Church administration
Roman Catholic Church 747-8w

Church Commissioners
12w
Investment 363w
Sportsgrounds 363w
Women 12w

Church of England
Finance 13-4
Pension rights 13

Churches National Housing Coalition
760w

Churchill, Mr Winston
Debates etc.
Bombings, Points of order (03:12:92) 394
Questions
Army in Northern Ireland 63w
Business questions 405
Coal, Imports 447-8w
Coal mine closures, Consultants 495w
Coal mine closures, Redundancy 672w
Electricity generation, Imports 447w
Energy, Imports 590w
Gas reserves 498-9w
Industrial energy prices, Electricity tariffs 833-4w
Military aid to civil community, Industrial disputes 404-8w
Mining equipment, Balance of trade 590w
Nuclear weapons tests, Exservicemen 64-5w

Citizen's Charter
11w, 201w, 228w
Annual reports 395w
Carers 82-4w
Child benefit 393
Higher education 119w
London Underground 204w
Pensioners 11-2
Personal social services 82-4w
Public sector 465w

City action teams
Government grants 742-3w

City challenge
320w, 393w
Expenditure 152-3w, 208w

City grants
710w
Expenditure 392-3w
Wirral 392-3w

City of Bristol (Portishead Docks) Bill (HL) 1990/91
Debates etc.
Royal Assent (03:12:92) 424

Civil defence
Expenditure 299-301w
Local government expenditure 301w

Civil list
220w, 748w
Consolidated Fund 748w

Civil servants
Medical records 123w

Civil servants' business appointments
726w

Civil servants' visits abroad
Bosnia-Herzegovina 558w

Civil service
Contracts for services 547w

Civil service agencies
801w
Dept of the Environment 286-7w
Industrial health & safety 286-7w

Civil service dispersal
Dept for Education 233w
Dept of Employment 417w
Dept of Health 520w
Dept of Social Security 503w
Dept of the Environment 472w

Civil service dispersal—continued
Dept of Trade & Industry 496w
Dept of Transport 387-8w
Export Credits Guarantee Department 253
Foreign & Commonwealth Office 436w
Home Office 551-2w
Inland Revenue 106-7w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 624w
Ministry of Defence 610w
Petroleum Engineering Directorate 745w
Treasury 468-9w
VAT 49w

Civil service manpower
48w
Dept for Education 234w
Dept of Employment 417w
Dept of Health 230w
Dept of National Heritage 547w
Dept of Social Security 341w
Dept of the Environment 207w
Dept of Trade & Industry 258w
Dept of Transport 203w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office 212w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 370w
Ministry of Defence 541w
Northern Ireland Office 308w
Office of Public Service & Science 465w
Scottish Office 620w
Treasury 102-3w
Welsh Office 414w

Clapham, Mr Michael
Questions
British Geological Survey, Disclosure of information 832w

Clappison, Mr James
Questions
Educational assessment 995-6

Clark, Dr David
Questions
Ammunition, Seas & oceans 543w
Ammunition, Waste disposal 542-3w
Armed forces, Clothing 543-4w
Armed forces deployment, Bosnia-Herzegovina 166w
Armed forces deployment, Yugoslavia 543w
Armed forces training, Brecon Beacons National Park 541-2w
Armed forces training, Defence land 805w
Arms trade, Argentina 364-5w
Arms trade, Disclosure of information 364w
Arms trade, Iraq 166w
Chemical weapons, Yugoslavia 164w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Costs 805w
Merchant ships, Ship chartering 542w
Nuclear weapons, Nuclear safeguards 651w
Peace keeping operations, Bosnia-Herzegovina 611w
Peace keeping operations, Yugoslavia 166w

Clark, Dr Michael
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (02:12:92) 340

Clarke, Mr Eric
Debates etc.
Mink Keeping Order 1992 (08:12:92) 799
Public expenditure, Scotland (02:12:92) 279
Questions
Advisory Conciliation & Arbitration Service 133

Clarke, Henry D
(07:12:92) 638-50

Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth, Secretary of State for the Home Department
Questions
Bombings, Public buildings 733w
Bombings, Shrewsbury Castle 743w
Clinton, Bill 658-60w, 734-5w
Clinton, Bill, British citizenship 806-7w
Home Office, Civil service dispersal 551-2w

Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth—continued
Home Office, Contracts for services 97w, 658w
Home Office, Departmental correspondence 96w
Home Office, Disabled workers 661w
Home Office, Operating costs 96-8w
Fire Precautions (Places of Work) Regulations 1992 99w
Guildford Four Inquiry 335-6w
Guildford Four Inquiry, Immunity certificates 218w
Immunity certificates 481-2w
Police firearms, Road blocks 807w
Prison Service, Public appointments 478w
Terrorism, Crime victims 555-6w
Terrorism, Police powers 552w
Trevi Group 479w, 662w
Visas, EC immigration 215w
War crimes, Channel Islands 7-8w, 735w

Clarke Foods
Knowsley (07:12:92) 638-50

Class sizes
37w
Primary education 29w, 36-8w

Clayton Committee
see Nutrition Task Force

Clelland, Mr David
Questions
Income tax, Working mothers 766w
Non-departmental public bodies 833

Clergy
Pensions 12w
Resignations 12w

Client Legislation Unit
136w

Clifton-Brown, Mr Geoffrey
Questions
Car industry 689
Lorries, Licensing 286w
Palace of Westminster, Energy conservation 799w
Road construction 203-4w
Set-aside schemes, Landlord & tenant 387
Tenant farmers 368w
Town & country planning, Planning authorities 292w
Training & enterprise councils 174w
Travelling people, Caravan sites 833-4

Climate Change Convention
578w

Clinical psychologists
Training 141w

Clinton, Bill
658-60w, 734-5w
British citizenship 806-7w

Closed circuit television
Scottish courts 191w

Clothing
Armed forces 543-4w

Clwyd
Community care grants 129w
GCE A level 603w
Gypsies 669w
Road safety 244w
Unemployment 665w

Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Debates etc.
Arts finance (11:12:92) 1125-7
Questions
BBC, Broadcasting finance 577
Royal residences, Art works 548w
Windsor Castle, Fires 580-1

Clwyd Health Authority
Hospital patients 244w

Clyde submarine base
Compensation 544w

Coal
Electricity generation 256w
Energy research 250w
Exports 137
Imports 251w, 447-8w
Production 582-6w

Coal mine closures
248-50, 250w, 251, 257
Assisted areas 261
Coal reserves 834w
Consultants 495w
Employment opportunities 305w
Employment training 176w, 220-1w
Public interest 448w
Redundancy 350w, 672w, 832w
Redundancy pay 495w
Wales 305w
Water pollution 706-7w

Coal Mines (Closure Review) Bill 1992/93
Debates etc.
1R (01:12:92) 145-6

Coal mining
34w, 251w, 582-6w
Germany 258w
Industrial health & safety 176-7w
Land pollution 125w
Subsidies 258w

Coal reserves
Coal mine closures 834w

Coastal erosion
Northern Ireland 400-1w
Research 400-1w

Coastal protection
Estimates days (10:12:92) 1012-50
Expenditure 403w
Nature conservation 226-7w
Northern Ireland 399-401w, 403w

Coastal zone management
(10:12:92) 1012-50

COCOM
see Coordinating Committee on Export Controls

Codex Alimentarius Commission
639w

Coe, Mr Sebastian
Debates etc.
Fisheries (09:12:92) 915-6

Coffey, Ms Ann
Questions
Health education, Government grants 565w
Kidney patients, Hospital waiting lists 77w

Coffins
EC law 461w

Cohen, Mr Harry
Debates etc.
Arts finance (11:12:92) 1130
Damages (Scotland) (No 2) Bill (HL), Committed to Committee of the Whole House (11:12:92) 1176
Mink Keeping Order 1992 (08:12:92) 807
Questions
Christmas bonus 232w
Fossil fuel levy, Nuclear power stations 107-8w
Legal aid scheme, Housing 302w
Magistrates' courts 16
Nuclear weapons, Nuclear safety 719w
Private detectives, Dept of Trade & Industry 107w

Cold weather payments
571w
Statistics 232w

Colombia
Child workers 458w

Colvin, Mr Michael
Debates etc.
United Nations (04:12:92) 510, 515-20
Questions

Colvin, Mr Michael—continued
Alternative energy 256w
Alternative energy, Energy research 255w
Divorce law, Law reform 387w
Energy conservation 739w
Marriage guidance, Government grants 217-8w
Relate 334w
Renewable Energy Advisory Group 255w

Commercial Court
Administrative delays 16-7
Judges 751w

Commercial Debt Settlement Bill 1992/93
Debates etc.
1R (02:12:92) 287-9
2R order read (11:12:92) 1175

Commission of the European Communities
see European Commission

Common agricultural policy
367w
Environmentally sensitive areas 817w
Fraud 377-8
GATT 382-3

Common fisheries policy
368w, (09:12:92) 853-940

Common land
471w

Commonwealth
310-1w

Commonwealth Development Corporation
Dominican Republic 310w
Grenada 310w

Commonwealth of Europe Bill 1992/93
Debates etc.
2R order read (11:12:92) 1174

Commonwealth of Independent States
Fascism 88w
Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty 435w

Community care
676-8
Adult education 661-2w
Alcoholism 77w
Council tax 81w
Drug abuse 77w
Finance 77w, 82w, 147-8w
Lancashire 686w
Local government expenditure 642w
Local government finance 432w, 685-6w
Local government services 233w
Local government social services 775w
Scotland 185-6w, 192w

Community care grants
343-4w, 423-4w
Clwyd 129w
Expenditure 749-50w
Wales 129w

Community care plans
Braille 761w
Handicapped 761w
Wales 761w

Community charge
Arrest warrants 192w
London boroughs 295w
Non-payment 295w
Scotland 192w

Community health services
518w

Community hospitals
628w

Community policing
Strathclyde 191w

Commuters
202w
Working hours 175w

Companies
Transport 130w

Companies Act 1985 (Disclosure of Branches & Bank Accounts) Regulations 1992
Debates etc.
(07:12:92) 636

Companies (Fees) (Amendment) Regulations 1992
Debates etc.
(07:12:92) 636

Companies Registration Office (England & Wales)
Consultants 29w

Company accounts
Partnerships 30-1w

Company cars
Taxation 102w

Company disclosure of information
Financial institutions (07:12:92) 636
Sanctions (09:12:92) 849

Company liquidations
Small businesses 357-8w

Competition
British Rail 594w
Contracts for services 393
Ministerial statements (30:11:92) 21-9

Composition labelling
Wines 55w

Comptroller & Auditor General
see National Audit Office

Computer applications
Dept of Social Security local offices 69w

Computer software
Monopolies 676w

Concentration camps
Bosnia-Herzegovina 816w

Concessionary television licences
679w
Blind 746-7w

Conditions of employment
EC countries 137

Conductive education
Dungannon 738-9w

Confederation of British Industry
259

Conference on Security & Cooperation in Europe
see European Security Conference

Confiscation orders
Drug crimes 806w

Congdon, Mr David
Questions
Business, Bureaucracy 389

Conifers
River pollution 506-7w, 787-8w
Scotland 787-8w

Connarty, Mr Michael
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (01:12:92) 165
Public expenditure, Scotland (02:12:92) 279-80
Questions
Industrial research, Research finance 263-4

Conservative Central Office
1006

Conservative Party
994

Consolidated Fund
Civil list 748w

Consolidated Fund Bill 1992/93
Debates etc.
1R (09:12:92) 1096

Consolidated Fund debates
Speaker's rulings & statements (03:12:92) 413

Construction materials
Quality control 819-20w

Consultants
Cardiff Bay barrage 415w
Cardiff Bay Development Corporation 28-9w
Coal mine closures 495w
Companies Registration Office (England & Wales) 29w
Energy review 585w
Northern Ireland Dept of Economic Development 738w

Consumer credit
Debts 767w

Consumer protection
Sales promotions 745-6w

Contaminated land registers
829-30, 830w, 831, 831w

Contracts
Land reclamation 576w
Plain English (08:12:92) 696-8
Tarmac Construction 140

Contracts for services
Air force 239w
Blakenhurst Prison 337-8w
Cardiff Bay barrage 29w
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster 657w
Civil service 547w
Competition 393
Council housing management 26w, 125w
Dept for Education 118w, 690-1w
Dept of Employment 181-2w, 731-2w
Dept of Health 144w, 688w
Dept of National Heritage 678w
Dept of Social Security 681-2w
Dept of the Environment 741-2w
Dept of Trade & Industry 676w
Dept of Transport 694w
Employment protection 323-4w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office 89w, 655w
Government car service 211w
Home Office 97w, 658w
Lord Chancellor's Dept 657-8w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 711-2w
Ministry of Defence 720-1w
NHS 28w, 323-4w, 763w
Northern Ireland Office 684w
Prison education services 98w, 353-4w
School meals 560w
Scottish Office 690w
Treasury 814w
Welsh Office 669-70w

Contracts of employment
Cox, Nigel 433w
NHS trusts 606w

Contributions Agency
see Social Security Contributions Agency

Control of Industrial Major Accident Hazards Regulations 1984
Questions
221-2w

Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species
150w, 317w
Wood 207w

Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Materials
498w

Convictions
Young offenders 412w

Conway, Mr Derek
Questions
Bombings, Public buildings 733w
Bombings, Shrewsbury Castle 743w
BC Energy Council 588-9w

Conway, Mr Derek—continued
Energy review 585w
European economic area, Switzerland 589w
May Day bank holiday 392-3
Offal, Import controls 755w
Shropshire Regimental Museum, Security 806w

Cook, Mr Frank
Debates etc.
Social Security Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways and Means res (30:11:92) 46
Questions
Business questions 1004

Cook, Mr Robin
Debates etc.
Unfair competition (30:11:92) 22-3
Questions
Coal mine closures 257
Manufacturing industries 260

Coombs, Mr Anthony
Debates etc.
Unemployment (08:12:92) 702
Questions
Asthma 76-7w
Basel Convention 835-6
Child Support Agency, Publicity 68w
Export credit guarantees 253
Manufacturing industries 984
Pakistan, Capital punishment 85w
Water pollution, Pollution monitoring 296w
Women clergy 12w

Coombs, Mr Simon
Questions
BBC, Broadcasting finance 576
Employment action 125-6, 180w
English Tourist Board 42w
Grant maintained schools 692w
Malawi, Overseas aid 309w
NHS finance 643w

Coordinating Committee on Export Controls
461w

Cope, Rt Hon Sir John, Paymaster-General
Questions
Betting & gaming duties, Football pools 306w, 769w
Car tax, Tax yields 102w
Drug seizures 430w, 987
Drug seizures, Wales 430w
EC budget 700w
EC Cohesion Fund 767w
Exchange rates, Manufactured exports 47w
Income tax, Working mothers 766w
Manufacturing industries, Unemployment 980-1
Proceeds of crime, Channel Islands 987
Public sector borrowing requirement, Taxation 986
Small businesses, Bankruptcy 770w
Tax allowances, Manufacturing industries 980
Tax yields, Whisky 980
Taxation 986
THORP 470w
Tobacco, Smuggling 812-3w
Treasury, Chlorofluorocarbons 48w
Treasury, Departmental correspondence 103w
Treasury, Environment protection 812w
UK membership of EC 429-30w
VAT 769w, 986
VAT, Charities 102w
VAT, Civil service dispersal 49w
VAT, Default surcharge 698-9w
VAT, Exports 698w, 766w
VAT, Farmers 813-4w
VAT, Horses 768w
VAT, Magazine press 699w
VAT, Sailing boats 104-5w
VAT, Tax rates & bands 985-6
VAT, Transitional arrangements 814w
VAT, Unpaid taxes 769-70w
VAT exempted goods 767w

Cope, Rt Hon Sir John—continued
VAT registration 699-700w
VAT registration, Small businesses 767w
VAT zero rated goods, EC law 569w, 766w
Wood, Imports 198w, 705w

Copyright (Computer Programs) Regulations 1992
Debates etc.
(30:11:92) 44

Corbyn, Mr Jeremy
Debates etc.
Departmental records, Points of order (07:12:92) 594
Lamont, Norman, Points of order (30:11:92) 44
Occupational Pensions Bill, Points of order (11:12:92) 1173, 1176
Refugees, Bosnia-Herzegovina (30:11:92) 36
Social Security Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & Means res (30:11:92) 45, 56, 60-1
Social Security Bill, Com (07:12:92) 596, 599, 611-4, 617, 618, 620
Standing Order No 20 applications, Points of order (30:11:92) 40
United Nations (04:12:92) 501, 506, 511, 519, 531, 540-6
Questions
Crisis loans, Floods 232-3w
Homelessness 145-6w
Homelessness, Greater London 146w
Housing Corporation, Government grants 306-7w
Priority routes, Expenditure 91w

Cormack, Mr Patrick
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (01:12:92) 230, 233, (02:12:92) 348
Questions
Business questions 408, 999-1000
Coal mine closures 251
Windsor Castle, Building repairs 580

Corporation tax
Occupational pensions 306w

Cory, Peter
Courts martial 61-2w

Cosmetics
Animal experiments 114w
EC action (07:12:92) 636-7

COST
795w

Cost per pupil
Educational publications 39w

Couchman, Mr James
Debates etc.
Unemployment (08:12:92) 707, 726-9

Council house rents
704w
Rent arrears 294-5w

Council house sales
296-300w, 578w, 701w
Local government revenue 242w, 700w, 706w

Council housing
Empty housing 294w
Smoke alarms 125w

Council housing management
Contracts for services 26w, 125w
Wales 26w, 125w

Council of Europe
7w
UK delegations 802w

Council of Ministers
314w, 437-40w, 664w
Disclosure of information 801-2w

Council tax
13-4w, 138, 701w
Appeals 13w

Council tax—continued
Community care 81w
Costs 770w
Discounts 156-8w
Greater London 138-9
Lancashire 770w
Nursing homes 13w
Residential care 472w
Scotland 237-8w, 508w
Single people 14w
Students 843
Transitional relief 237-8w, 701w, 815w
Valuation 12-3w, 508w, 701w, 841-2, 996

Council tax capping
841-2

Council tenants
Housing improvement 394-5w

Councillors
Travelling expenses 295w

Counterfeit manufacturing
Cellular phones 32w

Countryside Commission
623-4w

Courts
Police 359w

Courts martial
Cory, Peter 61-2w

Cousins, Mr Jim
Debates etc.
One stop shop initiative (03:12:92) 424
Questions
Arms to Iraq Inquiry 64w
Calcium, Prescriptions 139-41w
Emergency calls 5w, 117w
Girobank, Privatisation 117w
Hormone treatments, Per capita costs 137-9w
Industrial production, Surveys 46w
Inheritance tax, Tax yields 812w
Nationalised industries, External financing limits 106w
Prescriptions, Budgeting 81w

Cox, Nigel
Contracts of employment 433w

Cox, Mr Tom
Questions
Community care, Local government social services 775w
Prison staff, Public sector housing sales 733w
Racial discrimination, EC action 808w
Toys & games, China 832w

Crack
Drug seizures 551w

Craigie Hall
Repairs & maintenance 806w

Crow, Mr James
Questions
Pay settlements 768w

Credit cards
Disclosure of information 769w

Crime
327-34w
Licensing laws 191w

Crime prevention
Greater Manchester 807w
Housing estates 762w
Motor vehicle theft 409-10w
Wales 762w

Crime victims
Terrorism 555-6w

Crimes of violence
Racial attacks 556w, (09:12:92) 850-2
Railway transport 130w
Wales 130w

Criminal Justice Act 1991
Questions
Curfews 808w

Criminal proceedings
Scottish courts 359-60w

Crisis loans
Floods 232-3w

Crossrail Bill 1991/92
Debates etc.
2R order read (03:12:92) 377, (10:12:92) 979

Crown immunity
Parliamentary buildings 592w

Crown Prosecution Service
586-7
Vacancies 452w

Cryer, Mr Bob
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (01:12:92) 150, 214, (02:12:92) 348-9
Mink Keeping Order 1992 (08:12:92) 795
One stop shop initiative (03:12:92) 420-1
Prince of Wales (09:12:92) 846
Questions
Bentley, Derek, Inquiries 334w
Business questions 410, 1003
Council house sales 701w
Family credit, Surveys 171w
Family doctors, Budgeting 686
Lamont, Norman, Tenant eviction 306w

Cultural heritage
Science & technology 584

Cumbria
Fire services 216w
Low flying 403w

Cumbria Training & Enterprise Council
Finance 131-2

Cummings, Mr John
Questions
Employment training, Coal mine closures 176w, 220-1w
Employment training, Easington 176w

Cunningham, Mr Jim
Debates etc.
Social Security Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & Means res (30:11:92) 92-4, 99-100
Unemployment (08:12:92) 775-6
Questions
Industrial production 498w

Cunningham, Dr John
Questions
National income, EC countries 758w

Cunninghame District Council
Local government finance 786w

Curfews
Criminal Justice Act 1991 808w

Curriculum
Engineering education 40w
Further education 130w

Currie, Mrs Edwina
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (01:12:92) 205, 208, 211, 214, 222, 235, (02:12:92) 303, 309-12, 323-4, 352
House of Commons Chamber, Points of order (08:12:92) 694-5
Questions
Business questions 406
Housing, Inner city areas 839

Curry, Mr David, Minister of State for Agriculture
Debates etc.
Fisheries (09:12:92) 862, 870-1, 874, 877, 878-80, 882, 884-5, 889-91, 893, 899-900, 924-5, 931-6
Sea Fish (Conservation) Bill, Lords amends (09:12:92) 950-1, 959-60, 966, 969-71
Questions
Agricultural policy, Sustainable development 754w

Curry, Mr David—continued
Agricultural production 58-9w
Agricultural products, EC trade with developing countries 159w
Agriculture, EC law 511-3w
Agri-environment action plan 712w
Alcohols 365w
Apples, Tree felling 623-4w
Bananas, EC external trade 157w
Bivalve molluscs, Irradiated food 378-9
Butter, EC free food scheme 384-5
Cereals, EC countries 817w
Cereals, Republic of Ireland 225w
Common fisheries policy 368w
Early retirement 366w
EC law, EC internal trade 752-3w
Employment level, Rural areas 224w
Environmentally sensitive areas 224w, 368w
Environmentally sensitive areas, Marginal land 624w
"Fair Assessment Consultation Paper" 225w
Fish conservation 817-8w
Fish conservation, Water Resources Act 1991 370w
Fish diseases, Government laboratories 366w
Fishing, Fees & charges 511w
Fishing quotas 58w, 388-9
Food industry, Basildon 384
GATT 510
GATT, Cereals 755w
GATT, Food prices 713w
GATT, Set-aside schemes 510w, 755-6w
Group marketing grant 385-6
Marine animals, Fishing catches 158w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food, Chlorofluorocarbons 55-6w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food, Civil service dispersal 624w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food, Civil service manpower 370w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food, Contracts for services 711-2w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food, Departmental correspondence 157w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food, Disabled workers 753-4w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food, Operating costs 158w
Offal, Import controls 753w
Oil seed rape, Agricultural subsidies 159w, 224w, 370w
Potato Marketing Board 712-3w
Potato marketing scheme 367w
Salmon, Fish conservation 57w
Set-aside schemes, Flood control 714w
Sheep, Marginal land 713w
Sheep, National Farmers' Union 368w
Sheep premiums 57w
Wheat, Food exports 368w

Custodial treatment
Young offenders 480w, 552w

Customs & Excise
987

Dafis, Mr Cynog
Debates etc.
Arts finance (11:12:92) 1132
Forest protection, Public petitions (11:12:92) 1103
Refugees, Bosnia-Herzegovina (30:11:92) 35
Questions
Air pollution monitoring, Manufacturing industries 391w
BBC, S4C 584
Cancer hazards, Non-ionising radiation 73w
Common land 471w
Environment protection, EC regional policy 149w
Environment protection, Treasury 812w
Environmentally sensitive areas 368w
Solar power, Government buildings 206w

Dairy Crest
Factory closures 765w
Regional aid 27w
Wales 27w, 765w

Dairy products
Manpower 28w
Wales 28w

Dalyell, Mr Tam
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (01:12:92) 156-7, 171, 185, 189-90, (02:12:92) 318, 332
Fishing quotas, North Sea (01:12:92) 243, 246
One stop shop initiative (03:12:92) 419
Private Members' motions, Points of order (04:12:92) 567
Public expenditure, Scotland (02:12:92) 282
United Nations (04:12:92) 520-9, 559-60
Questions
Arms trade, Departmental records 219-20w
Arms trade, Iraq 247w
Balance of payments, Libyan Arab Republic 449-50w
Darwin initiative 292w
Drugs, Licensing 319w
Historic Royal Palaces Agency 457w
Lockerbie, Bombings 622w
Malaria, Disease control 311-2w
Philippines, Official visits 592-3w

Damages
Metropolitan Police 410w

Damages (Scotland) Bill (HL) 1992/93
Debates etc.
2R* (11:12:92) 1175-6

Damages (Scotland) (No 2) Bill (HL) 1992/93
Debates etc.
2R* (11:12:92) 1175-6

Dangerous Dogs Act 1991
Questions
549-50w

Darling, Mr Alistair
Debates etc.
Banking Coordination (Second Council Directive) Regulations 1992 (10:12:92) 1057-64, 1068-70
Questions
Bank of Credit & Commerce International Inquiry, Disclosure of information 105w
Charities, Disqualifications 690w
Economic situation 985

Dartmoor National Park
Ministry of Defence 640

Darwin initiative
292w

Davidson, Mr Ian
Debates etc.
Public expenditure, Scotland (02:12:92) 278-9

Davies, Mr Bryan
Debates etc.
Lamont, Norman, Points of order (02:12:92) 285-6
Refugees, Bosnia-Herzegovina (30:11:92) 37

Davies, Rt Hon Denzil
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (01:12:92) 161, 167, 172-3, 184, 189, 203, (02:12:92) 351, 360
Questions
Treaty on European Union 989-90

Davies, Mr Ron
Questions
Agricultural Development & Advisory Service, Fees & charges 26w
Bellwin scheme, Wales 825-6w
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy 225-6w
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy, Wales 246-8w
Educational standards, Disclosure of information 609w
Environmentally sensitive areas, Wales 26w
Floods, Wales 395-6

Davies, Mr Ron—continued
Hill livestock allowances, Wales 27w
Horses, Export of live animals 159w, 226w
NHS trusts, Orders & regulations 505w
Tenants' incentive scheme 473w

Day, Mr Stephen
Debates etc.
Social Security Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & Means res (30:11:92) 99-102, 113

Day care of children
774-5w

Day care units
Nottingham Hospital 143-4w

de Klerk, FW
Disclosure of information 748w

Deaf
Children 415w, 506w
Special education 606w, 669w
Wales 506w, 669w

Death
Drug abuse 604-5w
Harmondsworth Detention Centre 734w
Industrial accidents 612w
Mentally ill 434w
Moyle, Jonathan 690
Smoking 628w
Terrorism 308w

Death rate
Developing countries 557w

Debt rescheduling
50-1w
Developing countries 49-50w

Debts
45w
Business (02:12:92) 287-9
Consumer credit 767w
Developing countries 51-2w
Disclosure of information 769w
Personal income 772w
Small businesses 113-4w, 257w

Debts written off
Developing countries 50-1w

Default surcharge
769-70w
VAT 698-9w

Defective housing
Right to buy 708w

Defence contracts
Royal Ordnance 611w
Shipbuilding 59-60w
Weir Group 610w

Defence equipment
Army 544w
Iraq 168w

Defence expenditure
544w
HMS Challenger 364w
Strategic nuclear weapons 364w

Defence industries
Diversification 622w
Scotland 622w

Defence land
Armed forces training 805w
Historic buildings 167-8w
Wales 415w

Defence procurement
Helicopter carriers 62-3w, 364w
Military aircraft 721w

Defence research
Chemical & biological warfare 160-3w
Military alliances 160w

Defence Research Agency
Official visits 240w

Defence review
794w

Delyn
National House Building Council 414w

Democracy
Hong Kong 458w

Denham, Mr John
Debates etc.
Package Travel, Package Holidays & Package Tours Regulations 1992 (10:12:92) 1092-3
Questions
Debts, Developing countries 51-2w
Debts written off, Developing countries 50-1w
Economic policy, Developing countries 51-2w
GATT, Food standards 367w
Hazardous wastes, Imports 836
Private detectives, Dept of Trade & Industry 107w
World Bank, Loans 483-90w, 558w
World Bank, Manpower 311w

Dental charges
318w

Dental health
Children 237w
Strathclyde 237w

Dental Remuneration Review
631w

Dental services
525-30w, 679-80
Children 237w
Chorley & South Ribble Health Authority 631w
Greenwich & Bexley Family Health Services Authority 630-1w
NHS complaints 519w
Strathclyde 237w

Dentistry
AIDS 74-5w

Dentists
524w
NHS 74w, 529-38w
Patients 74w
Pay 146-8w
Wales 125w

Departmental correspondence
Dept for Education 118w
Dept of Employment 180w
Dept of Health 143w
Dept of National Heritage 101w
Dept of Social Security 171w
Dept of the Environment 210w
Dept of Transport 90w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office 88w
Home Office 96w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 157w
Ministry of Defence 165w
Northern Ireland Office 134-5w
Scottish Office 183w
Treasury 103w
Welsh Office 131w

Departmental publications
EC internal trade 591w
Expenditure 26-7w
Treaty on European Union 566w
Valleys initiative 26-7w

Departmental records
Arms trade 219-20w

Departmental responsibilities
Animal welfare 466w
Radiation protection 465-6w
Sports 20w

Dept for Education
Administrative costs 691w
Chlorofluorocarbons 121-2w
Civil service dispersal 233w
Civil service manpower 234w
Contracts for services 118w, 690-1w
Departmental correspondence 118w

Dept for Education—continued
Disabled workers 692w
Operating costs 118w

Dept of Employment
Chlorofluorocarbons 177w
Civil service dispersal 417w
Civil service manpower 417w
Contracts for services 181-2w, 731-2w
Departmental correspondence 180w
Disabled workers 791w
Operating costs 180-1w

Dept of Energy
Leave 589w

Dept of Health
Chlorofluorocarbons 74w
Civil service dispersal 520w
Civil service manpower 230w
Contracts for services 144w, 688w
Departmental correspondence 143w
Disabled workers 774w
Operating costs 689-90w
Research facilities 230w

Dept of National Heritage
20w
Chlorofluorocarbons 41-2w
Civil service manpower 547w
Contracts for services 678w
Departmental correspondence 101w

Dept of Social Security
Chlorofluorocarbons 341w
Civil service dispersal 503w
Civil service manpower 341w
Contracts for services 681-2w
Departmental correspondence 171w
Disabled workers 749w
Operating costs 171w

Dept of Social Security local offices
Computer applications 69w
Repairs & maintenance 501w
Social Fund 499-500w
Stratford 501w

Dept of the Environment
Chlorofluorocarbons 149w
Civil service agencies 286-7w
Civil service dispersal 472w
Civil service manpower 207w
Contracts for services 741-2w
Departmental correspondence 210w
Disabled workers 708w
Official engagements 831w
Operating costs 152w

Dept of Trade & Industry
Billing 252w
Chlorofluorocarbons 346-7w
Civil service dispersal 496w
Civil service manpower 258w
Contracts for services 676w
Disabled workers 676w
Legislation 109-10w
Operating costs 110w
Private detectives 107w

Dept of Transport
Civil service dispersal 387-8w
Civil service manpower 203w
Contracts for services 694w
Departmental correspondence 90w
Disabled workers 696w
Legislation 9w
Operating costs 90-1w

Deregulation initiative
9w, 25w, 109-10w, 496w

Derelict land grants
574-6w
Wirral Borough Council 473-4w

Derwentshire District Council
150w

Deva, Mr Nirj Joseph
Debates etc.
Judicial Pensions & Retirement Bill (HL), 2R (03:12:92) 475-6
United Nations (04:12:92) 505, 550-3

Deva, Mr Nirj Joseph—continued
Questions
Air transport, Insurance 89-90w
Tenant's Charter, Languages 571w

Developing countries
Chlorofluorocarbons 302w, 395w
Death rate 557w
Debt rescheduling 49-50w
Debts 51-2w
Debts written off 50-1w
Economic policy 51-2w
Hazardous wastes 844
Overseas aid 590-1, 670w
Wood 426-8w

Development areas
Cheshire 117w

Development Board for Rural Wales
Public sector housing sales 132w

Development of Tourism for the Disabled Bill 1992/93
Debates etc.
2R order read (11:12:92) 1175

Devlin, Mr Tim
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (01:12:92) 217-9, 223-4, (02:12:92) 324, 348
Questions
Betting shops, Opening hours 550w
Northern region, Official visits 140

Devolution
Scotland 19w, 193-4w

Devon
Vaccination 636-7w

Devon & Cornwall Police
Manpower 478-9w

Devonport Management
610w

Dewar, Mr Donald
Debates etc.
Social Security Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & Means res (30:11:92) 45-6, 50-9, 83, 106-8, 110
Social Security Bill, Com (07:12:92) 601, 606-11, 614, 616, 618, 621, 623-6, 628-32, 634-5
Questions
Child Support Agency 5
Child Support Agency, Publicity 680w
Income support, Social security benefits rates 680w
National Insurance Fund, Personal pensions 421-2w
National Insurance Fund, Treasury grant 421w
National Insurance Fund, Treasury supplement 421w
National Insurance Fund, Unemployment 421w
Tax yields, Pensions 471w

Dickens, Mr Geoffrey
Debates etc.
Parliamentary security, Points of order (07:12:92) 594
Questions
Child Support Agency 5
Church Commissioners, Women 12w
Geriatric patients 684
Legal aid 18
Rented housing, Housing associations 842

Dicks, Mr Terry
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (02:12:92) 295
Questions
Family doctors, Pay 319w

Diego Garcia
Armed forces deployment 63w

Dietary supplements
139-41w
EC action 753w

Diplomatic relations
Iraq 566w

Dir86/378/EEC
750w

Dir89/618/EURATOM
556w

Dir90/425/EEC
756-7w

Dir91/440/EEC
595w

Dir91/628/EEC
756-7w

Direct labour departments
209-10w

Directors
South Glamorgan Health Authority 507w

Disability living allowance
7-9
Administrative delays 2-3, 7-8, 67w, 680w, 800-1w
Publicity 800w
Social security claims 580-1w
Social security recipients 67w
Stoke on Trent 345w, 680w

Disability working allowance
9
Publicity 800w
Social security recipients 67w

Disabled passengers' scheme
Road tax 464w

Disabled Persons (Services) Bill 1992/93
Debates etc.
2R order read (11:12:92) 1174

Disabled Person's Transport Advisory Committee
Annual reports 694-5w

Disabled workers
Dept for Education 692w
Dept of Employment 791w
Dept of Health 774w
Dept of Social Security 749w
Dept of the Environment 708w
Dept of Trade & Industry 676w
Dept of Transport 696w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office 654w
Home Office 661w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 753-4w
Training 667-8w, 790-1w
Training & enterprise councils 616w, 763w
Wales 667-8w
Welsh Office 764w

Disciplinary proceedings
Teachers 476w, 507w, 620w

Discounts
Council tax 156-8w

Disease control
Malaria 311-2w

District health authorities
North East Thames Regional Health Authority 523w
Public appointments 132w

Divers
Medical treatments 523w

Divorce law
Law reform 18w, 387w

Dixon, Mr Don
Questions
Members' pensions 508w

Dobson, Mr Frank
Debates etc.
Trade unions, Points of order (10:12:92) 1010
Unemployment (08:12:92) 699-711, 715, 719, 720, 723, 751

Dobson, Mr Frank—continued
Questions
Employment opportunities 131
Wages councils 750w

Doctors' & Dentists' Review Body
319w

Documents
Astra Holdings 64w
Guildford Four Inquiry 283w

Dolphins
Cardigan Bay 667w

Domestic energy conservation
Home energy efficiency scheme 829w

Domestic violence
796-7w
Northumberland 216-7w
Police 216w

Domestic wastes
Waste disposal 287w

Domicil
Law reform 798w

Dominican Republic
Commonwealth Development Corporation 310w

Donohoe, Mr Brian H
Debates etc.
Public expenditure, Scotland (02:12:92) 276

Dorrell, Mr Stephen, Financial Secretary to the Treasury
Debates etc.
Consolidated Fund Bill, 1R (10:12:92) 1096
Questions
Bank loans, Tax allowances 469-70w
Company cars, Taxation 102w
Corporation tax, Occupational pensions 306w
Inheritance tax, Tax yields 812w
Inland Revenue, Civil service dispersal 106-7w
Inland Revenue, Offices 106-7w
London International Financial Futures & Options Exchange, Tax allowances 431w
Mortgage relief 771-2w
Mortgage relief, Expenditure 198-9w
Nationalised industries, External financing limits 106w
Privatisation, Income 49w
Separate taxation of wife's earnings, Tax administration 200w
Shareholders 470w
Tax yields, Invalidity benefits 812w
Tax yields, Pensions 471w
Treasury, Civil service dispersal 468-9w

Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Falkland Islands) Order 1992
Debates etc.
(30:11:92) 117, (01:12:92) 125

Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Guyana) Order 1992
Debates etc.
(30:11:92) 117, (01:12:92) 125

Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Scottish Office
Debates etc.
Watson, Diane (09:12:92) 974-8
Questions
Arrests, Scotland 508-9w
Charities, Disqualifications 690w
Community charge, Arrest warrants 192w
Community policing, Strathclyde 191w
Drug crimes, Scotland 24w
Environmental education, Teacher training 238w
Higher education, Research finance 183-4w
Land ownership & tenure, Scotland 189w
Licensing laws, Crime 191w
Lockerbie, Bombings 622w
Police, Courts 359w

Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James—continued
Police, Scotland 190w
Prison staff, Scotland 621w
Prisons, Scotland 620-1w
Public lavatories, Scotland 359w
Schools, Inspections 785w
Scottish courts, Closed circuit television 191w
Scottish courts, Criminal proceedings 359-60w
Scottish courts, Repairs & maintenance 191w
Scottish Homes, Housing & handicapped 359w
Skye bridge 621-2w
Student numbers, Scotland 351-8w
Teachers, Disciplinary proceedings 620w
Tourist industry, Government grants 509w
Victim support schemes, Glasgow 182w

Dounreay
Transport of radioactive materials 462w

Dover, Mr Den
Questions
Construction materials, Quality control 819-20w
Dental Remuneration Review 631w
Dental services, Chorley & South Ribble Health Authority 631w
Derelict land grants 574-6w

Dowd, Mr Jim
Questions
Adult education, Greater London 692w
Energy research, Research finance 112-3w
House of Commons questions, Costs 592w
Small businesses, Protective clothing 673w

Downpatrick
Business premises 737w

Drinking & driving
Publicity 823-4w

Drinking Water Inspectorate
154w

Driver & Vehicle Licensing Agency
Manpower 783w

Driving instruction
Handicapped (11:12:92) 1160-72

Driving Standards Agency
Manpower 822w

Drug abuse
629w
Community care 77w
Death 604-5w
Pregnant women 603w
Prescription drugs 21-2w
Prisons 480-1w
Residential care 521w
Scotland 21-2w
Wales 603-5w

Drug crimes
Channel Islands 987
Confiscation orders 806w
Lancashire 661w
Prison population 480w
Prisoners 8-10w
Proceeds of crime 806w
Scotland 24w
Wales 480w, 550-1w

Drug industry
Generic prescribing 148w
Limited list prescribing 78w

Drug rehabilitation centres
(11:12:92) 1177-84

Drug seizures
430w, 551w, 987
Crack 551w
Wales 430w

Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986
Questions
806w

Drugs
Alternative medicine 520-1w
Expenditure 686-7w
Labelling 632w
Licensing 319w

Dual carriageways
A12 94w

Duchy of Cornwall
840

Duncan, Mr Alan
Debates etc.
Arts finance (11:12:92) 1129-30
Local Government (Overseas Assistance) Bill, 2R (11:12:92) 1137-40
Road Traffic (Driving Instruction by Disabled Persons) Bill, 2R (11:12:92) 1168
Questions
Council tax, Valuation 996
Dept of Social Security local offices, Computer applications 69w
Handicap benefits, Expenditure 6
Road traffic control, Rutland County 698w
Speed limits, Hertfordshire 595w

Duncan-Smith, Mr Iain
Questions
EC Labour & Social Affairs Council 618-9w
Economic & monetary union, Treaty on European Union 102w

Dundee
Inland Revenue 106-7w

Dungannon
Conductive education 738-9w

Dunn, Mr Bob
Questions
Community charge, Non-payment 295w
Council house rents, Rent arrears 294-5w
Council housing, Empty housing 294w
EC Transport Council 777-9w
Educational standards, Disclosure of information 691w
Family doctors, Budgeting 683

Dunnachie, Mr Jimmy
Questions
Petroleum exploration licences, Cardigan Bay 832-3w

Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (02:12:92) 338
Unemployment (08:12:92) 703, 711
Questions
Bananas, EC external trade 157w
School closures, Rural areas 477w

Durant, Sir Anthony
Questions
Council tax capping 841-2
Empty Government Residential Properties Task Force 576-7w
School Curriculum & Assessment Authority 396w

Durham County Council
Local government revenue 150w

Durham Markets Company Bill (HL) 1991/92
Debates etc.
Royal Assent (03:12:92) 424

Dykes, Mr Hugh
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (01:12:92) 165, 174, (02:12:92) 337-47
Questions
GATT, France 383

Dyslexia
Young offenders 218w

Eagle, Ms Angela
Debates etc.
Cammell Laird, Points of order (02:12:92) 286
Unemployment (08:12:92) 718, 730, 736, 768-71

Eagle, Ms Angela—continued
Questions
Business questions 405-6
Child benefit, Expenditure 505w
Child benefit, Social security benefits uprating 343w
Judiciary, Women 451w
Means tested benefits, Take-up 344w

Early day motions
Costs 201w

Early retirement
366w

Early warning systems
Flood control 99w

Earnings rules
Family credit 66w
Invalid care allowances 68w
Social Security Benefit (Amendment) Regulations 1992 503-4w

Easington
Employment training 176w

East Coast Main Line (Safety) Bill 1991/92
Debates etc.
2R order read (03:12:92) 377, (10:12:92) 979

East coast railway line
697w

East Dyfed Health Authority
Hospital patients 244w

East Midlands
Textile industry 615w

East Sussex
Business 743-4w

East Timor
Human rights 652w

Eastern Health & Social Services Board
Home helps 132-3w
Nationality 136w

Eastham, Mr Ken
Questions
Business questions 412
Council tax, Transitional relief 701w
Employment opportunities, Industry 135-6
Members' pensions 508w
Paracetamol, Liver diseases 522w
Paracetamol, Safety measures 521-2w
Paracetamol, Suicide 522w

EC action
Cosmetics (07:12:92) 636-7
Dietary supplements 753w
Languages 212w
Nuclear non proliferation 651w
Racial discrimination 808w
Transport of radioactive materials 288-9w, 697w

EC Agriculture Council
365w, 437-40w, 827w

EC aid
Kurds 491w
Macedonia 3w

EC budget
700w

EC Cohesion Fund
767w, 827-8

EC Commission
see European Commission

EC Committee of the Regions
2w
EC grants & loans 802w

EC Consumer Affairs Council
254w

EC countries
Cereals 817w
Conditions of employment 137

EC countries—continued
Employment level 130-1
Foreign investment in UK 441-2w
Industrial energy prices 833-4w
Interest rates 768w, 981
Limited list prescribing 320w
National income 758w
Overseas investment 441-2w
Passports 3w
Public contracts 214w
Transport of radioactive materials 781w
Unemployment 173w

EC Culture Council
455w

EC Draft 4204/89
(07:12:92) 636

EC Draft 8586/92
(07:12:92) 636-7

EC Draft 9697/92
(04:12:92) 566, (09:12:92) 853-940

EC economic policy
982, 984-5

EC Education Council
476-7w

EC Energy Council
588-9w, 747w

EC enlargement
Malta 315w

EC Environment Council
437-40w, 826-7w

EC environmental policy
705-6w, 832
Subsidiarity 831-2

EC external relations
Treaty on European Union 212-3w

EC external trade
Bananas 157w

EC Finance Council
437-40w, 747w

EC Fisheries Council
437-40w

EC Foreign Affairs Council
437-40w, 758-9w

EC free food scheme
Butter 384-5

EC grants & loans
Apples 623-4w
EC Committee of the Regions 802w
Elderly 136w
Northern Ireland 599w
Textile industry 31w
Women's employment 617w

EC immigration
Immigration controls 334-5w
Visas 215w

EC Industry Council
348w

EC institutions
Disclosure of information 802w

EC Internal Market Council
437-40w

EC internal relations
Prime Minister 664-5w

EC internal trade
247w, 250-1w
Departmental publications 591w
EC law 752-3w
Financial institutions (10:12:92) 1051-73
Small businesses 603-4w
VAT 698w
Wild animals 153-4w

EC Labour & Social Affairs Council
178w, 437-40w, 618-9w

EC law
Agriculture 511-3w
Air pollution control 288w, 572w
Coffins 461w
EC internal trade 752-3w
Environmental impact assessment 831-2
Hazardous wastes 835-6
Industrial health & safety 179-80w
Occupational pensions 750w
Package holidays 673w
Pollution control 293w
Protective clothing 673w
Railway network 595w
Slaughterhouses 366w, 625-7w
Transport of animals 756-7w
VAT zero rated goods 569w, 766w
Water pollution 703w
Whales 150w

EC regional policy
Environment protection 148w

EC Research Council
437-40w

EC Social Charter
137, 618-9w

EC Telecommunications Council
349w

EC trade with developing countries
Agricultural products 159w

EC Transport Council
437-40w, 777-9w

Economic & monetary union
102w, 691-2
Treaty on European Union 102w

Economic forecasting
Treasury 306w, 471w

Economic policy
983, 988, 996
Developing countries 51-2w
Engineering Employers' Federation 991
Housing 393-4
Unemployment 389-90

Economic situation
139-40, 469w, 768w, 983, 985
Environment protection 569-70w

Edinburgh Summit
665w, 687-9, 994

Education Bill 1992/93
Questions
665-7w, 997-8, 1001, 1003-4

Education Partners Overseas
Educational aid 494w

Education Support Grants Regulations 1992
Debates etc.
(01:12:92) 142

Educational aid
Education Partners Overseas 494w

Educational assessment
995-6
English education 35w
Liverpool 561w

Educational finance
Birmingham City Council 313w
Further education 563-5w
OECD countries 559w

Educational publications
Cost per pupil 39w

Educational standards
Disclosure of information 36w, 561w, 609w, 691w
Greenwich 690-1
Schools 36w
Wales 609w

Eggar, Mr Tim, Minister for Energy
Questions
Alternative energy 256w, 347w
Alternative energy, Energy research 255w
British Coal Corporation, Investment 350w
British Coal Corporation, Privatisation 745w
British Geological Survey, Disclosure of information 832w
Bronchitis, Industrial injuries 591w
Coal, Energy research 250w
Coal, Imports 251w, 447-8w
Coal mine closures 248-50, 250w, 251, 257
Coal mine closures, Coal reserves 834w
Coal mine closures, Consultants 495w
Coal mine closures, Public interest 448w
Coal mine closures, Redundancy 350w, 672w, 832w
Coal mine closures, Redundancy pay 495w
Coal mining 34w, 582-6w
Coal mining, Subsidies 258w
Companies Registration Office (England & Wales), Consultants 29w
Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Materials 498w
Dept of Energy, Leave 589w
Dept of Trade & Industry, Chlorofluorocarbons 346-7w
Dept of Trade & Industry, Civil service dispersal 496w
Dept of Trade & Industry, Civil service manpower 258w
Dept of Trade & Industry, Contracts for services 676w
Dept of Trade & Industry, Disabled workers 676w
Dept of Trade & Industry, Operating costs 110w
Electricity generation, Gas fired power stations 33w
Electricity generation, Imports 34w, 447w
Electricity generation, Magnox reactors 832w
Electricity generation, Refuse derived fuel 256w
Electricity supply industry 254-5
Electricity supply industry, Environment protection 255
Electricity tariffs 254
Energy, Imports 590w
Energy research, Research finance 112-3w
Energy review 347w
Energy review, Consultants 585w
Energy review, Disclosure of information 442-6w
Energy review, Gas supply industry 348w
Fast reactors, Energy research 29-30w
Fossil fuel levy 33-4w
Fossil fuel levy, Nuclear power stations 107-8w
Gas fired power stations, Staythorpe 32-3w
Gas reserves 498-9w
Government Chemist, Official visits 252-3w
Industrial energy prices 112w
Industrial energy prices, Electricity tariffs 833-4w
International Atomic Energy Agency, Argentina 568w
International Atomic Energy Agency, Japan 568w
International Atomic Energy Agency, UK contributions 496w
Magnox reactors 253-4
Major Energy Users' Council 112w
Mining equipment 255-7
Mining equipment, Balance of trade 590w
Ministers' visits abroad, Japan 497w
Non-fossil fuel obligation 256-7w
Non-fossil fuel obligation, Treaty of Rome 587w
Nuclear accidents, Emergency planning 614-5w
Nuclear power 254, 832w
Nuclear power, Energy policy 588w
Nuclear power stations, Construction 111w
Nuclear power stations, Decommissioning 258w
Nuclear power stations, Electrical safety 114w
Nuclear safeguards 498w
Nuclear safeguards, Inspections 586w
Nuclear safeguards, Overseas trade 585w
Offshore drilling, Environment protection 495w, 586w
Offshore drilling, Wales 495-6w
Offshore structures, Decommissioning 31-2w
Oil refineries 32w
Oil refineries, Cheshire 32w
Orimulsion, Imports 34w
Petroleum Engineering Directorate, Civil service dispersal 745w
Petroleum exploration licences 117w
Petroleum exploration licences, Cardigan Bay 832-3w
Petroleum production, Bureaucracy 257w
Plutonium 345-6w
Plutonium, Exports 34w, 108w, 345w
Plutonium, Radiation hazards 587w
Point of Ayr colliery 34w
PowerGen, Flue gas desulphurisation 674-5w
Radioactive materials, Kent 587w
Renewable Energy Advisory Group 255w
Shipbuilding Intervention Fund 746w
Trentham colliery 499w
Uranium 346w
Wind power, Electricity generation 497w
Wind power, Wales 744w
Zangger Committee 568w

Eggs
Agricultural production 368-9w

EH101 helicopters
60w

El Alamein
Festivals & special occasions 65w

Elderly
EC grants & loans 136w
Northern Ireland 136w

Elections
Cameroon 440w
USA 994

Electrical Equipment Certification Management Board
728-9w

Electrical safety
Nuclear power stations 114w

Electricite de France
447w

Electricity generation
British Coal Corporation 446-7w
Coal 256w
Gas fired power stations 33w
Imports 34w, 447w
Magnox reactors 832w
Refuse derived fuel 256w
Wind power 497w

Electricity supply industry
254-5
Environment protection 255

Electricity tariffs
254
Industrial energy prices 833-4w

Elephants
Nature conservation 207-8w

Elimination of Poverty in Retirement Bill 1992/93
Debates etc.
2R order read (11:12:92) 1174

Ellesmere Port
Training & enterprise councils 54-5w

Ellenbogen, Mr Harold
Debates etc.
Judicial Pensions & Retirement Bill (HL), 2R (03:12:92) 474
Questions
Disabled workers, Dept for Education 692w
Disabled workers, Dept of Employment 791w

Elletson, Mr Harold—continued
Disabled workers, Dept of Health 774w
Disabled workers, Dept of Social Security 749w
Disabled workers, Dept of the Environment 708w
Disabled workers, Dept of Trade & Industry 676w
Disabled workers, Dept of Transport 696w
Disabled workers, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 654w
Disabled workers, Home Office 661w
Disabled workers, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 753-4w
Disabled workers, Welsh Office 764w
Generic prescribing, Drug industry 148w
Handicap benefits 9
Medical research, Limited list prescribing 123w

Emergency calls
5w, 76w, 117w, 323w, 673-4w
Telephone services 687

Emergency planning
Nuclear accidents 614-5w

Emery, Sir Peter
Debates etc.
One stop shop initiative (03:12:92) 418
Questions
Business questions 998
Employment level, EC countries 130-1

Emphysema
Industrial injuries 591w

Employment action
180w
Finance 125-6
Hyndburn 727-8w

Employment (Age Limits) Bill 1992/93
Debates etc.
2R order read (11:12:92) 1175

Employment agencies
Home care services 55w, 419w

Employment level
EC countries 130-1
Northern region 129-30
Rural areas 224w, 361w
Scotland 361w
Wales 825w

Employment opportunities
131, 180-1w
Autumn statement 135
Coal mine closures 305w
Engineers 799w
Financial institutions 245w
Industry 135-6
Jubilee line 135
Manufacturing industries 414w
Older workers 131
Skilled workers 27-8w
Urban programme 14w, 209w
Wales 27-8w, 245w

Employment protection
Contracts for services 323-4w
Unfair dismissal 126-7

Employment schemes
Wales 606w
Young people 417-8w

Employment Select Committee
(30:11:92) 117

Employment Service Agency
Performance standards 729w

Employment training
27w, 729w
Age participation rates 221w
Coal mine closures 176w, 220-1w
Easington 176w
Hyndburn 727-8w

Empty Government Residential Properties Task Force

Empty Government Residential Properties Task Force—continued
576-7w

Empty housing
Council housing 294w
Greater London 306-7w
House purchase 474w, 737-8w
Housing associations 572w
London boroughs 294w
Northern Ireland 737-8w

Energy
Imports 590w

Energy conservation
471-2w, 739w
Palace of Westminster 799w

Energy policy
Nuclear power 588w

Energy research
Alternative energy 255w
Coal 250w
Fast reactors 29-30w
Research finance 112-3w

Energy review
32-3w, 129-30, 347w, 446-7w, 585w, 745w
Consultants 585w
Disclosure of information 442-6w
Gas supply industry 348w

Engineering education
Curriculum 40w
Higher education 38w
Student numbers 40-2w
Students 38-9w, 41w
Technical education 397w

Engineering Employers' Federation
Economic policy 991

Engineers
Employment opportunities 799w
Higher education teachers 397w
Teachers 396-7w
Technical education 397w

Engines
Motorcycles 698w

English Channel
624-6w

English education
Educational assessment 35w

English Heritage
see Historic Buildings & Monuments Commission for England

English Nature
see Nature Conservancy Council for England

English Tourist Board
42w

Enright, Mr Derek
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (02:12:92) 306, 312-7, 322, 360
Questions
Alcohols 365w
Business questions 998

Environment protection
EC regional policy 148w
Economic situation 569-70w
Electricity supply industry 255
Offshore drilling 495w, 586w
Treasury 812w
Treaties 149w
Wales 125w

Environment Select Committee
(10:12:92) 1012-50

Environmental education
Information services 24w
Scotland 24w, 238w
Teacher training 238w

Environmental health
Orders & regulations 291-2w

Environmental impact assessment
EC law 831-2

Environmental policy
Research 288w

Environmentally sensitive areas
224w, 368w
Common agricultural policy 817w
Marginal land 624w
Wales 26w, 826w

Equal opportunities
Occupational pensions 750w
Women clergy 13-4

Esperanto
212w
Languages education 235w

Essex
Housing construction 710w

Estate agents
Misleading advertising (08:12:92) 793
Unfair trading practices 705w

Estate Agents (Specified Offences) (No 2) (Amendment) Order
Debates etc.
(08:12:92) 793

Estimates days
Coastal protection (10:12:92) 1012-50

Etherington, Mr Bill
Debates etc.
Coal Mines (Closure Review) Bill, 1R (01:12:92) 145-6

Ethnic cleansing
589

Ethnic minorities
Languages 7w, 212w

Etiquette
803w

EURATOM
498w

EUREKA
33w

European Agricultural Guidance & Guarantee Fund
159w
Northern Ireland 601-2w

European Coal & Steel Community
348w

European Commission
(01:12:92) 147-237, (02:12:92) 289-368
Interpreters 316w

European Communities (Amendment) Bill 1992/93
Debates etc.
Com (01:12:92) 147-237, (02:12:92) 289-368
Scotland (01:12:92) 144
Questions
406

European Convention on Human Rights
(01:12:92) 147-237

European Court of Justice
757w

European Economic Area
Switzerland 589w

European fighter aircraft
721w

European Free Trade Association
758-9w

European Legislation Select Committee
(04:12:92) 566

European Passenger Services
Privatisation 818w

European Police Office
479w

European Regional Development Fund
Northern Ireland 599-600w
Wales 605w

European Security Conference
2w

European Standing Committee A
1007

European Union (Public Information) Bill 1992/93
Debates etc.
2R order read (04:12:92) 565

EUROPOL
see European Police Office

Euthanasia
Medical ethics 434w

Evans, Mr David
Debates etc.
Floods, Warrengate Road (10:12:92) 1097-100
Questions
Clergy, Pensions 12w
Direct labour departments 209-10w
Non-domestic rates 577-9w
Public holidays 136
Social security benefits rules, Travelling people 68w
Tourist boards 456w

Evans, Mr John
Debates etc.
Oral question time point of order (02:12:92) 251
Questions
Coal mine closures 248-9
Disability living allowance, Administrative delays 7
Nutrition & health 629w

Evans, Mr Jonathan
Questions
Children's Homes Staff Selection Inquiry 524w
Commonwealth Development Corporation, Dominican Republic 310w
Floods, Wales 398-9

Evans, Mr Nigel
Debates etc.
Judicial Pensions & Retirement Bill (HL), 2R (03:12:92) 481
Questions
AIDS 520w
Betting shops 6w
Betting shops, Gaming machines 6-7w
Business questions 409
Disability living allowance, Social security recipients 67w
GCE A level, Student numbers 477w
Grant maintained schools, Ballots 40w
Grant maintained schools, Secondary education 40w
Health services, Medical audit 317w
Higher education, Age participation rates 398w
Home helps, Manpower 432w
Hospital patients 631w
Hospitals, Construction 519w
Housing construction 393w
Infant mortality 76w, 519w
Interest rates, EC countries 768w
Literacy 313w
National lottery, Betting shops 43w
North West region, Foreign investment in UK 442w
Salmon, Fish conservation 57w
Social security abuse 580w
Taxation 986
Teenage pregnancy 519-20w
Television licences, Pensioners 583-4
Terrorism, Police powers 552w

Evans, Mr Roger
Debates etc.
Judicial Pensions & Retirement Bill (HL), 2R (03:12:92) 436, 432, 438, 440-6, 456, 485

Evans, Mr Roger—continued
Questions
Flood control, Monmouth 396-7

Evennett, Mr David
Questions
Training & enterprise councils 126

Evidence
Guildford Four Inquiry 95w, 218w

Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Debates etc.
Fisheries (09:12:92) 856, 895, 909-11
Fishing quotas, North Sea (01:12:92) 241, 245
Public expenditure, Scotland (02:12:92) 281-2
Unfair competition (30:11:92) 26
Questions
Defence industries, Diversification 622w
HMS Challenger, Defence expenditure 364w
Nuclear submarines, Decommissioning 364w
Prison staff, Scotland 621w
Prisons, Scotland 620-1w
Strategic nuclear weapons, Defence expenditure 364w

Exchange rate mechanism
747w

Exchange rates
Labour costs 47-8w
Manufactured exports 47w
Prices 47-8w
Sterling 47w

Exhaust emission controls
Motor vehicle testing 388w

Export controls
Orders & regulations 745w

Export credit guarantees
252-3
Expenditure 586-7w
South America 251-2

Export Credits Guarantee Department
Civil service dispersal 253
Redundancy 590-1w

Export of Goods (Control) Order 1992
Questions
745w

Export of live animals
Cattle 385w
Horses 159w, 226w

Export promotion
264
Wales 587w

Exports
254w
Coal 137
Middle East 253w
Motorcycles 587w
Plutonium 34w, 108w, 345w
VAT 698w, 766w

Exservicemen
Nuclear weapons tests 64-5w
Social security claims 800w

Extradition
Brunner, Alois 749w
Nigeria 219w
Republic of Ireland 451w

Eye tests
Optical charges 318w

Faber, Mr David
Debates etc.
Social Security Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & Means res (30:11:92) 87-92
Questions
Trade barriers, USA 262

Fabricant, Mr Michael
Questions
Agricultural Training Board, Finance 379
BBC 453w
Crown Prosecution Service, Vacancies 452w

Fabricant, Mr Michael—continued
Employment opportunities, Autumn statement 135
"Health of the Nation White Paper" 680
Money supply 140-1
Newspaper press, Bank services 101-2w
Ozone layer, Northern region 702w
Windsor Castle, Fires 409w

Factory closures
Dairy Crest 765w

Factory Inspectorate
613-4w, 723-6w
Manpower 179w, 722w
Recruitment 222w, 229w
Scotland 179w

"Fair Assessment Consultation Paper"
225w

Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Debates etc.
Judicial Pensions & Retirement Bill (HL), 2R (03:12:92) 464, 467
Questions
Craigie Hall, Repairs & maintenance 806w
Historic buildings, Defence land 167-8w
Historic Military Buildings Committee 167w
Ministers, Festivals & special occasions 803w

Falkland Islands
Double taxation (30:11:92) 117
Marine animals 3w
Penguins 757-8w
PSA International 152w
Road construction 152w

Family benefits
69w

Family conciliation services
18-9w

Family credit
10
Earnings rules 66w
Lone parent families 172w
Social security claims 66w
Surveys 171w
Take-up 10-1
Telephone services 66w

Family doctors
Alternative medicine 629w, 685w
Budgeting 629-30w, 681-3, 685-6
Health education 804-5w
Pay 319w

Family planning clinics
318w

Farm & conservation grants scheme
607-8w

Farm buildings
Capital investment 158w
Planning permission 382

Farmers
Rural planning 381-2
VAT 813-4w

Farms
Mink 385-6w
Russia 427w

Fascism
Commonwealth of Independent States 88w
Germany 88w
Spain 88w

Fast reactors
Energy research 29-30w

Fatchett, Mr Derek
Debates etc.
National Health Service (Freedom of Speech) Bill, 1R (10:12:92) 1011
One stop shop initiative (03:12:92) 415-6
Questions
Assisted areas 261-2

Fatchett, Mr Derek—continued
EUREKA 33w
LINK programme 33w
Manufactured imports 115w
Motor industry, Manpower 53-4w
Office of Electricity Regulation 115w
Privatisation, Income 49w
Small businesses, Debts 257w
Small businesses, Government assistance 114-5w
Water supply industry, Regulatory system 154w
World Summit for Children 571w

Faulds, Mr Andrew
Debates etc.
House of Commons Chamber, Points of order (08:12:92) 695

Federation of Civil Engineering Contractors
92-3w

Fertilisers
Ammonium nitrate 737w

Fertility
Medical treatments 431-2w

Festivals & special occasions
El Alamein 65w
Ministers 803w

Field, Mr Barry
Debates etc.
Coastal protection (10:12:92) 1021-6, 1036
Questions
Archaeological sites, Wootton Creek 453w
Baptism, Fees & charges 12w
Business questions 1006
Cetaceans, Nature conservation 707w
Non-domestic rates 739-40w
Sefton Borough Council, Road works 209w
SMART awards, South East region 248w
VAT, Sailing boats 104-5w

Field, Mr Frank
Debates etc.
Cammell Laird, Standing Order No 20 applications (02:12:92) 284
Social Security Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & Means res (30:11:92) 61, 67, 80-8, 90-2, 108-12, 114-5
Unemployment (08:12:92) 737-42, 744
Questions
City challenge 393w
City grants, Expenditure 392-3w
Derelict land grants, Wirral Borough Council 473-4w
Empty housing, House purchase 474w
Regional aid, Wirral 834-6w

Finance & Services Select Committee
(11:12:92) 1176

Financial Information Project Systems
West Midlands Regional Health Authority 81w, 803w

Financial institutions
Company disclosure of information (07:12:92) 636
EC internal trade (10:12:92) 1051-73
Employment opportunities 245w

Financial services
Investor protection 429w
Self-regulating organisations 429w

Fires
Industrial accidents 612w
Water pollution 431w

Fire engines
4-6w

Fire Precautions (Places of Work) Regulations 1992
Questions
99w

Fire prevention
British Museum 307w
Furniture 250w

Fire prevention—continued
Historic buildings 327w, 409w, 456w
Holyrood House 21w
Palace of Westminster 362-3w
Royal residences 101w, 457w
Underground railways 461-2w
Windsor Castle 44w, 95w, 101w

Fire Protection Association
456w

Fire regulations
Furniture 468w
Historic buildings 100w
Windsor Castle 100w, 413w

Fire services
Cumbria 216w
Local government expenditure 301w
Windsor 4-6w
Windsor Castle 747w

Firearms (Amendment) Bill 1992/93
Debates etc.
2R order read (11:12:92) 1175

Firearms (Northern Ireland) Order 1992
Debates etc.
(02:12:92) 286

Fires
Public buildings 156w
Windsor Castle 409w, 456w, 549w, 579-81, 716w

Fish conservation
817-8w, (09:12:92) 941-71
Marine animals 315w
Salmon 57w
South Atlantic 314w
Water Resources Act 1991 370w

Fish diseases
Government laboratories 366w

Fish producers' organisations
58w

Fish products
Guide prices (09:12:92) 853-940

Fisher, Mr Mark
Questions
Africa, Overseas aid 591-2

Fisheries
Manpower 817-8w
Salmon 128w

Fishing
Fees & charges 511w
Salmon 128w

Fishing catches
Marine animals 158w, 360-1w

Fishing quotas
58w, 388-9, 624-6w
North Sea (01:12:92) 238-46
Scotland 683w
White fish 683w

Fishing vessels
Submarines 403-4w

Floors
573w

Flats over shops initiative
706w

Fleet Maintenance & Repair Organisation
Public petitions (03:12:92) 488
Redundancy (03:12:92) 488

Flood control
Early warning systems 99w
Hereford 397
Monmouth 396-7
National Rivers Authority (10:12:92) 1097-102
Set-aside schemes 714w

Flood damage
395-6

Floods
Crisis loans 232-3w
Islington 232-3w
Wales 395-401, 825-6w

Flue gas desulphurisation
PowerGen 674-5w

Flynn, Mr Paul
Debates etc.
Official Report, Points of order (09:12:92) 848, 849
Plain Language Bill, 1R (08:12:92) 698
Questions
Business questions 1007-8
Civil service agencies 801w
Council house rents 704w
Dept of the Environment, Official engagements 831w
Disability living allowance, Publicity 800w
Marine animals, Fishing catches 158w, 360-1w
Plutonium, Exports 108w
Redundancy pay 799w
Social security benefits disqualification 800w

Food additives
Canthaxanthin 623w

Food aid
Somalia 671w

Food exports
Barley 368w
Wheat 368w

Food from Britain
Public appointments 513w

Food hygiene
Inspections 350-2w
Meat 754w
Slaughterhouses 223-4w, 227-8w, 818w

Food industry
Basildon 384
Inspections 370-84w
Scotland 350-2w

Food inspection
Meat 511w

Food prices
GATT 713w

Food standards
GATT 367w

Football pools
Betting & gaming duties 306w, 769w
Manpower 728w
National lottery 325-7w, 547w

Foreign & Commonwealth Office
Chlorofluorocarbons 1-2w
Civil service dispersal 436w
Civil service manpower 212w
Contracts for services 89w, 655w
Departmental correspondence 88w
Disabled workers 654w
Operating costs 88w

Foreign investment in UK
988-9
EC countries 441-2w
North East region 30w
North West region 442w
Northern region 140
Wales 604w

Foreign policy
Kashmir 459w

Foreign tourists
454w
Expenditure 668w

Forensic Science Service
Official visits 318-9w

Forest protection
182w
African Development Bank 492w, 494w

Forest protection—continued
Brazil 492-4w
Population 425w
Public petitions (11:12:92) 1103
Rain forests 424-6w
UN Conference on Environment & Development 743w
Wood 811-2w

Forestry
Gabon 557w

Forestry Commission
(02:12:92) 265-83, 506-7w, 787-8w
Access to countryside 194w, 789-90w
Land acquisition 184-6w, 194w, 789-90w
North Yorkshire 184-6w

Forman, Mr Nigel, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education
Questions
Adult education, Greater London 692w
Dept for Education, Civil service dispersal 233w
Dept for Education, Civil service manpower 234w
Dept for Education, Contracts for services 118w, 690-1w
Dept for Education, Departmental correspondence 118w
Dept for Education, Disabled workers 692w
Dept for Education, Operating costs 118w
Educational finance, OECD countries 559w
Engineering education, Higher education 38w
Engineering education, Student numbers 40-2w
Engineering education, Students 38-9w, 41w
Engineers, Employment opportunities 799w
Further education, Age participation rates 558-9w
Further education, Educational finance 563-5w
Further education, Local government expenditure 561-3w
Further education, Long stay patients 39w
GCE A level, Student numbers 477w
Higher education, Age participation rates 398w
Higher education, Citizen's Charter 119w
Higher education, Inspections 119w
Higher education, Private sector 798w
Higher education, Research finance 119w
Higher education, Student numbers 475w
Higher education admission, OECD countries 560-1w
Higher education teachers, Engineers 397w
Higher education teachers, Pay 234-5w
Literacy 313w
Literacy, Young people 559w
Medical education, Alternative medicine 692w
Open University, University finance 313w, 476w
Royal Holloway & Bedford New College, Architectural conservation 798w
Steiner Schools Foundation 565w
Student grants, Administrative delays 475w
Student loans 40w
Student unions 120-1w
Student unions, Audit 120w
Student unions, Finance 120-1w
Student unions, Political activities 120w
Student unions, Sabbatical leave 121w
Students, Sponsorship 475-6w
Students, Women 40w
Technical education, Engineers 397w

Forsyth, Mr Michael, Minister of State for Employment
Debates etc.
Unemployment (08:12:92) 733, 741, 769, 784-9
Questions
Advisory Conciliation & Arbitration Service 132-3
Average earnings 174w
Conditions of employment, EC countries 137

Forsyth, Mr Michael—continued
Dept of Employment, Contracts for services 731-2w
Dept of Employment, Disabled workers 791w
Dept of Employment, Operating costs 180-1w
Disabled workers, Training 790-1w
EC Labour & Social Affairs Council 178w
Employment opportunities 180w
Holiday leave 136
Low pay, Prosecutions 616-7w
NOW initiative 617w
Public holidays 136
Quota of disabled workers, Local authorities 327w
Trade Union Reform & Employment Rights Bill 1992/93 127
Training & enterprise councils, Special training needs 790w
Unemployment, EC countries 173w
Unfair dismissal, Employment protection 126-7
Unfair dismissal, Part-time employment 127
Vocational guidance 174w
Wages councils 172w, 616w, 790w
Women's employment, EC grants & loans 617w
Youth training 133
Youth training, Rural areas 133-4

Forsythe, Mr Clifford
Questions
Bombings, Compensation 597-8w

Forth, Mr Eric, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education
Debates etc.
Testbourne School (02:12:92) 371-6
Questions
Class sizes 37w
Class sizes, Primary education 36-8w
Dept for Education, Administrative costs 691w
Dept for Education, Chlorofluorocarbons 121-2w
Educational finance, Birmingham City Council 313w
Educational publications, Cost per pupil 39w
Educational standards, Disclosure of information 36w, 561w, 691w
Engineering education, Curriculum 40w
Engineering education, Technical education 397w
English education, Educational assessment 35w
Esperanto, Languages education 235w
Grant maintained schools 118w, 692w
Grant maintained schools, Ballots 40w, 751w
Grant maintained schools, School transport 560w
Grant maintained schools, Secondary education 40w
Health education, Government grants 565w
HM Inspectorate of Schools, Manpower 119w
HM Inspectorate of Schools, Pay 235w
HM Inspectorate of Schools, Termination of employment 235-6w
Office for Standards in Education, Manpower 235w
Playing fields, Land acquisition 234w
Primary education, Kent 750w
School buildings, Repairs & maintenance 234w
School choice 560w
School closures, Rural areas 477w
School meals, Contracts for services 560w
School meals, Nutrition & health 235w
School population, Thamesmead 477w
Schools, Educational standards 36w
Shortage subjects, Teacher training 396w
Special schools 38w
Teachers, Disciplinary proceedings 476w
Teachers, Engineers 396-7w
Teachers, Professional qualifications 41w
Technical education 397-8w

Forth, Mr Eric—continued
Thomas Becket School Knowsley 751w

Fossil fuel levy
33-4w, 256w, 347w
Nuclear power stations 107-8w

Foulkes, Mr George
Debates etc.
Fisheries (09:12:92) 867
Public expenditure, Scotland (02:12:92) 280-1
Questions
Clyde submarine base, Compensation 544w
Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 549-50w
Gulf Trust, Fund raising 167w
Proceeds of crime, Channel Islands 987
UN Special Commission on Iraq, UK contributions 64w, 89w, 461w

Fox, Dr Liam
Debates etc.
Arts finance (11:12:92) 1131
Judicial Pensions & Retirement Bill (HL), 2R (03:12:92) 459, 472-5, 480
Local Government (Overseas Assistance) Bill, 2R (11:12:92) 1121-2, 1134-6, 1147, 1154
Road Traffic (Driving Instruction by Disabled Persons) Bill, 2R (11:12:92) 1162
Questions
Warships, Repairs & maintenance 365w

France
GATT 383

Franchising
British Rail 285w
Railway travel 201w, 697w

Fraser, Mr John
Debates etc.
Unfair competition (30:11:92) 28
Questions
Package holidays, EC law 673w
Racial attacks 588

Fraud
Common agricultural policy 377-8
Trials 198w

Freedom of expression
Health service staff (10:12:92) 1011

Freeman, Mr Roger, Minister for Public Transport
Questions
Bridges, Lancashire 203w
British Rail, Competition 594w
British Rail, Expenditure 695w
British Rail, Finance 594w
British Rail, Franchising 285w
British Rail, Performance standards 824w
British Rail, Privatisation 11w, 91-2w
British Rail, Vacancies 285w
Bus services, Privatisation 286w
Channel tunnel, Air pollution control 10w
Channel tunnel, Railway travel 818w
Channel tunnel, Transport of radioactive materials 697w
Commuters 202w
Dept of Transport, Disabled workers 696w
European Passenger Services, Privatisation 818w
Greater Manchester Buses, Buy outs 696w
Midland Metro 11w
Network SouthEast, Subsidies 818w
"New Opportunities for the Railways White Paper" 596w
Public transport, Mobility of disabled 694-5w
Railway freight transport 284-5w
Railway freight transport, Fees & charges 779w
Railway freight transport, Government grants 93w
Railway freight transport, Railway track 11w
Railway industry, Capital investment 463w
Railway network, Capital investment 283w, 594w

Freeman, Mr Roger—continued
Railway network, EC law 595w
Railway network, Scotland 695-6w
Railway transport 93w, 820w
Railway transport, Capital investment 820w
Railway travel 11w
Railway travel, Franchising 201w, 697w
Red Star, Privatisation 593-4w
Rolling stock, Procurement 284w
Traffic Commissioners, Bus services 695w
Transport of radioactive materials, Railway safety 780w

Freemasonry
Disclosure of information 391
Public appointments 391

French, Mr Douglas
Questions
Ancient monuments, Repairs & maintenance 575
Car boot sales, Burglary 95-6w
Pensions Ombudsman 749w
Somalia, Overseas aid 482w
VAT 769w
VAT, Default surcharge 698-9w
VAT, Unpaid taxes 769-70w
Video games, Monopolies 675w
Youth training 133

Fresh Meat (Hygiene & Inspection) Regulations 1992
Questions
227-8w

Fuel bills
72w

Fuel Cost Credits Bill 1992/93
Debates etc.
2R order read (11:12:92) 1175

Fulham Football Club
Sportsgrounds 363w

Fund raising
Gulf Trust 167w

Furnaces
Iraq 467w

Furniture
Fire prevention 250w
Fire regulations 468w

Furniture & Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) (Amendment) Regulations 1993
Questions
468w

Further education
Age participation rates 558-9w
Curriculum 130w
Educational finance 560-5w
Local government expenditure 561-3w
Long stay patients 39w
OECD countries 558-9w
South Wales 130w

Further Education Funding Council for England
556w, 564-5w

Fyfe, Mrs Maria
Questions
Health education, Expenditure 788w
Health service staff, Pay settlements 788w
Health services, Expenditure 788w
NHS finance, Scotland 619w
NHS trusts, Scotland 789w
Patient's Charter, Scotland 788w
Social security benefits rates 419w

Gabon
Forestry 357w

Galbraith, Mr Sam
Debates etc.
Public expenditure, Scotland (02:12:92) 281
Questions
Agricultural Inspectorate, Manpower 179w, 722w

Galbraith, Mr Sam—continued
Factory Inspectorate, Manpower 179w
Health & Safety Executive, Codes of practice 175w
Health & Safety Executive, Greater London 722-3w
Health & Safety Executive, Manpower 613-4w
Health & Safety Executive, North West region 723-4w
Health & Safety Executive, Nurses 416w
Health & Safety Executive, Offshore Safety Division 179w
Health & Safety Executive, Yorkshire & Humberside 724-6w
Industrial health & safety, Coal mining 176-7w
Industrial health & safety, EC law 179-80w
Industrial health & safety, Pesticides 175w
Industrial health & safety, Research 178w
Mine accidents 174w
Occupational health, Health hazards 729w
Offshore supply vessels, Overseas workers 693w
PA Consulting Group, Expenditure 728-9w
Public holidays 136

Gale, Mr Roger
Questions
Nuclear fuel reprocessing, Sellafield 473w
THORP 470w
VAT, Magazine press 699w
VAT, Transitional arrangements 814w

Gallie, Mr Phil
Debates etc.
Fisheries (09:12:92) 857, 895-7
Public expenditure, Scotland (02:12:92) 273
Unemployment (08:12:92) 705, 707
Questions
Council tax, Transitional relief 237-8w
Council tax, Valuation 508w
Local government finance, Scotland 786w
Rangers Football Club 993
Windsor Castle, Building repairs 581

Gamblers Anonymous
Northern Ireland 683-4w

Gaming machines
Betting shops 6-7w

Gapes, Mr Mike
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (02:12:92) 300, 306
Questions
Patient's Charter, Performance standards 684-5
UNESCO 458w

Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan, Minister of State, Foreign & Commonwealth Office
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (01:12:92) 177, 181-96, 212-3, 219, (02:12:92) 299, 304, 308, 328-9, 350, 354, 358-61
Questions
Albania, Arms trade 651-2w
Ascension Island, Cats 4w
Azerbaijan, Arms trade 655w
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed conflict 85-6w
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Military aircraft 213-4w
CFE Treaty 315-6w
Colombia, Child workers 458w
Council of Ministers 437-40w
EC Committee of the Regions 2w
EC countries, Public contracts 214w
Esperanto 212w
Falkland Islands, Marine animals 3w
Germany, Fascism 88w
Languages, Ethnic minorities 212w
Malta, EC enlargement 315w
Nuclear non proliferation, EC action 651w
Nuclear weapons, Nuclear safeguards 651w
Parliamentary sovereignty & European Community 314w

Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan—continued
Passports, EC countries 3w
South Atlantic, Fish conservation 314w
South Atlantic, Marine animals 315w
South East Asia, Nuclear weapons tests 437w
Treaty on European Union 89w, 211-2w
Treaty on European Union, EC external relations 212-3w
World Decade for Cultural Development, UK contributions 654w

Garnier, Mr Edward
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (01:12:92) 205-6, 208, 211
Questions
Air pollution control, Industrial wastes 293w
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Overseas aid 589
Pollution control, Industry 293-4w
Pollution control, Manufacturing industries 293w
Textile industry, Manpower 615w
World economy 769w

Gas (Exempt Supplies) Bill 1992/93
Debates etc.
2R order read (11:12:92) 1175

Gas fired power stations
Electricity generation 33w
Staythorpe 32-3w

Gas reserves
498-9w

Gas supply industry
Energy review 348w

GATT
58-9w, 224w, 361w, 366-7w, 510w, 758-9w
Agricultural production 383-4
Animal feed 383
Cereals 755w
Common agricultural policy 382-3
Food prices 713w
Food standards 367w
France 383
Hill farming 380
Set-aside schemes 25w, 381, 510w, 755-6w
Wales 125w

GCE A level
Clwyd 603w
Student numbers 477w, 603w

GCHQ
see Government Communications Headquarters

General Dental Council
339-40w

General Medical Council
339-40w
Privy Council 340-1w

General Register & Record Office of Shipping & Seamen
see Registrar General of Shipping

General Synod
13-4

Generic prescribing
144-5w, 231w, 641w, 688w
Drug industry 148w

Genetic engineering
Animal experiments 554w

Geriatric patients
684
Health services 683-4
NHS finance 630w

Germany
Coal mining 258w
Fascism 88w

Gerrard, Mr Neil
Questions
Butter, EC free food scheme 384-5
EC immigration, Immigration controls 334-5w

Garrard, Mr Neil—continued
Trevi Group 662w

Gill, Mr Christopher
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (02:12:92) 353
Questions
Family doctors, Budgeting 685-6
Set-aside schemes, Landlord & tenant 386

Gillan, Mrs Cheryl
Debates etc.
Unemployment (08:12:92) 734-7

Girobank
Privatisation 117w

Glasgow
Victim support schemes 182w

Glougernsley
Bombings 597-8w

Global environmental facility
UK contributions 309w

Godman, Dr Norman A
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (02:12:92) 313-4
Prime Minister's questions, Points of order (08:12:92) 695
Public expenditure, Scotland (02:12:92) 278
Sea Fish (Conservation) Bill, Lords amendts (09:12:92) 949
Water supply industry, Public petitions (08:12:92) 819
Questions
Drug crimes, Scotland 24w
Languages, Minority groups 455w
NOW initiative 617w
NOW initiative, Northern Ireland 602-3w
Public lavatories, Scotland 359w
Small businesses, Company liquidations 357-8w
Social security claims, Administrative delays 344-5w
Women's employment, EC grants & loans 617w

Golding, Mrs Llin
Debates etc.
Mink Keeping Order 1992 (08:12:92) 811-2
Social Security Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & Means res (30:11:92) 102-5
Social Security Bill, Com (07:12:92) 595-6, 601-3, 607, 619-21, 623
Questions
Children in care 75w, 774w
Disability living allowance, Administrative delays 8
House condition survey 290w
Motorways, Telephones 202-3w
World in Action 774w

Goode Committee
see Pension Law Review Committee

Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair, Minister of State, Foreign & Commonwealth Office
Questions
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Airports 816w
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Concentration camps 816w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office, Chlorofluorocarbons 1-2w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office, Civil service dispersal 436w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office, Civil service manpower 212w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office, Contracts for services 89w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office, Departmental correspondence 88w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office, Operating costs 88w
Hong Kong, Democracy 458w

Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Questions
Armed forces discharges 794w
Homelessness, Unemployment 139
NHS trusts 629w

Gordon, Ms Mildred
Questions
Arrests 410-2w
Arrests, Scotland 508-9w
Council tax, Greater London 138-9
National Identification Bureau 96w
Official Report, CD-ROM 201w
Police firearms, Road blocks 807w

Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (01:12:92) 225-7, 228, (02:12:92) 293, 318-9, 324, 326, 361
Questions
Administration of justice, Women 4w
VAT, Tax rates & bands 985-6

Gorst, Mr John
Debates etc.
Mink Keeping Order 1992 (08:12:92) 798
Questions
BBC, Archives 457-8w
Insolvency practitioners, Fees & charges 498w
London Forum 703w

Gould, Mr Bryan
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (01:12:92) 163-4, 167, (02:12:92) 315
Questions
Public sector debt 570-1w
Squatting, Law reform 5w

Government Actuary
(07:12:92) 595-636

Government assistance to industry
448w

Government buildings
Solar power 206w

Government car service
Contracts for services 211w

Government Chemist
Official visits 252-3w

Government Communications Headquarters
Research 86-7w

Government grants to local authorities
Air pollution control 288w
Road safety 821-2w

Government grants to voluntary organisations
Health services 361-2w
Scotland 361-2w

Government laboratories
Fish diseases 366w

Graham, Mr Thomas
Debates etc.
Public expenditure, Scotland (02:12:92) 279
Questions
Agricultural land, Planning permission 382

Grant, Sir Anthony
Debates etc.
Package Travel, Package Holidays & Package Tours Regulations 1992 (10:12:92) 1081-3
Standing Order No 20 applications, Points of order (30:11:92) 42

Grant, Mr Bernie
Questions
Maintenance, Social security benefits rules 170w

Grant maintained schools
118w, 692-3w
Ballots 40w, 751w
School transport 560w
Secondary education 40w

Grant maintained schools centre
692-3w

Greater London
Adult education 692w
Council tax 138-9

Greater London—continued
Empty housing 306-7w
Health & Safety Executive 722-3w
Homelessness 146w, 433w, 828-9
Hospital waiting lists 773w
Illegal immigrants 734w
Manufacturing industries 247-8
Nurses 73-4w
Police firearms 807w
Priority routes 783w
Regional aid 247
Sleeping rough 573w
Taxis 784-5w

Greater Manchester
Accident & emergency departments 145w
Crime prevention 807w
Public libraries 455w
Theatres 455w

Greater Manchester Ambulance Service
Unfair dismissal 419w

Greater Manchester Buses
286w
Buy outs 696w

Greater Manchester (Light Rapid Transit System) Bill (HL) 1990/91
Debates etc.
2R order read (03:12:92) 377, (10:12:92) 979

Greenpeace
470w

Greenway, Mr Harry
Debates etc.
Clarke Foods, Knowsley (07:12:92) 642-4, 646, 649-50
Questions
Business questions 1003
Homelessness, Voluntary organisations 829
Horses, Transport of animals 386w
National lottery, Charities 578
Official engagements 122w, 307w
Refugees, Work permits 219w
Regional aid, Greater London 247
Women clergy 12w

Greenway, Mr John
Questions
Group marketing grant 385-6
Hillsborough Stadium Inquiry 453w
Premium bonds 979-80
Prosecutions 586
UK contributions to EC budget 138

Greenwich
Educational standards 690-1
Standard spending assessments 290-1w

Greenwich & Bexley Family Health Services Authority
Dental services 630-1w

Greenwich Hospital
715-6w

Grenada
Commonwealth Development Corporation 310w

Griffiths, Mr Nigel
Debates etc.
Package Travel, Package Holidays & Package Tours Regulations 1992 (10:12:92) 1077-81, 1082, 1088, 1093
Public expenditure, Scotland (02:12:92) 281
Questions
Computer software, Monopolies 676w
Forestry Commission, Land acquisition 194w, 789-90w
Government grants to voluntary organisations, Scotland 362w
Health services, Government grants to voluntary organisations 361-2w
Sales promotions, Consumer protection 745-6w
Unfair trading practices, Prosecutions 117w

Griffiths, Mr Peter
Debates etc.
Mink Keeping Order 1992 (08:12:92) 810

Griffiths, Mr Win
Questions
Environmental education, Information services 24w
Environmental education, Teacher training 238w
Grant maintained schools 118w
Magistrates' courts, Administration of justice 15-6
NHS trusts, Capital investment 132w
Overseas aid, Developing countries 590

Grocott, Mr Bruce
Questions
United Nations, Armed forces deployment 652-4w
United Nations, Peace keeping operations 654-6w

Group marketing grant
385-6
Expenditure 385

Growth promoting hormones
755w

Grylls, Sir Michael
Debates etc.
One stop shop initiative (03:12:92) 416-7
Unfair competition (30:11:92) 23
Questions
Generic prescribing 145w, 231w
Limited list prescribing, EC countries 320w

Guaranteed minimum pensions
(30:11:92) 45-117, (07:12:92) 595-636

Guardian
408

Guide prices
Fish products (09:12:92) 853-940

Guildford Four Inquiry
222w, 335-6w, 588
Costs 96w
Documents 283w
Evidence 95w, 218w
Immunity certificates 218w, 222w, 283w, 303w
Intelligence services 95w

Gulf Trust
Fund raising 167w

Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
Questions
Agricultural land, Land use 380
Agricultural machinery, Capital investment 158w
Coastal protection, Nature conservation 226-7w
Common agricultural policy 367w
Common agricultural policy, Fraud 377-8
Environmentally sensitive areas, Common agricultural policy 817w
Fishing quotas 624-6w
Food from Britain, Public appointments 513w
GATT 366-7w
GATT, Agricultural production 383-4
GATT, Animal feed 383
GATT, Common agricultural policy 382-3
GATT, France 383
GATT, Hill farming 380
GATT, Set-aside schemes 381
Hill livestock allowances 751-2w
Intervention Board, Official visits 386w
Milk Marketing Board 367w
Mushrooms, Agricultural subsidies 383
Set-aside schemes 380-1, 386-7
Set-aside schemes, Land use 387
Set-aside schemes, Landlord & tenant 386-7
Slaughterhouses, Food hygiene 223-4w
Tenant farmers 368w
Transport of animals, EC law 756-7w

Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn—continued
Veterinary Medicines Directorate, Official visits 160w

Gunnell, Mr John
Questions
British Coal Corporation, Privatisation 745w
Prescription charges 630w
Small businesses, Government assistance 248-9w
Travelling people, Caravan sites 834

Guyana
Double taxation (30:11:92) 117

Guy's Hospital
630w

Gwynedd County Council
827w

Gymnastics
Government grants 42w

Gypsies
Caravan sites 669w
Clwyd 669w

Hague, Mr William
Questions
A1, Motorways 203w
British Coal Corporation, Investment 350w
EC Telecommunications Council 349w
European Coal & Steel Community 348w
Export controls, Orders & regulations 745w
Hearing aids, Research 231w

Hain, Mr Peter
Debates etc.
Business questions intervention (03:12:92) 403-4
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (01:12:92) 158
One stop shop initiative (03:12:92) 422
Questions
Armed forces training, Iraq 544w
Arms to Iraq Inquiry, Lawrence, Tess 307w
Arms trade, Iraq 656w, 663w
Business questions 409-10
Engineering Employers' Federation, Economic policy 991
Floods, Wales 397-8
Hospital waiting lists 628-9w
Lawrence, Tess, Burglary 334w
Parcelforce, Privatisation 282w
Post Office, External financing limits 834w
Post Office, Finance 745w
Post Office Counters 677w
Regional aid, South Wales 765w
Unemployment, South Wales 764-5w
VAT registration, Small businesses 767w

Hall, Mr Mike
Debates etc.
Small businesses, Bureaucracy (07:12:92) 657-60, 661, 662, 673
Questions
Health service staff, Pay review bodies 76w
National lottery 454w
Public expenditure, Treaty on European Union 989

Halons
Scottish Office 619-20w

Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie, Minister of State for the Armed Forces
Questions
Air force bases, Schools 363w
Aircraft noise, Helicopters 719-20w
Ammunition, Seas & oceans 543w
Ammunition, Waste disposal 542-3w
Amphibious forces, Warships 62w
Armed forces casualties, Inquiries 611-2w
Armed forces deployment, Bosnia-Herzegovina 60-1w, 166w
Armed forces deployment, Diego Garcia 63w
Armed forces deployment, Yugoslavia 543w

Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie—continued
Armed forces discharges 794w
Armed forces housing, Property transfer 168w
Armed forces pay, Bosnia-Herzegovina 805w
Armed forces training, Brecon Beacons National Park 62w, 541-2w
Armed forces training, Defence land 805w
Armed forces training, Iraq 544w
Army 716-8w
Army, Defence equipment 544w
Army in Northern Ireland 63w
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Military aircraft 241-2w
Chemical & biological warfare, Defence research 160-3w
Chemical & biological warfare, International conferences 164w
Chemical & biological warfare, Military alliances 163w
Chemical weapons 164w
Chemical weapons, Bosnia-Herzegovina 759w
Chemical weapons, Yugoslavia 164w
Cory, Peter, Courts martial 61-2w
Craigie Hall, Repairs & maintenance 806w
Defence expenditure 544w
Defence land, Wales 415w
Defence research, Military alliances 160w
El Alamein, Festivals & special occasions 65w
Government car service, Contracts for services 211w
Greenwich Hospital 715-6w
Gulf Trust, Fund raising 167w
Harrier aircraft, Army strength 60w
Historic buildings, Defence land 167-8w
Historic Military Buildings Committee 167w
HMS Drake, Costs 546w
Immunity certificates, Bombings 241w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Costs 805w
Low flying, Cumbria 403w
Military aid 717w
Military aid to civil community, Industrial disputes 404-8w
Ministry of Defence, Operating costs 165-6w
NATO, Armed forces deployment 714w
Peace keeping operations, Bosnia-Herzegovina 611w
Peace keeping operations, Yugoslavia 166w
RAF Chivenor 805w
RAF Elvington, Property transfer 402w
RAF Regiment 164-5w
RNSD Eaglescliffe, Relocation of employees 793-4w
Royal British Legion, Tidworth 168w
Shropshire Regimental Museum, Security 806w
Strategic nuclear weapons, Defence expenditure 364w
Submarines, Fishing vessels 403-4w
US bases, Menwith Hill 714w
War crimes, Channel Islands 611w, 793w
Windsor Castle, Fires 716w

Hamilton, Mr Neil, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs
Debates etc.
Clarke Foods, Knowsley (07:12:92) 644-50
Occupational Pensions Bill, Points of order (11:12:92) 1176
Small businesses, Bureaucracy (07:12:92) 659, 665, 667-74
Questions
Dept of Trade & Industry, Legislation 109-10w
Dept of Trade & Industry, Private detectives 107w
Deregulation initiative 496w
Insolvency practitioners, Fees & charges 498w
Monopolies, Computer software 676w
Monopolies, Video games 675w
Office of Electricity Regulation 115w
Overseas trade, USA 262-3

Hamilton, Mr Neil—continued
Partnerships, Company accounts 30-1w
Restrictive trade practices, Newspaper press 249w
Trade barriers, USA 262

Hampson, Dr Keith
Questions
Clinical psychologists, Training 141w

Hampton Court
101w

Handicap benefits
9, 68w
Expenditure 6

Handicapped
Community care plans 761w
Driving instruction (11:12:92) 1160-72
Personal social services 521w
Public petitions (08:12:92) 818-9, (11:12:92) 1104
Scotland 189-90w

Handicapped pupils
Wales 606w

Hanley, Mr Jeremy, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Northern Ireland Office
Questions
Cereals, Agricultural production 134w
Cereals, Northern Ireland 228w
Conductive education, Dungannon 733-9w
Eastern Health & Social Services Board, Nationality 136w
Elderly, EC grants & loans 136w
Gamblers Anonymous, Northern Ireland 683-4w
Home helps, Eastern Health & Social Services Board 132-3w
Home helps, Southern Health & Social Services Board 132-3w
Northern Ireland Dept of Education, Research finance 135w
Nursing homes, Northern Ireland 135-6w
Residential care, Northern Ireland 136w
School administration, Northern Ireland 500w
School discipline, Northern Ireland 501w
Social Fund, Dept of Social Security local offices 499-500w
White fish, Fishing quotas 683w
Wildlife incident investigation scheme, Northern Ireland 308w

Hannam, Sir John
Debates etc.
Road Traffic (Driving Instruction by Disabled Persons) Bill, 2R (11:12:92) 1160-5
Questions
Business 690
Disabled passengers' scheme, Road tax 464w
Public transport, Mobility of disabled 694-5w
Residential care of children, Boarding schools 230w
South West Water, Capital investment 702w

Hanson, Mr David
Debates etc.
Unemployment (08:12:92) 737, 751-6
Questions
Armed forces deployment, Bosnia-Herzegovina 60-1w
Building societies, Mortgage interest rates 48-9w
Christmas bonus 681w
Coal mining 34w
Gymnastics, Government grants 42w
National House Building Council, Defra 414w
Point of Ayr colliery 34w
Smoke alarms, Council housing 125w
Solvent abuse 142w
Sun Dwr Farm Northop, Land acquisition 131w

Hanson, Mr David—continued
VAT, Charities 102w

Hard core unemployed
135, 730w
Accrington 730w
South East region 730w
Wolverhampton 181w

Hardy, Mr Peter
Debates etc.
Mink Keeping Order 1992 (08:12:92) 795, 812
Questions
Beer, Measurement 677w
Contaminated land registers 829-30
Electricity generation, Gas fired power stations 33w
Electricity generation, Imports 34w
Fossil fuel levy 33-4w
Iron & steel industry 258-9
Nuclear power stations, Decommissioning 258w
RAF Regiment 164-5w
Railway transport 820w
Social security claims, Exservicemen 800w
Tobacco, Smuggling 812-3w

Hargreaves, Mr Andrew
Questions
Autumn statement 772w
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed conflict 995
Drug seizures 987

Harman, Ms Harriet
Questions
Manufacturing industries, Unemployment 980-1
Personal income 504w
Shareholders 470w

Harmondsworth Detention Centre
Death 734w
Immigrant detainees 734w
Suicide 733-4w

Harrier aircraft
Army strength 60w

Harris, Mr David
Debates etc.
Fisheries (09:12:92) 883-8, 896, 924
Sea Fish (Conservation) Bill, Lords amendts (09:12:92) 947, 952
Unfair competition (30:11:92) 24
Questions
Fishing quotas 388-9
Slaughterhouses 689-90

Harvey, Mr Nick
Questions
Agri-environment action plan 712w
Agri-environment action plan, Sustainable development 712w
Day care of children 774-5w
East Timor, Human rights 652w
Non-domestic rates, Rate rebates 739w
Poultry, Animal welfare 754w
RAF Chivenor 805w
Retirement pensions, Married women 682w
Road construction, Sites of special scientific interest 694w
Water supply, Private sector 829w

Haselhurst, Mr Alan
Debates etc.
Refugees, Bosnia-Herzegovina (30:11:92) 35
Questions
Airports, South East region 783-4w

Haslar Prison
Immigrant detainees 734w

Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Questions
Citizen's Charter, Child benefit 393

Hawkins, Mr Nick
Debates etc.
Coastal protection (10:12:92) 1029-32
Judicial Pensions & Retirement Bill (HL), 2R (03:12:92) 431-2, 450, 458, 465-9

Hawkins, Mr Nick—continued
Questions
Assisted areas 261
Council of Ministers 437-40w
Mushrooms, Agricultural subsidies 383
Railway travel, Franchising 697w
Sentencing 587

Hawksley, Mr Warren
Questions
Audit Commission for Local Authorities in England & Wales, NHS finance 635w

Hazardous wastes
700-1w
Developing countries 844
EC law 835-6
Imports 836
Transport of hazardous materials 844

Heald, Mr Oliver
Debates etc.
Judicial Pensions & Retirement Bill (HL), 2R (03:12:92) 471, 479
Unemployment (08:12:92) 706, 755, 764-8
Questions
EC law, EC internal trade 752-3w
Training & enterprise councils 129

Health & Safety Executive
179-80w, 728-9w
Codes of practice 175w
Greater London 722-3w
Manpower 613-4w, 723-4w
North East region 724-6w
North West region 723-4w
Nurses 416w
Offshore Safety Division 179w
Re-employment 229w
Scotland 416w
Transport of radioactive materials 781-2w
Yorkshire & Humberside 724-6w

Health education
Alternative medicine 685w
Expenditure 788w
Family doctors 804-5w
Government grants 565w
Scotland 788w
Urban programme 320w

Health Education Board for Scotland
788w

Health hazards
Asbestos 688w
Lead free petrol 391-2w
Occupational health 729w
Sheep dipping 627-8w

"Health of the Nation White Paper"
629w, 632w, 642-3w, 680-1

Health service staff
Freedom of expression (10:12:92) 1011
Pay 142w, 635w, 679
Pay review bodies 76w, 523w, 679
Pay settlements 788w
Scotland 788w

Health services
Expenditure 788w
Geriatric patients 683-4
Government grants to voluntary organisations 361-2w
Medical audit 317w
Scotland 788w

Health warnings
Tobacco 777w

Hearing aids
Research 231w

Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (01:12:92) 136
Prince of Wales (09:12:92) 846

Heating
Housing & elderly 573w

Helicopter carriers
Defence procurement 62-3w, 364w

Helicopters
Aircraft noise 719-20w

Henderson, Mr Doug
Questions
Council tax, Discounts 156-8w
Local government services 837
PSA Projects, Privatisation 392w
Tarmac Construction, Hewell Grange Prison 475w

Hendron, Dr Joe
Questions
Travelling people, Belfast 17-8w

Hendry, Mr Charles
Debates etc.
Social Security Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & Means res (30:11:92) 59-63
Questions
Audio recordings, Taxation 497w
Empty housing, Housing associations 572w
Family doctors, Budgeting 685
Homelessness 138
Listed buildings, Buxton 548w
Motor vehicle registration 990
Private rented housing 835
Sleeping rough, Greater London 573w

Heppell, Mr John
Questions
Trade missions, Iraq 255
Young offenders, Dyslexia 218w
Young offenders, Self-mutilation 556w

Hercules aircraft
721w

Hereford
Flood control 397

Heroin operations
643w

Hertfordshire
Residential care of children 637w
Speed limits 595w

Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael, President of the Board of Trade
Debates etc.
Competition, Ministerial statements (30:11:92) 21-9
One stop shop initiative, Ministerial statements (03:12:92) 414-24
Questions
Arms to Iraq Inquiry 31w
Arms trade, Iraq 247w, 440-1w
Coal mining 251w
EC Energy Council 588-9w
Energy review 446-7w, 585w
European Coal & Steel Community 348w
European Economic Area, Switzerland 589w
Manufacturing industries 249w, 259-60
Manufacturing industries, Unemployment 259
Small businesses, Government assistance 248-9w
Trade missions, Iraq 255

Hewell Grange Prison
Tarmac Construction 475w

Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L
Debates etc.
Banking Coordination (Second Council Directive) Regulations 1992 (10:12:92) 1064-5
Questions
A27, Road construction 91-2w
Landlord & tenant, Law reform 451w

Higher civil servants
Performance related pay 305-6w

Higher education
Age participation rates 398w
Citizen's Charter 119w
Engineering education 38w
Inspections 119w
Private sector 798w

Higher education—continued
Research finance 119w, 183-4w
Scotland 183-4w
Student numbers 475w

Higher education admissions
OECD countries 560-1w

Higher Education Funding Council for England
119w, 476w, 798w

Higher Education Funding Council for Scotland
see Scottish Higher Education Funding Council

Higher Education Funding Council for Wales
Research finance 132w

Higher education teachers
Engineers 397w
Pay 234-5w

Highlands & Islands Enterprise
815-6w

Hill, Mr James
Debates etc.
One stop shop initiative (03:12:92) 419
Questions
Business questions 407

Hill farming
GATT 380
Wales 28w

Hill livestock allowances
751-2w
Wales 27w

Hillsborough Stadium Inquiry
453w

Hinchliffe, Mr David
Questions
Carers, Citizen's Charter 82-4w
Cattle, Export of live animals 385w
Community care 677-8
Community care, Finance 77w, 82w, 147-8w
Community care, Local government expenditure 642w
Community care, Local government finance 432w, 685-6w
Employment agencies, Home care services 55w, 419w
Marriage guidance 992
Mentally ill, Death 434w
Mentally ill, Homelessness 433w
Mining equipment 256
Residential care 147w
Rugby 454-5w
VAT exempted goods 767w

Hip replacements
643w
Hospital waiting lists 678

Historic buildings
Defence land 167-8w
Fire prevention 327w, 409w, 456w
Fire regulations 100w

Historic Buildings & Monuments Commission for England
575
Listed buildings 43w
Windsor Castle 679-80w

Historic Military Buildings Committee
167w

Historic Royal Palaces Agency
457w

Historic Scotland
Official visits 182w

HM Chief Inspector of Schools
see Office for Standards in Education

HM Chief Inspector of Schools in Scotland
see HM Inspectorate of Schools

HM Factory Inspectorate
see Factory Inspectorate

HM Inspectorate of Constabulary
Disclosure of information 5w

HM Inspectorate of Schools
36w, 785w
Manpower 119w
Offices 235w
Pay 235w
Termination of employment 235-6w

HMS Challenger
Defence expenditure 364w

HMS Drake
Costs 546w

HMS Intrepid
62w

Hoey, Ms Kate
Questions
Cervical cancer, Screening 75w
Emergency calls, Telephone services 687
Legal profession, Vocational training 18w
London's Health Service Medical Education & Research Inquiry 630w
Social security claims, Women 70-1w
Students, Women 40w
Women, Career structure 177-8w

Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas, Minister of State, Foreign & Commonwealth Office
Debates etc.
Macedonia, Recognition of states (30:11:92) 120-4
United Nations (04:12:92) 555, 556, 558-64
Questions
Albania, Arms trade 4w
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Military aircraft 2-3w
Chemical weapons, Arms control 459-61w
Commonwealth of Independent States, Fascism 88w
Coordinating Committee on Export Controls 461w
Government Communications Headquarters, Research 86-7w
Iraq, Uranium 1w
Israel, Nuclear weapons 435w
Kosovo, Arms trade 2w
Kosovo, United Nations 2w
Macedonia, EC aid 3w
Nuclear fuels, Theft 436w
Nuclear non proliferation, Treaties 435w
Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty 434-5w
Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty, Commonwealth of Independent States 435w
Nuclear Suppliers' Group, China 436w
Nuclear weapons deployment, Inspections 436w
UN Special Commission on Iraq, UK contributions 89w, 461w
UNESCO 458w
US National Security Agency 437w

Hogg, Mr Norman
Debates etc.
Public expenditure, Scotland (02:12:92) 278
Questions
Public sector earnings 67w
Social security benefits uprating 2

Holiday leave
136

Holyrood House
Fire prevention 21w

Home Affairs Select Committee
(30:11:92) 117

Home care services
Employment agencies 55w, 419w

Home energy efficiency scheme
800w, 829-30w
Domestic energy conservation 829w
Expenditure 830w

Home helps
Eastern Health & Social Services Board 132-3w

Home helps—continued
Manpower 432w
Southern Health & Social Services Board 132-3w

Home Office
Chlorofluorocarbons 5-6w
Civil service dispersal 551-2w
Contracts for services 97w, 658w
Departmental correspondence 96w
Disabled workers 661w
Operating costs 96-8w

Home Robertson, Mr John
Debates etc.
Sea Fish (Conservation) Bill, Lords amendts (09:12:92) 947-8
Questions
Army 716-8w
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Military aircraft 241-2w
Devolution, Scotland 19w
Employment level, Rural areas 224w, 361w
Weir Group, Defence contracts 610w
Windsor Castle, Fires 716w

Homelessness
138, 145-6w, 472w, 740-1w, 994-5
Greater London 146w, 433w, 828-9
Local government expenditure 741w
Mentally ill 433w
Unemployment 139
Voluntary organisations 829

Homoeopathy
Prescriptions 803w

Homicide
Married men 217w
Married women 216w
Pakistan 566w

Hong Kong
Democracy 458w

Hood, Mr Jimmy
Debates etc.
Public expenditure, Scotland (02:12:92) 281
Questions
Council tax, Transitional relief 815w
Railway network, Scotland 695-6w

Hoon, Mr Geoffrey
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (02:12:92) 318, 333
Unfair competition (30:11:92) 25-6

Hoover
Sales promotions 745-6w

Hordern, Sir Peter
Questions
Common agricultural policy, Fraud 378

Hormone treatments
Per capita costs 137-9w

Horses
Export of live animals 159w, 226w
Transport of animals 386w
VAT 768w

Hospices
Children 186-7w
Scotland 186-7w

Hospital beds
Scotland 23w, 188-90w, 788-9w
Wales 608-9w

Hospital closures
Bradford 777w
Llandough Hospital 304-5w, 415w
St Bartholomew's Hospital 521w

Hospital consultants
London's Health Service Medical Education & Research Inquiry 689w
Secretarial staff 665w
South Glamorgan Health Authority 665w
West Midlands Regional Health Authority 638w

Hospital patients
631w
Clwyd Health Authority 244w
East Dyfed Health Authority 244w

Hospital Security Bill 1992/93
Debates etc.
2R order read (04:12:92) 565, (11:12:92) 1175

Hospital waiting lists
432w, 628-9w, 678, 681-2, 684-5
Greater London 773w
Hip replacements 678
Kidney patients 77w
Out-patients 628w
Patient's Charter 628w

Hospitals
518w, 686w
Construction 242-3w, 519w
Land values 186w
Rural areas 628w
Scotland 186w, 815w
Wales 127-8w, 242-3w, 763w

House condition survey
290w

House of Commons debates
Speaker's rulings & statements (10:12:92) 1009

House of Commons galleries
(02:12:92) 354-7

House of Commons Liaison Committee
(01:12:92) 237, (11:12:92) 1176

House of Commons questions
Costs 592w

House of Commons staff
Legal costs 682w

House of Commons stationery
403-4

House prices
Average earnings 771w

House purchase
Empty housing 474w, 737-8w

Housing
842
Economic policy 393-4
Inner city areas 839-40
Legal aid scheme 302w

Housing & elderly
Heating 573w

Housing & handicapped
Scottish Homes 359w

Housing & Urban Development Bill 1992/93
Questions
394-5w, 1006

Housing associations
Empty housing 572w
Rented housing 842
Student accommodation 607w

Housing benefits
Social security benefits rules 502-3w

Housing construction
393w
Essex 710w
Public sector housing 740w
Wales 760w

Housing Corporation
474w, 740w, 842
Government grants 306-7w, 843

Housing estates
Crime prevention 762w

Housing finance
766w

Housing improvement
Council tenants 594-5w

Housing insulation
Northern Ireland 402w

Housing investment programmes
Macclesfield Borough Council 844

Housing revenue accounts
211w
Sheltered housing 152w, 304w

Howard, Rt Hon Michael, Secretary of State for the Environment
Questions
Civil service agencies, Industrial health & safety 286-7w
Dept of the Environment, Civil service dispersal 472w
Dept of the Environment, Civil service manpower 207w
Dept of the Environment, Departmental correspondence 210w
Dept of the Environment, Disabled workers 708w
Dept of the Environment, Official engagements 831w
Dept of the Environment, Operating costs 152w
EC environmental policy 705-6w, 832
EC environmental policy, Subsidiarity 831-2
Empty Government Residential Properties Task Force 576-7w
Energy conservation 739w
Environmental impact assessment, EC law 831-2
Housing, Inner city areas 839-40
Local government services 837
Local government staff, Pay 836-7
Standard spending assessments 155w
Urban programme, Expenditure 152-3w
Water pollution, Pollution monitoring 296w

Howarth, Mr Alan
Debates etc.
Refugees, Bosnia-Herzegovina (30:11:92) 36
Questions
Cultural heritage, Science & technology 584
Public sector borrowing requirement, Taxation 986

Howarth, Mr George
Debates etc.
Clarke Foods, Knowsley (07:12:92) 638-42, 643, 645, 647, 649
Unemployment (08:12:92) 701
Questions
National Federation of Housing Associations 704w

Howell, Mr Ralph
Debates etc.
Social Security Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & Means res (30:11:92) 84-6
Unemployment (08:12:92) 704, 740

Howells, Dr Kim
Questions
BBC, Local broadcasting 583
Fast reactors, Energy research 29-30w
Peru, Overseas aid 482w

Hoyle, Mr Doug
Questions
AWACS, Offset arrangements 365w
Ministers, Press releases 772w

Hughes, Mr Kevin
Questions
Sites of special scientific interest, Thorne Moors 573-4w

Hughes, Mr Robert
Debates etc.
Fisheries (09:12:92) 835, 869-73
Public expenditure, Scotland (02:12:92) 276
Questions
Petroleum Engineering Directorate, Civil service dispersal 745w

Hughes, Mr Simon
Questions
Air pollution 830w
Air pollution control, EC law 288w, 572w
Air pollution control, Pollution monitoring 291w
Assisted areas 111w
Birds, Pest control 827-8w
Business questions 404
Cancer hazards, Non-ionizing radiation 73w
Canthaxanthin, Food additives 623w
Chlorofluorocarbons, Attorney General 195w
Chlorofluorocarbons, Dept for Education 121-2w
Chlorofluorocarbons, Dept of Employment 177w
Chlorofluorocarbons, Dept of Health 74w
Chlorofluorocarbons, Dept of National Heritage 41-2w
Chlorofluorocarbons, Dept of Social Security 341w
Chlorofluorocarbons, Dept of the Environment 149w
Chlorofluorocarbons, Dept of Trade & Industry 346-7w
Chlorofluorocarbons, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 1-2w
Chlorofluorocarbons, Home Office 5-6w
Chlorofluorocarbons, Lord Chancellor's Dept 196w
Chlorofluorocarbons, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 55-6w
Chlorofluorocarbons, Ministry of Defence 239-40w
Chlorofluorocarbons, Northern Ireland Office 133w
Chlorofluorocarbons, Treasury 48w
Chlorofluorocarbons, Waste disposal 573w
Chlorofluorocarbons, Welsh Office 126w
Coal mine closures, Public interest 448w
Coal mine closures, Redundancy 350w
Contaminated land registers 830-1w
EC environmental policy 705-6w
Economic situation, Environment protection 569-70w
Environment protection, Treaties 149w
Environmental health, Orders & regulations 291-2w
Environmental impact assessment, EC law 831-2
Falkland Islands, Marine animals 3w
Global environmental facility, UK contributions 309w
Housing finance 766w
Legal aid 14-5
Magnox reactors 253-4
Mortgage defaulters, Repossession orders 198w
Motorways, Road works 782-3w
Petroleum exploration licences 117w
Police firearms, Road blocks 807w
PowerGen, Flue gas desulphurisation 674-5w
Road salting & gritting, Research 782w
Road traffic 286w
UN Conference on Environment & Development, Treaties 578w
Unemployment 689
Whales, EC law 150w
Whales, Norway 19w
Women clergy 14

Human rights
Albania 567w
Cameroon 316-7w
East Timor 652w
Kashmir 459w
Narmada dam 811w
Sudan 566-7w
Tibet 670-1w

Human Rights Bill 1992/93
Debates etc.
2R order read (11:12:92) 1174

Hunt, Rt Hon David, Secretary of State for Wales
Questions
Agricultural Development & Advisory Service, Fees & charges 26w
Agricultural land, Lime 607-8w
Assisted areas, Wales 132w, 666w
Bellwin scheme, Wales 825-6w
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy, Wales 246-8w
Cardiff Bay barrage, Consultants 415w
Cardiff Bay barrage, Contracts for services 29w
Cardiff Bay Development Corporation, Audit 305w
Cardiff Bay Development Corporation, Consultants 28-9w
Coal mine closures, Employment opportunities 305w
Coal mining, Land pollution 125w
Council housing management, Contracts for services 26w
Dairy Crest, Factory closures 765w
Dairy Crest, Regional aid 27w
Dairy Crest, Wales 27w
Dairy products, Manpower 28w
Development Board for Rural Wales, Public sector housing sales 132w
District health authorities, Public appointments 132w
EC Agriculture Council 827w
EC Environment Council 826-7w
Educational standards, Disclosure of information 609w
Employment level, Wales 825w
Employment opportunities, Financial institutions 245w
Environmentally sensitive areas, Wales 26w, 826w
European Regional Development Fund, Wales 605w
Flood control, Hereford 397
Flood control, Monmouth 396-7
Floods, Wales 395-401
Foreign investment in UK, Wales 604w
GATT, Set-aside schemes 25w
GATT, Wales 125w
Higher Education Funding Council for Wales, Research finance 132w
Hill farming, Wales 28w
Hill livestock allowances, Wales 27w
Local government reform, Wales 606w
Manufacturing industries, Employment opportunities 414w
Milk Marketing Board, Wales 28w
NHS trusts, Advertising 505w
NHS trusts, Orders & regulations 505w
NHS trusts, Public appointments 606-7w
Non-domestic rates, Wales 827w
Regional aid, South Wales 765w
Regional enterprise grants, Wales 670w
Skilled workers, Employment opportunities 27-8w
Swn Dwr Farm Northop, Land acquisition 131w
Training & enterprise councils, Wales 26w
Unemployment, Clwyd 665w
Unemployment, South Wales 764-5w
Unemployment, Wales 126w, 243w, 765w
Valleys initiative, Departmental publications 26-7w
Welsh Office, Chlorofluorocarbons 126w
Welsh Office, Civil service manpower 414w
Welsh Office, Contracts for services 669-70w
Welsh Office, Departmental correspondence 131w
Welsh Office, Disabled workers 764w
Welsh Office, Legislation 25w
Welsh Office, North East Wales Training & Enterprise Council 29w
Welsh Office, Operating costs 131w
Welsh Office, Private detectives 413-4w

Hunt, Sir John
Questions
Council of Europe, UK delegations 802w

Hunter, Mr Andrew
Questions
Broadcasting controls, Terrorism 45w
Cory, Peter, Courts martial 61-2w

Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas, Secretary of State for Foreign & Commonwealth Affairs
Questions
EC Foreign Affairs Council 758-9w
Iraq, Arms trade 656w

Hutton, Mr John
Debates etc.
Unemployment (08:12:92) 760-4, 787
Questions
Council tax 701w
Exports, Middle East 253w
Higher education, Inspections 119w
HM Inspectorate of Schools, Manpower 119w
HM Inspectorate of Schools, Pay 235w
HM Inspectorate of Schools, Termination of employment 235-6w
International Atomic Energy Agency, Argentina 568w
International Atomic Energy Agency, Japan 568w
International Atomic Energy Agency, UK contributions 496w
Israel, Nuclear weapons 435w
Nuclear fuels, Theft 436w
Nuclear non proliferation, Treaties 435w
Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty 434-5w
Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty, Commonwealth of Independent States 435w
Nuclear safeguards, Inspections 586w
Nuclear safeguards, Overseas trade 585w
Nuclear Suppliers' Group, China 436w
Nuclear weapons deployment, Inspections 436w
Office for Standards in Education, Manpower 235w
South East Asia, Nuclear weapons tests 437w
Unemployment, Barrow in Furness 131-2
Zangger Committee 568w

Hydrochlorofluorocarbons
1w, 5-6w, 41-2w, 48w, 55-6w, 74w, 126w, 133w, 149w, 177w, 195-6w, 239-40w, 341w, 346-7w

Hyndburn
Employment action 727-8w
Employment training 727-8w
Local government revenue 706w

Hypermarkets
Road traffic 93w
Wales 129w

I spy strangers
(02:12:92) 354-7

Ilkley bypass
695w

Illegal immigrants
Greater London 734w

Illsley, Mr Eric
Questions
Quota of disabled workers, Local authorities 327w
RECHAR 30w

Immigrant detainees
Harmondsworth Detention Centre 734w
Haslar Prison 734w
Kidlington Prison 551w
Prison population 660-2w

Immigration applications
Political refugees 410w, 662w

Immigration controls
EC immigration 334-5w

Immobilisation of vehicles
999

Immunity certificates
220w, 477w, 481-2w
Bombings 241w
Guildford Four Inquiry 218w, 222w, 283w, 303w
Matrix Churchill 195w
Northern Ireland 17w

Immunity Certificates Bill 1992/93
Debates etc.
2R order read (11:12:92) 1175

Import controls
Offal 755w

Imports
199w
Child workers 831w
Coal 251w, 447-8w
Electricity generation 34w, 447w
Energy 590w
Hazardous wastes 836
Orimulsion 34w
Plutonium 34w
Wastes 828w
Wood 198w, 207w, 287w, 591w, 705w

Incinerators
Air pollution control 289-90w

Income support
3
Mortgage interest rates 581w
Residential care 71-2w
Social security benefits rates 420w, 680w
Social security benefits reductions 72w, 343w
Social security recipients 342-3w
Water charges 70w, 419-21w

Income tax
Working mothers 766w

Independent Living Fund
169-70w, 233w
Nottingham 170w

Industrial accidents
221-2w
Building industry 612w
Death 612w
Fines 612w

Industrial disputes
Military aid to civil community 404-8w

Industrial energy prices
112w
EC countries 833-4w
Electricity tariffs 833-4w

Industrial health & safety
Civil service agencies 286-7w
Coal mining 176-7w
EC law 179-80w
Palace of Westminster 200-1w
Pesticides 175w
Radiation hazards 614w
Research 178w
Sheep dipping 627-8w
Sikhs 418w

Industrial injuries
Bronchitis 591w
Emphysema 591w

Industrial Injuries Advisory Council
591w

Industrial investment
252w, 675w, 982-3

Industrial policy
Scotland 193-4w

Industrial production
199w, 498w
Paisley 191-2w
Surveys 46w

Industrial research
123-4w
Research finance 258-82w, 263-4

Industrial training
Redundancy 130

Industrial wastes
Air pollution control 293w

Industry
Employment opportunities 135-6
Pollution control 293-4w

Infant mortality
76w, 519w

Infectious diseases
Malta 773w

Information services
Environmental education 24w

Information Technology Services Agency
Official visits 169w

Ingram, Mr Adam
Debates etc.
Public expenditure, Scotland (02:12:92) 279
Questions
New towns development corporations, Public sector housing 361w
Nuclear power, Energy policy 588w

Inheritance tax
Tax allowances 431w
Tax yields 812w

Inland Revenue
Civil service dispersal 106-7w
Dundee 106-7w
Inspections 430w
Offices 106-7w
Scotland 107w

INMOS
1007-8

Inner cities initiative
Expenditure 710-1w

Inner city areas
Housing 839-40

Inner London boroughs
Standard spending assessments 289-90w

Inner London Education Authority
692w

Inquiries
Disclosure of information 611-2w

Insolvency practitioners
Fees & charges 498w

Insurance
Air transport 89-90w
Art works 324-5w
Bombings 743w
Windsor Castle 101w

Integrated pollution control
704w

Intelligence services
Guildford Four Inquiry 95w

Inter-city Rail Transport
695-6w

Interest payments
581w

Interest rates
981-2
Banks 983-4
EC countries 768w, 981
USA 982

International Atomic Energy Agency
307w, 435-6w, 463w, 498w, 585-6w, 583-9w, 651w
Argentina 568w
Brazil 568w
Japan 568w
UK contributions 496w

International Bank for Reconstruction & Development
see World Bank

International conferences
Chemical & biological warfare 164w

International Development Association
809w

International Maritime Organisation
Transport of radioactive materials 462w, 597w

International Military Services
63w

International Monetary Fund
51-2w

International Red Cross
(30:11:92) 30-8

International trade
Wood 441w, 467w

International Tropical Timber Agreement
424-6w
Non-governmental organisations 426w

International Tropical Timber Organisation
424w, 426w
UK contributions 424-5w

Interpreters
European Commission 316w

Intervention Board
Official visits 386w

Invalid care allowance
Earnings rules 68w

Invalidity benefits
69w
Medical examinations 11
Surveys 581-2w
Tax yields 812w

Investor protection
429w
Financial services 429w
Mortgages 45-6w

IRA
390-1, 411-2

Iran
Armed forces training 544w
Arms trade 166w, 656w, 665w
Nuclear weapons 435w

Iraq
64w, 89w, 105w, 195w, 461w, 490-2w
Armed forces training 544w
Arms trade 20w, 63-4w, 166w, 219-20w, 247w, 364w, 440-1w, 467w, 656w, 663w, 665w, 816w
Defence equipment 168w
Diplomatic relations 566w
Furnaces 467w
Nuclear weapons 307w
Peace keeping operations 566w
Technology transfer 168w
Trade missions 255
Uranium 1w

Iraq-Kuwait conflict
307w, 334w
Costs 805w

Iron & steel
Production 257-8

Iron & steel industry
258-9
Italy 258

Irradiated food
Bivalve molluscs 378-9

Islington
Floods 232-3w

Israel
Nuclear weapons 435w

Italy
Iron & steel industry 258

Jack, Mr Michael, Minister of State, Home Office
Questions
Administration of justice, Women 4w
Arrests 410-2w
Bentley, Derek, Inquiries 334w
Challenge to jury 198w
Crime 327-34w
Crime prevention, Greater Manchester 807w
Criminal Justice Act 1991, Curfews 808w
Drug crimes, Lancashire 661w
Drug crimes, Wales 550-1w
Drug seizures 551w
Drug seizures, Crack 551w
Fraud, Trials 198w
Guildford Four Inquiry, Costs 96w
Guildford Four Inquiry, Evidence 95w, 218w
Guildford Four Inquiry, Intelligence services 95w
Homicide, Married men 217w
Homicide, Married women 216w
Immunity certificates 477w
Marriage guidance, Government grants 217-8w
Motor vehicle theft, Crime prevention 409-10w
Noise control, Motorcycles 555w
Probation & aftercare, Prisoners' release 100w
Relate 334w
Squatting, Law reform 5w, 808w
Taking & driving away, Casualties 7w
Taking & driving away, Punishment 661w
War crimes, Channel Islands 735w
Young offenders, Alternatives to prison 662-4w
Young offenders, Convictions 412w

Jackson, Ms Glenda
Questions
Bed & breakfast accommodation, Social security benefits 995
Hospital waiting lists, Greater London 773w
Royal Free NHS Trust 675

Jackson, Mrs Helen
Questions
Civil servants, Medical records 123w
Domestic violence 796-7w
Income support, Water charges 70w, 419-21w
Legal aid 18-20
Medical examinations, Disclosure of information 181w
Medical records, Patient's Charter 143w
PSA Projects, Privatisation 149-50w
Social security claims, Administrative delays 2-3
Water supply disconnections 391w, 709-10w

Jackson, Mr Robert, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Office of the Minister for the Civil Service
Questions
European Commission, Interpreters 316w
Medical research, Limited list prescribing 123w
Science & technology research, Alternative medicine 793w

Janner, Mr Greville
Debates etc.
Refugees, Bosnia-Herzegovina (30:11:92) 33
Questions
Advisory Conciliation & Arbitration Service 727w
Advisory Conciliation & Arbitration Service, Expenditure 726w
Advisory Conciliation & Arbitration Service, Manpower 726-7w
Business questions 407-8
Holiday leave 136
Manufacturing industries, Leicester 248
War crimes, Channel Islands 735w, 793w

Japan
International Atomic Energy Agency 568w
Ministers' visits abroad 497w

Jenkin, Mr Bernard
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (01:12:92) 178, (02:12:92) 310
One stop shop initiative (03:12:92) 420
Questions
EC budget 700w
North East Thames Regional Health Authority, District health authorities 523w
North East Thames Regional Health Authority, Finance 686-7
Public expenditure 470w
Retirement pensions 12
Treaty on European Union, EC external relations 212-3w
Visas, EC immigration 215w

Jessel, Mr Toby
Debates etc.
Occupational Pensions Bill, Points of order (11:12:92) 1173
Road Traffic (Driving Instruction by Disabled Persons) Bill, 2R (11:12:92) 1161, 1164, 1166-7

Jobclubs
730-2w
Performance standards 173-4w

John T Boyds Consultants
see Boyds Mining Consultants

Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Questions
BBC, Broadcasting finance 577
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed forces deployment 391

Johnston, Sir Russell
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (01:12:92) 168-81, 193, 200, 229, (02:12:92) 289-90, 301, 305, 311, 319, 358-9
Questions
Kosovo, United Nations 2w
Macedonia, EC aid 3w
Malta, EC enlargement 315w
Political refugees, Yugoslavia 411-2w

Jones, Mr Barry
Debates etc.
Unemployment (08:12:92) 752-3
Questions
A494, Road traffic 761w
Air force, Contracts for services 239w
Ambulance services, North Wales 763w
Assisted areas, Wales 666w
British Rail, Privatisation 667w
Cancer, Medical treatments 246w
Caravan sites, Gypsies 669w
Churches National Housing Coalition 760w
Crime prevention, Housing estates 762w
Dairy Crest, Regional aid 27w
Dairy Crest, Wales 27w
Dairy products, Manpower 28w
Dolphins, Cardigan Bay 667w
Employment schemes, Wales 606w
Export promotion, Wales 587w
GATT, Set-aside schemes 25w
GATT, Wales 125w
Hill farming, Wales 28w
Housing construction, Wales 760w
Industrial investment 675w
Iron & steel industry 258
Legal aid, Certification 19w
Legal aid, Expenditure 19w
Local government reform, Wales 606w
Magistrates' courts, Wales 18w
Milk Marketing Board, Wales 28w
Nutrition & health, Pensioners 70w
Orchestras, Arts Council grants 455w
Road safety, Schools 244w
Sheltered housing, Housing revenue accounts 304w

Jones, Mr Barry—continued
Skilled workers, Employment opportunities 27-8w
Training & enterprise councils, Performance standards 667w
Transport of animals 367w
Travelling people, Caravan sites 763-4w
Unemployment, Clwyd 665w
Unemployment, Wales 126w
Urban programme, Alyn & Deeside 762w
Urban programme, Wales 669w
Vocational guidance, Wales 760w
Youth training, Wales 666w
Youth unemployment, Shotton 666w

Jones, Mr Gwilym, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Welsh Office
Questions
Abortion, RU486 126w
Ambulance services, North Wales 763w
Breast cancer, Screening 128-9w
Cancer, Medical treatments 246w
Cardiff Prison, Young offenders 759-60w
Children, Deaf 506w
Children in care, Telephone services 25w
Children in care, Wales 25w
Churches National Housing Coalition 760w
Community care grants, Clwyd 129w
Community care plans, Braille 761w
Community care plans, Handicapped 761w
Contracts for services, NHS 28w
Council housing management, Contracts for services 26w, 125w
Crime prevention, Housing estates 762w
Dentists, Wales 125w
Drug abuse, Death 604-5w
Drug abuse, Pregnant women 603w
Gypsies, Caravan sites 669w
Hospital beds, Wales 608-9w
Hospital consultants, Secretarial staff 665w
Hospital patients, Clwyd Health Authority 244w
Hospitals, Construction 242-3w
Hospitals, Wales 127-8w, 763w
Housing construction, Wales 760w
Hypermarkets, Wales 129w
Llandough Hospital, Hospital closures 304-5w, 415w
Local government revenue, Council house sales 242w
National House Building Council, Delyn 414w
NHS, Contracts for services 763w
NHS administration, Wales 608w
NHS internal market, Wales 608w
NHS trusts, Capital investment 132w
NHS trusts, Contracts of employment 606w
Nursing homes, Repossession orders 669w
Nursing Staff & Professions Allied to Medicine Review Body 507w
Occupational therapy, Wales 506w
Radiation, North Wales 605-6w
Recycling, Local authorities 246w
River pollution, Wales 608w
Salmon, Fisheries 128w
Salmon, Fishing 128w
Salmon, Manpower 128w
Schizophrenia, Wales 826w
Sheltered housing, Housing revenue accounts 304w
Smoke alarms, Council housing 125w
South Glamorgan Health Authority, Directors 507w
Student accommodation, Housing associations 607w
Travelling people, Caravan sites 763-4w
Urban programme, Alyn & Deeside 762w
Urban programme, Wales 669w
Young offenders, Secure accommodation 760w

Jones, Mr Ieuan Wyn
Questions
Average earnings 174w
Chemical weapons, Bosnia-Herzegovina 759w
Community care plans, Braille 761w
Community care plans, Handicapped 761w

Jones, Mr Ieuan Wyn—continued
Disabled workers, Training 667-8w, 790-1w
Employment level, Wales 825w
Macedonia, Recognition of states 567w
Nursing homes, Repossession orders 669w
Schizophrenia, Wales 826w
Sheep, Marginal land 713w
Training & enterprise councils, Codes of practice 728w
Training & enterprise councils, Disabled workers 616w, 763w, 824w
Training & enterprise councils, Special training needs 790w
Vocational training 728w
Youth training, Per capita costs 824-5w
Youth training, Wales 760-1w

Jones, Mr Jon Owen
Questions
Cardiff Prison, Young offenders 759-60w
Employment opportunities, Financial institutions 245w
Energy conservation 471-2w
Floods, Wales 401
Further education, Curriculum 130w
Hospital consultants, Secretarial staff 665w
Industrial health & safety, Sikhs 418w
Local government pensions 472-3w
Manufacturing industries, Employment opportunities 414w
Offshore drilling, Environment protection 495w
Offshore drilling, Wales 495-6w
Political refugees, Immigration applications 662w
Schools, Museums & galleries 605w
Severn bridge, British Steel Corporation 499w
Training, Wales 245w
Unemployment, Wales 243w
Young offenders, Custodial treatment 480w
Young offenders, Secure accommodation 760w
Youth training, South Glamorgan 304w
Youth training, Training allowances 175w

Jones, Dr Lynne
Debates etc.
Unemployment (08:12:92) 718, 723-6, 787
Questions
AIDS, Government grants 143w
Arms trade, Iraq 440-1w
Educational finance, Birmingham City Council 313w
Fertility, Medical treatments 431-2w
Financial services, Investor protection 429w
Financial services, Self-regulating organisations 429w
Infectious diseases, Malta 773w
Investor protection 429w
"New Opportunities for the Railways White Paper" 596w
Parking offences, London boroughs 697w
Vacancies, Birmingham 416-7w
VAT, Exports 698w
Visas, Temporary immigrants 458w
Youth training 221w

Jones, Mr Martyn
Questions
GATT, Hill farming 380
Invalidity benefits, Medical examinations 11
Unemployment 173w

Jones, Mr Nigel
Questions
Dept for Education, Administrative costs 691w
Local government reform, Metropolitan districts 16w

Jones, Mr Robert B
Debates etc.
Coastal protection (10:12:92) 1012-8, 1034, 1050
Questions
EC environmental policy, Subsidiarity 831

Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Questions
Armed forces deployment, Waste disposal 792w
Eggs, Agricultural production 368-9w
Environmentally sensitive areas 224w
Fire services, Cumbria 216w
Low flying, Cumbria 403w
Motorcycles, Motor vehicle parts 389w

Jowell, Ms Tessa
Questions
Community care 677
Community care, Council tax 81w
Council tax, Nursing homes 13w
Higher education teachers, Pay 234-5w
London's Health Service Medical Education & Research Inquiry 630w

Jubilee line
Employment opportunities 135

Judges
Commercial court 751w
Manpower 16-7
Performance standards 18w

Judicial Pensions & Retirement Bill (HL) 1992/93
Debates etc.
2R & Money res° (03:12:92) 425-87

Judiciary
Training 195w
Women 451w

Kashmir
Foreign policy 459w
Human rights 459w
Press freedom 459w

Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Debates etc.
Official Report, Points of order (09:12:92) 848
Questions
Albania, Arms trade 651-2w
Albania, Human rights 567w
Clinton, Bill 734-5w

Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (01:12:92) 230
Unemployment (08:12:92) 773
Questions
Nuclear power 254
Overseas aid, Developing countries 590
Railway network, Capital investment 283w

Kennedy, Mr Charles
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (02:12:92) 289
Questions
Skye bridge 621-2w
Underwater Test & Evaluation Centre 545-6w

Kennedy, Mrs Jane
Questions
Health service staff, Pay review bodies 679
Invalidity benefits, Surveys 581-2w
Microwave Modules 249w

Kent
Primary education 750w
Radioactive materials 587w

Key, Mr Robert, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of National Heritage
Questions
Ancient monuments, Local authorities 576
Ancient monuments, Repairs & maintenance 575
Archaeological sites, Wootton Creek 453w
Arts finance 454w
Cultural heritage, Science & technology 584
Dept of National Heritage, Chlorofluorocarbons 41-2w

Key, Mr Robert—continued
English Tourist Board 42w
Foreign tourists 454w
Historic Royal Palaces Agency 457w
Kirkstall Abbey, Architectural conservation 575
Languages, Minority groups 455w
Listed buildings, Buxton 548w
Mass media, Ownership 584-5
Music education 582-3
National lottery, Charities 577-9
National lottery, Voluntary organisations 578-9
Orchestras, Young people 582
Public libraries 454w
Public libraries, Greater Manchester 455w
Sports facilities, Rate rebates 453w
Theatres, Repairs & maintenance 548-9w
Tourism, Government grants 457w
Tourism, May Day bank holiday 678w
Tourist boards 456w
Tourist boards, Government grants 677w
Tourist industry, Ministerial duties 678w
Tourist industry, National lottery 677-8w
Walking, Lancashire 43w

Khabra, Mr Piara S
Questions
Health service staff, Pay 142w

Kidlington Prison
Immigrant detainees 551w

Kidney patients
Hospital waiting lists 77w

Kilfoyle, Mr Peter
Debates etc.
Clarke Foods, Knowsley (07:12:92) 644, 648, 650
Questions
Betting & gaming duties, Football pools 769w
Football pools, Manpower 728w
Homelessness 994-5
Merchant seamen, Manpower 695w
National lottery 679w
National lottery, Football pools 547w
National lottery, Scotland 547w
Prisons, North West region 555w
Registrar General of Shipping 463w

Kilsyth
Business premises 737w

King, Rt Hon Tom
Questions
IRA 390-1

Kirkstall Abbey
Architectural conservation 575

Kirkwood, Mr Archy
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (02:12:92) 361
Fisheries (09:12:92) 856
Sea Fish (Conservation) Bill, Lords amendts (09:12:92) 941-3, 956
Social Security Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & Means res (30:11:92) 69, 72-5, 84, 113
Social Security Bill, Com (07:12:92) 603-4, 614, 632-3, 635
Questions
Child Support Agency, Manpower 342w
Child Support Agency, Social security claims 342w
Community charge, Arrest warrants 192w
Nurses, Manpower 73-4w
Ozone layer 702w
Social security benefits rates 2
VAT, Horses 768w

Knapman, Mr Roger
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (01:12:92) 214, 220, 231, (02:12:92) 291, 316, 318
Questions
GATT 366w

Knapman, Mr Roger—continued
Hip replacements, Hospital waiting lists 678
Iron & steel industry, Italy 258

Knee replacements
643w

Knight, Mrs Angela
Questions
Armed forces casualties, Inquiries 611-2w
Business questions 1001
Export promotion 264
Grant maintained schools 692-3w

Knight, Dame Jill
Debates etc.
Prince of Wales (09:12:92) 847
Questions
Children in care, Local government social services 677

Know-how Fund
(11:12:92) 1105-22, 1134-59
Russia 427w

Knowsley
Clarke Foods (07:12:92) 638-50

Knox, Mr David
Questions
Invalidity benefits, Tax yields 812w
Peak Park Joint Planning Board, Ballots 832-3
Sheep, National Farmers' Union 368w
Social security finance 66w

Kosovo
Arms trade 2w
United Nations 2w

Kurds
566w
EC aid 491w
Overseas aid 490-2w

Kyle of Lochalsh
Nature conservation 622w

Kynoch, Mr George
Debates etc.
Fisheries (09:12:92) 858
Public expenditure, Scotland (02:12:92) 274-5
Questions
Youth training, Scotland 815-6w

Labelling
Drugs 632w
Wood 287w

Laboratory of the Government Chemist
see Government Chemist

Labour costs
Exchange rates 47-8w

Lagganside Corporation
Audit 308-9w

Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Debates etc.
Health Select Committee, Points of order (08:12:92) 694
Unemployment (08:12:92) 701
Questions
Early day motions, Costs 201w
UK repayments from EC budget 687-8

Lamont, Norman
Legal costs (30:11:92) 39-40, 569w
Tenant eviction 306w, 452w

Lamont, Rt Hon Norman, Chancellor of the Exchequer
Questions
EC economic policy 982, 984-5
Economic situation 985
Inland Revenue, Inspections 430w
Interest rates 981-2
Interest rates, EC countries 981
Interest rates, USA 982
Motor vehicle registration 990

Lamont, Rt Hon Norman—continued
Private investment 767-8w

Lancashire
Bridges 203w
Community care 686w
Council tax 770w
Drug crimes 661w
Local government revenue 205-6w
Walking 43w
Youth training 505w

Land acquisition
Forestry Commission 184-6w, 194w, 789-90w
Nature conservation 21w
Playing fields 234w
Swn Dwr Farm Northop 131w

Land ownership & tenure
Scotland 189w

Land pollution
Coal mining 125w

Land reclamation
Contracts 576w

Land Registry Office
Official visits 196w

Land Travel
1001

Land use
Agricultural land 380
Set-aside schemes 387

Land values
Hospitals 186w

Landlord & tenant
Law reform 303w, 451w
Rent arrears 303-4w
Set-aside schemes 386-7

Lang, Rt Hon Ian, Secretary of State for Scotland
Debates etc.
Public expenditure, Ministerial statements (02:12:92) 265-83
Questions
Council tax, Transitional relief 237-8w
Local government finance, Cunninghame District Council 786w
Local government finance, Scotland 786w
Scottish Office, Chlorofluorocarbons 619-20w
Scottish Office, Civil service manpower 620w
Scottish Office, Contracts for services 690w
Scottish Office, Departmental correspondence 183w
Scottish Office, Operating costs 183w
Youth training, Scotland 815-6w

Languages
EC action 212w
Ethnic minorities 7w, 212w
Minority groups 455w
Tenant's Charter 571w

Languages education
Esperanto 235w

Law Officers' Dept
see Attorney General

Law reform
Divorce law 18w, 387w
Domicil 798w
Landlord & tenant 303w, 451w
Squatting 5w, 808w

Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Debates etc.
Judicial Pensions & Retirement Bill (HL), 2R (03:12:92) 432, 461-5, 467, 485

Lawrence, Tess
Arms to Iraq Inquiry 307w
Burglary 334w

Lead free petrol
Health hazards 391-2w

Leasehold housing
Advisory services 207w

Leasing schemes
NHS 105w

Leave
Dept of Energy 589w

Leavesden airfield
(03:12:92) 488, (04:12:92) 568-74

Legal aid
14-5, 17-20
Alternatives to prison 586
Certification 19w
Expenditure 19w
Northern Ireland 592w
Wales 19w

Legal aid scheme
302-3w, 797-8w
Battered women 18-20
Housing 302w
Northern Ireland 387w
Personal income 85w

Legal costs
Bankruptcy 770w
House of Commons staff 682w
Lamont, Norman (30:11:92) 39-40, 569w
Ministers 307w, 466w, 665w, 803w
Private prosecutions 796w
Standing Order No 20 applications (30:11:92) 39-40

Legal profession
Vocational training 18w

Legg, Mr Barry
Debates etc.
Unemployment (08:12:92) 749-51
Questions
Parliamentary sovereignty & European Community 314w
Treaty on European Union 211w

Legislation
Dept of Trade & Industry 109-10w
Dept of Transport 9w
Welsh Office 25w

Leicester
Manufacturing industries 248
Urban programme 14w

Leigh, Mr Edward Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Technology
Debates etc.
Package Travel, Package Holidays & Package Tours Regulations 1992 (10:12:92) 1074-7, 1093-5
Questions
Audio recordings, Taxation 497w
Beer, Measurement 677w
Cars, Advertising 257w
Cellular phones, Counterfeit manufacturing 32w
Cosmetics, Animal experiments 114w
EC Consumer Affairs Council 254w
EC Telecommunications Council 349w
Emergency calls 117w, 673-4w
Estate agents, Unfair trading practices 705w
EUREKA 33w
Export credit guarantees 252-3
Export credit guarantees, South America 251-2
Furniture, Fire prevention 250w
Girobank, Privatisation 117w
Industrial research, Research finance 258-82w, 263-4
LINK programme 33w
Loan sharks 108w
Manufacturing industries, Leicester 248
Multifibre arrangement 248
Package holidays, EC law 673w
Parcelforce, Privatisation 282w, 674w

Leigh, Mr Edward—*continued*
Post Office 744w
Post Office, External financing limits 834w
Post Office, Finance 745w
Post Office Counters 677w
Postal services 744w
Radiocommunications Agency, Official Visits 253w
Red Star, Privatisation 674w
Sales promotions, Consumer protection 745-6w
Science & technology research, Technology transfer 281-2w
Small businesses, Billing 252w
Small businesses, Debts 113-4w, 257w
Small businesses, Government assistance 114-5w
Small businesses, Protective clothing 673w
Small businesses, VAT registration 116w
SMART awards, South East region 248w
Telephone services, Pornography 251w
Trading standards departments, Manpower 248w
Unfair trading practices, Prosecutions 117w

Leighton, Mr Ron
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (02:12:92) 351-2, 354
Unemployment (08:12:92) 717, 727, 746-9
Questions
Dept of Social Security local offices, Repairs & maintenance 501w
Disability living allowance, Administrative delays 67w

Lennox-Boyd, Mr Mark, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Foreign & Commonwealth Office
Questions
Africa, Overseas aid 591-2
African Development Bank, Forest protection 492w, 494w
African Development Bank, Manpower 494w
Albania, Human rights 567w
Angola, Peace negotiations 567-8w
Bangladesh, Overseas aid 309w
BBC External Services 652w
BBC External Services, Cost effectiveness 652w
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed conflict 589-90
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Civil servants' visits abroad 558w
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Overseas aid 589
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Peace keeping operations 672w
Brazil, Forest protection 492-4w
Brazil, Wood 494w
British residents abroad, Voluntary organisations 482w
Cameroon, Elections 440w
Cameroon, Human rights 316-7w
Cameroon, Overseas aid 427w
Cameroon, Political prisoners 311w
Commonwealth 310-1w
Commonwealth Development Corporation, Dominican Republic 310w
Commonwealth Development Corporation, Grenada 310w
Developing countries, Chlorofluorocarbons 302w, 393w
Developing countries, Death rate 557w
Developing countries, Overseas aid 670w
Developing countries, Wood 426-8w
East Timor, Human rights 652w
Education Partners Overseas, Educational aid 494w
Falkland Islands, Penguins 757-8w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office, Contracts for services 655w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office, Disabled workers 654w
Forest protection, Population 425w
Gabon, Forestry 557w
Global environmental facility, UK contributions 309w
International Development Association 809w

Lennox-Boyd, Mr Mark—*continued*
International Tropical Timber Agreement 425-6w
International Tropical Timber Agreement, Non-governmental organisations 426w
International Tropical Timber Organisation, UK contributions 424-5w
Iraq, Arms trade 816w
Iraq, Diplomatic relations 566w
Iraq, Peace keeping operations 566w
Kashmir, Foreign policy 459w
Kashmir, Human rights 459w
Kashmir, Press freedom 459w
Kurds, EC aid 491w
Kurds, Overseas aid 490-2w
Macedonia, Recognition of states 567w
Malaria, Disease control 311-2w
Malawi, Overseas aid 309w
Malawi, Power industry 557w
Marimuthu, Mullai 757w
Narmada dam, Arrests 810w
Narmada dam, Human rights 811w
Narmada dam, UK companies abroad 810w
National income, EC countries 758w
Natural Resources Institute, Official visits 100w
Overseas aid 482-3w, 591
Overseas aid, Developing countries 590-1
Overseas aid, Expenditure 671w
Overseas aid, Tropical forestry action plan 492w
Pakistan, Capital punishment 85w
Pakistan, Homicide 566w
Peru, Overseas aid 482w
Rain forests, Forest protection 424-6w
Rain forests, Nature conservation 310w
Russia, Farms 427w
Russia, Know-how Fund 427w
Russia, Technical assistance 428w
Sardar Sarovar dam, World Bank 811w
Somalia, Food aid 671w
Somalia, Overseas aid 482w, 809w
Somalia, Peace keeping operations 671-2w
Southern Africa, Overseas aid 592
Sudan, Human rights 566-7w
Tanzania, Ports 557w
Tibet, Human rights 670-1w
Treaty on European Union 757w
Treaty on European Union, Departmental publications 566w
United Nations, Armed forces deployment 652-4w
United Nations, Peace keeping operations 654-6w
United Nations, UK contributions 312-4w
Visas, Temporary immigrants 458w
Western Sahara, Official visits 567w
Wood, Forest protection 811-2w
World Bank 810w
World Bank, Loans 483-90w, 558w
World Bank, Manpower 311w, 489w
World Bank, Narmada dam 811w
World Bank, UK contributions 809w
Yugoslavia, Overseas aid 428-9w

Lester, Mr Jim
Debates etc.
Local Government (Overseas Assistance) Bill, 2R (11:12:92) 1105-9

Lestor, Miss Joan
Questions
Business questions 1002
Council tax, Valuation 841
Greater Manchester Buses, Buy outs 696w
VAT zero rated goods, EC law 766w
Youth training 134

Leukaemia & Cancer Children's Fund
361-2w

Lewis, Mr Terry
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (02:12:92) 342, 353
Unemployment (08:12:92) 714, 778-9
Questions
Greater Manchester Ambulance Service, Unfair dismissal 419w

Lewis, Mr Terry—*continued*
Telephone services, Pornography 251w

Liaison Committee
see House of Commons Liaison Committee

Libyan Arab Republic
Balance of payments 449-50w

Licensing laws
Crime 191w
Scotland 191w

Lidington, Mr David
Debates etc.
Refugees, Bosnia-Herzegovina (30:11:92) 34
Questions
Business questions 408
Contracts for services, Home Office 658w
Maxwell companies, Pension funds 8
Occupational pensions, EC law 750w
Shipbuilding, Safety standards 784w
Social Security Contributions Agency, Performance targets 170w
Stoke Mandeville Hospital 678-9

Life imprisonment
480-1w
Parole 410w

Life insurance
Mortgages 46w

LIFFE
see London International Financial Futures & Options Exchange

Lilley, Rt Hon Peter, Secretary of State for Social Security
Debates etc.
Social Security Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & Means res (30:11:92) 45-50, 58, 110
Questions
Family credit, Take-up 10-1
Handicap benefits, Expenditure 6
Low incomes, Marginal tax rates 10
Severe disability premium 6-7
Severe disability premium, Blind 5-6
Social security benefits rates 2
Social security benefits uprating 1-2
Social security finance 66w

Lime
Agricultural land 607-8w

Limited list prescribing
77-82w
Cost effectiveness 79w
Disclosure of information 79w
Drug industry 78w
EC countries 320w
Medical research 123w

LINK programme
33w, 123-4w, 258-82w

Listed buildings
Buxton 548w
Historic Buildings & Monuments Commission for England 43w

Literacy
313w
Young people 559w

Litherland, Mr Robert
Questions
Housing 842

Liver diseases
Paracetamol 522w

Liverpool
Educational assessment 561w

Livestock
Waste disposal 384-5w

Livingstone, Mr Ken
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (01:12:92) 159, 221, 225, (02:12:92) 343, 353

Livingstone, Mr Ken—continued
Questions
Chemical & biological warfare, Defence research 160-3w
Chemical & biological warfare, International conferences 164w
Chemical & biological warfare, Military alliances 163w
Chemical weapons 164w
Defence research, Military alliances 160w
Government Communications Headquarters, Research 86-7w
Moyle, Jonathan, Death 690
Nuclear power stations, Electrical safety 114w

Llandough Hospital
Hospital closures 304-5w, 415w

Llanelli Borough Council (River Lliedi) Bill (HL) 1991/92
Debates etc.
Royal Assent (03:12:92) 424

Lloyd, Mr Peter, Minister of State, Home Office
Questions
Advisory Council on Race Relations 808-9w
Betting shops 6w
Betting shops, Gaming machines 6-7w
Betting shops, Opening hours 550w, 808w
Blakenhurst Prison, Contracts for services 337-8w
Drug abuse, Prisons 480-1w
Drug crimes, Prison population 480w
Emergency calls 5w
Ethnic minorities, Languages 7w
Fire regulations, Historic buildings 100w
Fire services, Cumbria 216w
Fire services, Windsor 4-6w
Flood control, Early warning systems 99w
Home Office, Chlorofluorocarbons 5-6w
Immigrant detainees, Prison population 660-2w
Kidlington Prison, Immigrant detainees 551w
Life imprisonment 480-1w
Life imprisonment, Parole 410w
Nuclear shelters 4w
Nuclear shelters, Property transfer 553w
Prison education services 97-8w
Prison education services, Contracts for services 98w, 553-4w
Prison population 413w
Prison staff, Public sector housing sales 733w
Prisoners, Terrorism 480w
Prisoners, Women 8-10w
Prisoners on remand, Prison population 736w
Prisons, North West region 555w
Racial attacks, Crimes of violence 556w
Racial discrimination, EC action 808w
Summertime 7w
Sunday trading 99w
Windsor Castle, Fire prevention 95w
Windsor Castle, Fire regulations 413w
Wolds Remand Prison, Segregation of prisoners 98w
Young offenders, Custodial treatment 480w, 552w
Young offenders, Dyslexia 218w
Young offenders, Prisoners on remand 411w, 478w, 658w
Young offenders, Secure accommodation 217w
Young offenders, Self-mutilation 556w
Youth custody, Prisoners on remand 217w

Lloyd, Mr Tony
Debates etc.
Unemployment (08:12:92) 719
Questions
Accident & emergency departments, Greater Manchester 145w
Contracts for services, Dept for Education 118w
Contracts for services, Dept of Employment 181-2w

Lloyd, Mr Tony—continued
Contracts for services, Dept of Health 144w
Contracts for services, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 89w
Contracts for services, Home Office 97w
Further education, Educational finance 563-5w
Longford Hall, Repairs & maintenance 548w
Non-domestic rates, Appeals 15-6w
Prison education services 97-8w
Prison education services, Contracts for services 98w, 553-4w
Training & enterprise councils, Youth training 129

Llwyd, Mr Elfyn
Questions
Air force bases, Schools 363w
Bus lanes, Wales 130w
Car ownership, Wales 243-4w
Cars, Advertising 257w
Children in care, Telephone services 25w
Children in care, Wales 25w
Commuters 202w
Commuters, Working hours 175w
Companies, Transport 130w
Company cars, Taxation 102w
Council housing management, Contracts for services 26w, 125w
Crimes of violence, Railway transport 130w
Divorce law, Law reform 18w
Early retirement 366w
Ethnic minorities, Languages 7w
Family conciliation services 18-9w
Floods, Wales 400-1
Foreign tourists, Expenditure 668w
Hill livestock allowances 751-2w
Hypermarkets, Wales 129w
Industrial health & safety, Radiation hazards 614w
Interest rates, Banks 983-4
Judges, Performance standards 18w
Lorries, Axle weights 244-5w
Nuclear accidents, Emergency planning 614-5w
Nuclear accidents, Radiation protection 556w
Nuclear power stations, Construction 111w
Parking, Local authority powers 129-30w
Railway freight transport, Government grants 93w, 130w
Railway freight transport, Railway track 11w
Railway transport 93w
Road safety, Publicity 94w
Road traffic, Hypermarkets 93w
Road traffic control, Wales 129w
Town & country planning 151w
Training, Waiting lists 27w
Training & enterprise councils, Wales 26w
Travel, Wales 245-6w
Uranium 346w
Youth training, Rural areas 133-4

Loan sharks
108w

Loans
World Bank 483-90w, 557-8w

Local authorities
Ancient monuments 576
Overseas aid (11:12:92) 1105-22, 1134-59
Quota of disabled workers 327w
Recycling 246w

Local authority powers
Parking 129-30w

Local broadcasting
BBC 583

Local enterprise companies
622w

Local Government Commission for England
709w

Local government conditions of service
Northern Ireland 739w

Local government expenditure
Civil defence 301w
Community care 642w
Fire services 301w
Further education 561-3w
Homelessness 741w
Sixth form colleges 561-3w

Local government finance
206-7w, 702w
Community care 432w, 685-6w
Cunninghame District Council 786w
Scotland 786w
Social security benefits uprating 318-9w

Local government functions
Northumberland 705w

Local Government (Overseas Assistance) Bill 1992/93
Debates etc.
2R (11:12:92) 1105-22, 1134-59

Local government pensions
472-3w

Local government reform
702w
Archives 709w
Metropolitan districts 16w
Parliamentary constituencies 16w
Record offices 197-8w
Wales 606w, 665-6w

Local government revenue
206w, 706w
Airports 210w
Capital investment 155w, 570w
Council house sales 242w, 700w, 706w
Durham County Council 150w
Hyndburn 706w
Lancashire 205-6w
Property transfer 205-6w, 210w
Wales 242w

Local government services
837
Community care 233w

Local government social services
Children in care 677
Community care 775w
Fees & charges 775w

Local government staff
Pay 836-7

Lockerbie
Bombings 622w

London Ambulance Service
Overtime 73w

London boroughs
Community charge 295w
Empty housing 294w
Parking offences 697w
Rent arrears 294-5w

London Buses
Privatisation 390-1w

London Forum
703w

London International Financial Futures & Options Exchange
Tax allowances 431w

London Regional Transport
461-2w

London Residuary Body
295w
Public appointments 295w, 741w

London Underground
203w, 461-2w
Citizen's Charter 204w

London's Health Service Medical Education & Research Inquiry
434w, 521w, 630w, 686-7
Hospital consultants 689w

London's Health Service Medical Education & Research Inquiry—continued
Public expenditure 689w

Lone parent families
Family credit 172w

Long stay patients
Further education 39w

Longford Hall
Repairs & maintenance 548w

Lord, Mr Michael
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (02:12:92) 330
Questions
Aujeszky's disease 511w
GATT, Set-aside schemes 510w
Set-aside schemes 380-1

Lord Chancellor's Dept
Chlorofluorocarbons 196w
Contracts for services 657-8w

Lorries
Axle weights 244-5w
Licensing 286w
Wales 244-5w

Loucas, Kyprus
680-1, 775-6w, 804w

Low birthweight babies
634w

Low flying
Cumbria 403w

Low incomes
Child Support Agency 4
Marginal tax rates 10
Social security benefits 67w

Low pay
Prosecutions 54w, 616-7w

Loyden, Mr Eddie
Debates etc.
Unemployment (08:12:92) 708
Questions
Angola, Peace negotiations 567-8w
Methyl bromide, Air pollution control 577-8w

Luff, Mr Peter
Questions
Concessionary television licences 679w
EC internal trade 250-1w
Edinburgh Summit 994
Mining equipment 256-7
Wyre Piddle bypass 595w

Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas, Attorney-General
Questions
Attorney General, Chlorofluorocarbons 195w
Attorney General, Ministerial duties 452w
Crown Prosecution Service 586-7
Extradition, Republic of Ireland 451w
Guildford Four Inquiry, Documents 283w
Guildford Four Inquiry, Immunity certificates 283w
Lamont, Norman, Tenant eviction 452w
Matrix Churchill, Immunity certificates 195w
Prosecutions 586
Prosecutions, Alternatives to prison 586
Sentencing 587
Sunday trading 452w

Lyons, Ms Liz
Debates etc.
Road Traffic (Driving Instruction by Disabled Persons) Bill, 2R (11:12:92) 1166
Questions
London's Health Service Medical Education & Research Inquiry 438w
Loucas, Kyprou 680-1, 776w
Motor vehicle theft, Crime prevention 409-10w

Lyons, Ms Liz—continued
Urban programme 828
Urban programme, Employment opportunities 209w
Urban programme, Expenditure 208w
Urban programme, Rochdale 208w, 288w

Lyons Maid
(07:12:92) 638-50

M1
Road works 202w

M6
819-20w

M25
Road works 284w

M66
Road construction 204w

McAllion, Mr John
Debates etc.
Public expenditure, Scotland (02:12:92) 277
Subsidiarity, Points of order (01:12:92) 143
Questions
Civil service agencies, Industrial health & safety 286-7w
Inland Revenue, Civil service dispersal 106-7w
Inland Revenue, Offices 106-7w
Nuclear power 703w
Police, Courts 359w
Separate taxation of wife's earnings, Tax administration 200w

McCartney, Mr Ian
Debates etc.
Small businesses, Bureaucracy (07:12:92) 660-4
Questions
Furniture, Fire prevention 250w
Royal Free NHS Trust 676

Macclesfield Borough Council
Housing investment programmes 844

Macdonald, Mr Calum
Debates etc.
Fisheries (09:12:92) 916-9
Questions
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed conflict 85-6w
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Military aircraft 2-3w
Chemical weapons, Arms control 459-61w
Languages, Ethnic minorities 212w

Macedonia
EC aid 3w
Recognition of states 3w, (30:11:92) 119-24, 567w

McFall, Mr John
Debates etc.
Sea Fish (Conservation) Bill, Lords amendts (09:12:92) 964-6, 970
Questions
Criminal proceedings, Scottish courts 359-60w
Food hygiene, Inspections 350-2w
Food industry, Inspections 370-84w
Schools, Inspections 785w
Waste disposal, Recycling 828w
Wastes, Imports 828w

McGrady, Mr Eddie
Debates etc.
Fisheries (09:12:92) 904-7
Questions
Business premises, Downpatrick 737w
Business premises, Kilkeel 737w
Business questions 405
Home helps, Eastern Health & Social Services Board 132-3w
Social Fund, Dept of Social Security local offices 499-500w
Submarines, Fishing vessels 405-4w

MacGregor, Rt Hon John, Secretary of State for Transport
Questions
EC Transport Council 773-5w
Transport of radioactive materials 780w

MacGregor, Rt Hon John—continued
Transport of radioactive materials, EC countries 781w

McKelvey, Mr William
Debates etc.
Public expenditure, Scotland (02:12:92) 276
Questions
Betting shops, Opening hours 808w

Mackinlay, Mr Andrew
Questions
Arms trade, Disclosure of information 219w
Ativan 321w
Attorney General, Ministerial duties 452w
British Museum, Fire prevention 307w
British Rail, Franchising 285w
British Rail, Vacancies 285w
Business questions 1008-9
Channel tunnel, Air pollution control 10w
Coffins, EC law 461w
Colombia, Child workers 458w
Fire regulations, Historic buildings 100w
Fire services, Windsor 4-6w
Historic buildings, Fire prevention 327w, 409w, 456w
Historic Buildings & Monuments Commission for England, Listed buildings 43w
Historic Buildings & Monuments Commission for England, Windsor Castle 679-80w
Holyrood House, Fire prevention 21w
Housing construction, Essex 710w
Iraq, Furnaces 467w
Iraq, Nuclear weapons 307w
Landlord & tenant, Law reform 303w
Landlord & tenant, Rent arrears 303-4w
Ministers, Legal costs 307w
Palace of Westminster, Fire prevention 362-3w
Railway freight transport 284-5w
Rolling stock, Procurement 284w
Royal residences, Fire prevention 101w, 457w
Unfair dismissal, Employment protection 126-7
Windsor Castle 43-4w
Windsor Castle, Building repairs 44w
Windsor Castle, Fire prevention 101w
Windsor Castle, Fire regulations 413w
Windsor Castle, Fire services 747w
Windsor Castle, Fires 569w
Windsor Castle, Insurance 101w
Windsor Castle, Public access 100w

Maclean, Mr David, Minister for the Environment and Countryside
Debates etc.
Coastal protection (10:12:92) 1045-50
Questions
Air pollution 830w
Air pollution control, EC law 288w, 572w
Air pollution control, Government grants to local authorities 288w
Air pollution control, Industrial wastes 293w
Air pollution control, Pollution monitoring 291w
Air pollution monitoring, Manufacturing industries 391w
Basel Convention 835-6
Birds, Pest control 827-8w
British Waterways Board 302w
British Waterways Board, Water supply industry 151w
Cetaceans, Nature conservation 707w
Chlorofluorocarbons, Waste disposal 573w
Coffins, EC law 461w
Common land 471w
Contaminated land registers 829-30, 830w, 831, 831w
Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species, Wood 207w
Darwin initiative 280w
Dept of the Environment, Chlorofluorocarbons 149w
Domestic wastes, Waste disposal 287w
Elephants, Nature conservation 207-8w

Maclean, Mr David—continued
Energy conservation 471-2w
Environment protection, EC regional policy 148w
Environment protection, Treaties 149w
Environmental health, Orders & regulations 291-2w
Environmental policy, Research 288w
Hazardous wastes 700-1w
Hazardous wastes, Imports 836
Hazardous wastes, Transport of hazardous materials 844
Home energy efficiency scheme 829-30w
Home energy efficiency scheme, Domestic energy conservation 829w
Home energy efficiency scheme, Expenditure 830w
Incinerators, Air pollution control 289-90w
Integrated pollution control 704w
Lead free petrol, Health hazards 391-2w
Methyl bromide, Air pollution control 577-8w
National parks, Ballots 840-1
National parks, Northern Ireland 840
National parks, Privatisation 840
Non-departmental public bodies 833
Nuclear fuel reprocessing, Sellafield 473w
Nuclear power 703w
Ozone layer 702w
Ozone layer, Northern region 702w
Peak Park Joint Planning Board, Ballots 832-3
Pollution control, Industry 293-4w
Pollution control, Manufacturing industries 293w
Rain forests, Wood 317w
Sewage, Water treatment 150w
Sites of special scientific interest, Thorne Moors 573-4w
South West Water, Capital investment 702w
Tipping of waste, Licensing 572w
Transport of radioactive materials, EC action 288-9w
UN Conference on Environment & Development, Treaties 578w
Waste disposal, Recycling 828w
Waste Management Industry Training & Advisory Board 571-2w
Wastes, Imports 828w
Wastes, Orders & regulations 395w
Water & sewerage companies 287w
Water meters 707w
Water pollution, Coal mine closures 706-7w
Water pollution, EC law 703w
Water pollution, Fines 431w
Water supply 151w
Water supply, Private sector 829w
Water supply disconnections 391w, 709-10w
Water supply industry, Government grants 391w
Water supply industry, Regulatory system 154w
Whales, EC law 150w
Wild animals, EC internal trade 153-4w
Wood, Imports 287w

McLeish, Mr Henry
Debates etc.
Public expenditure, Scotland (02:12:92) 267-71, 283
Unemployment (08:12:92) 785
Questions
Devolution, Scotland 193-4w

Maclennan, Mr Robert
Debates etc.
Arts finance (11:12:92) 1129
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (01:12:92) 180, 202
Fisheries (09:12:92) 857
Public expenditure, Scotland (02:12:92) 279
Refugees, Bosnia-Herzegovina (30:11:92) 32
Sea Fish (Conservation) Bill, Lords amends (09:12:92) 930, 938
Questions
Legal aid 10
Set-aside schemes 387

Maclennan, Mr Robert—continued
Windsor Castle, Building repairs 580

McLoughlin, Mr Patrick, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of Employment
Questions
Advisory Conciliation & Arbitration Service 726-7w
Advisory Group on Older Workers, Public appointments 418-9w
Agricultural Inspectorate, Manpower 179w, 722w
Astra Training Services, Training & enterprise councils 132
Certification Officer, Re-employment 229w
Civil servants' business appointments 726w
Commuters, Working hours 175w
Dept of Employment, Chlorofluorocarbons 177w
Dept of Employment, Civil service dispersal 417w
Dept of Employment, Civil service manpower 417w
Dept of Employment, Contracts for services 181-2w
Dept of Employment, Departmental correspondence 180w
Employment action 125-6, 180w
Employment agencies, Home care services 55w, 419w
Employment level, Northern region 129-30
Employment opportunities 181w
Employment schemes, Young people 417-8w
Employment Service Agency, Performance standards 729w
Employment training, Age participation rates 221w
Employment training, Coal mine closures 176w, 220-1w
Employment training, Easington 176w
Employment training, Hyndburn 727-8w
Factory Inspectorate, Manpower 179w
Factory Inspectorate, Recruitment 222w, 229w
Football pools, Manpower 728w
Greater Manchester Ambulance Service, Unfair dismissal 419w
Hard core unemployed 730w
Hard core unemployed, Accrington 730w
Hard core unemployed, South East region 730w
Hard core unemployed, Wolverhampton 181w
Health & Safety Executive, Codes of practice 175w
Health & Safety Executive, Greater London 722-3w
Health & Safety Executive, Manpower 613-4w
Health & Safety Executive, North West region 723-4w
Health & Safety Executive, Nurses 416w
Health & Safety Executive, Offshore Safety Division 179w
Health & Safety Executive, Re-employment 229w
Health & Safety Executive, Yorkshire & Humberside 724-6w
Industrial accidents 221-2w
Industrial accidents, Building industry 612w
Industrial health & safety, Coal mining 176-7w
Industrial health & safety, EC law 179-80w
Industrial health & safety, Pesticides 175w
Industrial health & safety, Radiation hazards 614w
Industrial health & safety, Research 178w
Industrial health & safety, Sheep dipping 627-8w
Industrial health & safety, Sikhs 418w
Jobclubs 730-2w
Jobclubs, Performance standards 173-4w
Low pay, Prosecutions 54w
Medical examinations, Disclosure of information 181w

McLoughlin, Mr Patrick—continued
Merseyside Training & Enterprise Council, Finance 125-6
Mine accidents 174w
Motor industry, Manpower 53-4w
Nuclear accidents, Radiation protection 556w
Occupational health, Health hazards 729w
Occupational pensions, Redundancy pay 582w
Oil refineries, Cheshire 54w
PA Consulting Group, Expenditure 728-9w
Redundancy, West Midlands 173w
Redundancy pay 799w
Shell, Redundancy 54w
Textile industry, Manpower 615w
Training & enterprise councils 126
Training & enterprise councils, Codes of practice 728w
Training & enterprise councils, Disabled workers 616w
Training & enterprise councils, Ellesmere Port 54-5w
Training & enterprise councils, Finance 615-6w, 791w
Training & enterprise councils, Surrey 174w
Training & enterprise councils, Young people 134
Unemployment 173w
Unemployment, Barrow in Furness 131-2
Unemployment, Selby 615w
Vacancies, Birmingham 416-7w
Vocational training 728w
Wages councils 52w, 172w, 222w
Wages Inspectorate, Manpower 52-4w
Women, Career structure 177-8w
Youth employment, Carlisle 615w
Youth training 134, 221w, 327w
Youth training, Lancashire 505w
Youth training, Training allowances 175w
Youth unemployment, Carlisle 173w

McMaster, Mr Gordon
Questions
Carpet industry, Scotland 192w
Community care, Adult education 641-2w
Community care, Scotland 185-6w, 192w
Community policing, Strathclyde 191w
Handicapped, Scotland 189-90w
Hospices, Children 186-7w
Industrial production, Paisley 191-2w
Licensing laws, Crime 191w
Police, Scotland 190w
Prescription drugs, Drug abuse 21-2w
Recycling, Newsprint 185-6w
Sports, Departmental responsibilities 20w

McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (01:12:92) 155-6, 171, 177, 215
Questions
Debts 45w

McNamara, Mr Kevin
Questions
Legal aid scheme, Northern Ireland 387w
Terrorism, Death 308w

Madden, Mr Max
Debates etc.
Refugees, Bosnia-Herzegovina (30:11:92) 34
Standing Order No 20 applications, Points of order (30:11:92) 42
Questions
Advisory Council on Race Relations 808-9w
Asylum & Immigration Appeals Bill 1992/93 555w
Concessionary television licences, Blind 746-7w
Education Partners Overseas, Educational aid 494w
Hospital closures, Bradford 777w
Passports, EC countries 3w

Madel, Mr David
Questions
Coal, Energy research 250w
Maxwell companies, Pension funds 9
Water meters 707w

Magazine press
VAT 699w

Maginnis, Mr Ken
Questions
Broadcasting controls, Terrorism 576-7

Magistrates' courts
16
Administration of justice 15-6
Wales 18w

Magnox reactors
253-4
Electricity generation 832w

Maguire Seven
335-6w

Mahon, Mrs Alice
Debates etc.
Health Select Committee, Points of order (08:12:92) 693
Mink Keeping Order 1992 (08:12:92) 796, 806-7, 809
Questions
Campaign for Cold Weather Credits 571w
Council tax 13-4w
Council tax, Appeals 13w
Council tax, Discounts 156w
Council tax, Single people 14w
Council tax, Valuation 12-3w
Kashmir, Foreign policy 459w
Kashmir, Human rights 459w
Kashmir, Press freedom 459w
Members' correspondence 75w
Orimulsion, Imports 34w
US bases, Menwith Hill 714w
US National Security Agency 437w

Maintenance
Absent parents 422w
Social security benefits rules 170-2w

Maintenance Group Defence Support Agency
see RAF Support Command Maintenance Group

Maitland, Lady Olga
Debates etc.
Refugees, Bosnia-Herzegovina (30:11:92) 37
United Nations (04:12:92) 554-5, 561
Questions
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Airports 816w
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed conflict 590
Child Support Agency 4
Employment schemes, Young people 417-8w
Offensive weapons, Right of search 6w
Priority routes, Road accidents 783w
Small businesses, Debts 113-4w
Training, Young people 132
Women clergy 13

Major, Rt Hon John, Prime Minister, First Lord of the Treasury and Minister for the Civil Service
Debates etc.
Prince of Wales, Ministerial statements (09:12:92) 845-7
Questions
Animal welfare, Departmental responsibilities 466w
Arms to Iraq Inquiry, Lawrence, Tess 307w
Arms trade, Departmental records 219-20w
Arms trade, Disclosure of information 219w
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed conflict 391-2
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed forces deployment 391
British Museum, Fire prevention 307w
Brunner, Alois, Extradition 749w
Business 690
Business, Bureaucracy 389

Major, Rt Hon John—continued
Campaign for Cold Weather Credits 571w
Car industry 689
Citizen's Charter, Child benefit 393
Civil list 220w, 748w
Civil list, Consolidated Fund 748w
Contracts for services, Competition 393
De Klerk, FW, Disclosure of information 748w
Devolution, Scotland 19w
EC Energy Council 747w
Economic & monetary union 691-2
Economic policy, Housing 393-4
Edinburgh Summit 688-9
Educational standards, Greenwich 690-1
Emergency calls, Telephone services 687
Exchange rate mechanism 747w
Freemasonry, Public appointments 391
Furniture, Fire regulations 468w
Immunity certificates 220w
IRA 390-1
Iraq, Arms trade 663w, 665w
Iraq, Furnaces 467w
Iraq, Nuclear weapons 307w
Manufacturing industries, Redundancy 392
Matrix Churchill, Arms exports 20w
May Day bank holiday 392-3
Members' correspondence, British residents abroad 748-9w
Ministers, Legal costs 307w, 466w, 665w
Moyle, Jonathan, Death 690
Official engagements 122w, 307w
Post Office, Redundancy 389-90
Prime Minister, EC internal relations 664-5w
Queen, Personal taxation 220w
Radiation protection, Departmental responsibilities 465-6w
Railway freight transport 466-7w
Roman Catholic Church, Church administration 747-8w
Royal family finance 467-8w
Security Service Commissioner 122w
Slaughterhouses 689-90
Supermarkets, Property development 692
Treaty on European Union 466w
Treaty on European Union, UK repayments from EC budget 392
UK repayments from EC budget 687-8
Unemployment 689
Whales, Norway 19w
Wood, International trade 467w
World Summit for Children 571w

Major Energy Users' Council
112w

Malaria
Disease control 311-2w

Malawi
Overseas aid 309w
Power industry 557w

Mallon, Mr Seamus
Debates etc.
Unemployment (08:12:92) 709
Questions
Aircraft noise, Helicopters 719-20w
Conductive education, Dungannon 738-9w
Gamblers Anonymous, Northern Ireland 683-4w
Immunity certificates, Northern Ireland 17w
Newry bypass, Road construction 683w
Northern Ireland government, Anglo-Irish talks 141

Malone, Mr Gerald
Debates etc.
Testbourne School (02:12:92) 371-2
Questions
Caravan sites 292-3w

Malta
EC enlargement 315w
Infectious disease 773w

Management consultants
Scottish health boards 589-10w

Mandelson, Mr Peter
Questions
BBC, Broadcasting finance 576
Capital investment 991-2
Local government staff, Pay 836-7

Mans, Mr Keith
Questions
Nuclear power 254
Open University, University finance 313w

Manufactured exports
251w
Exchange rates 47w

Manufactured goods
Overseas trade 47w

Manufactured imports
110-2w, 115w

Manufacturing industries
110-2w, 249-50, 259-60, 766w, 984
Air pollution monitoring 391w
Employment opportunities 414w
Greater London 247-8
Leicester 248
Northern region 249w
Pollution control 293w
Redundancy 392
Stoke on Trent 142
Tax allowances 980
Unemployment 259, 980-1
Wales 414w

Marek, Dr John
Questions
Armed forces deployment, Diego Garcia 63w
Ascension Island, Cats 4w
North East Wales Training & Enterprise Council 29w

Marginal land
Environmentally sensitive areas 624w
Sheep 713w

Marginal tax rates
Low incomes 10
Social security benefits 67w

Marinetha, Mullai
757w

Marine animals
Animal experiments 336w
Falkland Islands 3w
Fish conservation 315w
Fishing catches 158w, 360-1w
Scotland 360-1w
South Atlantic 315w

Marine nature reserves
Bardsey Island 131w

Market share
UK trade with EC 448-9w

Marland, Mr Paul
Questions
Farm buildings, Planning permission 382
Wastes, Orders & regulations 395w

Marlow, Mr Tony
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (01:12:92) 159-61, 166, 174, 180, 183, 193, 198, 230, 232-3, (02:12:92) 292, 302, 313, 316, 319-20
Treaty on European Union, Points of order (02:12:92) 286, (07:12:92) 593
Unemployment (08:12:92) 701, 708
Questions
Agricultural production 58-9w
Cereals, EC countries 817w
EC Cohesion Fund 827-8

Marriage guidance
992
Government grants 217-8w

Married men
Homicide 217w

Married women
Homicide 216w
Retirement pensions 682w

Marshall, Mr Jim
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (01:12:92) 172, 174, 181, 207-8, 213, 220, (02:12:92) 304, 316, 322
Questions
Multifibre arrangement 248
NHS internal market 76w

Marshall, Mr John
Questions
BBC, Broadcasting finance 577
Homelessness, Greater London 828-9
Public Order Act 1986, Racial incitement 587
Royal Free NHS Trust 675

Martin, Mr David
Debates etc.
Fleet Maintenance & Repair Organisation, Public petitions (03:12:92) 488
Questions
Common agricultural policy, Fraud 377-8
NHS finance, Regional health authorities 632-3w

Martin, Mr Michael J
Debates etc.
Public expenditure, Scotland (02:12:92) 277
Watson, Diane (09:12:92) 972-4
Questions
Early day motions, Costs 201w

Martlew, Mr Eric
Debates etc.
Unemployment (08:12:92) 715
Questions
Armed forces deployment, Bosnia-Herzegovina 61w
Youth employment, Carlisle 615w
Youth unemployment, Carlisle 173w

Mass media
Ownership 584-5

Mates, Mr Michael, Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office
Questions
Bombings, Newtownbreda 133-4w
EC grants & loans, Northern Ireland 599w
European Agricultural Guidance & Guarantee Fund, Northern Ireland 601-2w
European Regional Development Fund, Northern Ireland 599-600w
Ministers' domestic visits, Northern Ireland 16w
Northern Ireland Office, Civil service manpower 308w
Northern Ireland Office, Contracts for services 684w
Northern Ireland Office, Departmental correspondence 134-5w
Northern Ireland Office, Operating costs 135w
Terrorism, Death 308w
UK contributions to EC budget, Northern Ireland 600-1w

Matrix Churchill
247w
Arms exports 20w
Immunity certificates 195w

Mawhinney, Dr Brian, Minister for Health
Questions
Accident & emergency departments, Greater Manchester 145w
AIDS, Dentistry 74-5w
AIDS, Government grants 142-3w
Alcoholism 629w
Asthma 76-7w
Ativan 321w
Calcium, Prescriptions 139-41w
Clinical psychologists, Training 141w
Cox, Nigel, Contracts of employment 433w

Mawhinney, Dr Brian—continued
Dental Remuneration Review 631w
Dental services 525-30w
Dental services, Chorley & South Ribble Health Authority 631w
Dental services, Greenwich & Bexley Family Health Services Authority 630-1w
Dental services, NHS complaints 519w
Dentists 524w
Dentists, NHS 74w, 529-38w
Dentists, Pay 146-8w
Dept of Health, Research facilities 230w
Drugs, Expenditure 686-7w
Drugs, Labelling 632w
Drugs, Licensing 319w
Euthanasia, Medical ethics 434w
Eye tests, Optical charges 318w
Family doctors, Budgeting 630w, 685-6
Family doctors, Health education 804-5w
Financial Information Project Systems, West Midlands Regional Health Authority 81w, 803w
Generic prescribing 144-5w, 231w, 641w, 688w
Generic prescribing, Drug industry 148w
Health service staff, Pay 142w, 635w
Health service staff, Pay review bodies 76w, 523w
Health services, Medical audit 317w
Hormone treatments, Per capita costs 137-9w
Hospital closures, Bradford 777w
Hospital consultants, West Midlands Regional Health Authority 638w
Hospital waiting lists, Greater London 773w
Infectious diseases, Malta 773w
Limited list prescribing 77-82w
Limited list prescribing, Cost effectiveness 79w
Limited list prescribing, Disclosure of information 79w
Limited list prescribing, Drug industry 78w
Limited list prescribing, EC countries 320w
London's Health Service Medical Education & Research Inquiry 434w, 630w
London's Health Service Medical Education & Research Inquiry, Hospital consultants 689w
London's Health Service Medical Education & Research Inquiry, Public expenditure 689w
Medical research, NHS 321w
NHS internal market 76w
NHS Management Executive, Annual reports 804w
NHS Supplies Authority 639-40w
NHS trusts, Ambulance services 687w
NHS trusts, Public appointments 635w, 688w
North East Thames Regional Health Authority, Finance 686-7
Nutrition & health 629w
Nutrition Task Force 642w
Paediatrics, Neurology 803-4w
Paracetamol, Safety measures 521-2w
Prescription charges 142w, 630w
Prescription drugs, Braille 318w
Prescriptions, Budgeting 81w, 689w
Royal Free NHS Trust 675-6
Smoking, Death 628w
Solvent abuse 142w
St Bartholomew's Hospital, Hospital closures 521w
Standing Advisory Committee on Future Medical Manpower 776-7w
Sunderland Health Authority, Office workers 777w
Tobacco, Health warnings 777w
Wigs, Child patients 231w
Wigs, NHS charges 231w

Maxton, Mr John
Debates etc.
Public expenditure, Scotland (02:12:92) 278

Maxwell companies
Pension funds 8-9

May Day bank holiday
136, 392-3
Tourism 678w

May Inquiry
see Guildford Four Inquiry

Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland
Questions
Guildford Four Inquiry 222w
Guildford Four Inquiry, Immunity certificates 222w
Immunity certificates, Northern Ireland 17w
Local government constituencies, Northern Ireland 739w
Public expenditure, Northern Ireland 598-9w

Meacher, Mr Michael
Questions
African Development Bank, Forest protection 492w, 494w
African Development Bank, Manpower 494w
Bank loans, Tax allowances 469-70w
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed conflict 589
Brazil, Forest protection 492-4w
Brazil, Wood 494w
Commonwealth Development Corporation, Grenada 310w
Debt rescheduling, Developing countries 49-50w
Developing countries, Overseas aid 670w
Developing countries, Wood 426-8w
Export credit guarantees, Expenditure 586-7w
Forest protection, Population 425w
Forest protection, UN Conference on Environment & Development 743w
Gabon, Forestry 557w
International Tropical Timber Agreement 425-6w
International Tropical Timber Agreement, Non-governmental organisations 426w
International Tropical Timber Organisation, UK contributions 424-5w
Malawi, Power industry 557w
Military aid 717w
Overseas aid 482-3w
Overseas aid, Tropical forestry action plan 492w
Rain forests, Forest protection 424-6w
United Nations, UK contributions 312-4w
Wood, Brazil 441w
Wood, Imports 198w, 591w, 705w
Wood, International trade 441w, 467w
World Bank, Manpower 489w

Meale, Mr Alan
Questions
Badgers, Pest control 56-8w
Wolds Remand Prison, Segregation of prisoners 98w

Means tested benefits
Take-up 344w

Measurement
Beer 677w

Meat
Food hygiene 754w
Food inspection 511w

Medical audit
Health services 317w

Medical education
Alternative medicine 692w

Medical equipment
Tomography 686w

Medical ethics
Euthanasia 434w

Medical examinations
Disclosure of information 181w
Invalidity benefits 11

Medical records
Civil servants 123w
Disclosure of information 123w

Medical records—continued
Patient's Charter 143w

Medical research
Limited list prescribing 123w
NHS 321w

Medical treatments
Cancer 246w
Divers 523w
Fertility 431-2w

Medicines Control Agency
520-1w, 632w

Members' allowances
430w

Members' correspondence
75w
Administrative delays 341-2w
British residents abroad 748-9w
Social security recipients 682w

Members' pay
693w

Members' pensions
339w, 508w

Members' travel
Bicycles 339w

Meningitis
Vaccination 317-8w, 635-7w

Mental Health Act Commission
231w, 775-6w

Mentally disturbed offenders
321w

Mentally ill
Death 434w
Homelessness 433w

Menwith Hill
US bases 714w

Merchant, Mr Piers
Debates etc.
Local Government (Overseas Assistance) Bill, 2R (11:12:92) 1109-11, 1116

Merchant seamen
Manpower 695w

Merchant ships
Ship chartering 542w

Merit awards
689w

Merseyside Training & Enterprise Council
Finance 125-6

Meteorological Office
Official visits 240-1w

Methyl bromide
Air pollution control 577-8w

Metropolitan districts
Local government reform 16w

Metropolitan Police
Damages 410w
Public appointments 733w

Michael, Mr Alan
Questions
Children, Deaf 415w, 506w
Civil defence, Expenditure 299-301w
Crime 327-34w
Deaf, Special education 606w, 669w
Export Credits Guarantee Department, Civil service disposal 253
Export Credits Guarantee Department, Redundancy 590-1w
Fire services, Local government expenditure 301w
Furniture, Fire regulations 468w
Health service staff, Pay review bodies 523w
HM Inspectorate of Constabulary, Disclosure of information 5w

Michael, Mr Alan—continued
Immunity certificates 220w, 481-2w
Life imprisonment 481w
Life imprisonment, Parole 410w
Llandough Hospital, Hospital closures 304-5w, 415w
Music education 582-3
NHS administration, Wales 608w
NHS internal market, Wales 608w
Nuclear shelters 4w
Nuclear shelters, Property transfer 553w
Nursing Staff & Professions Allied to Medicine Review Body 507w
Occupational therapy, Wales 506w
Police pensions 477-8w
Prison population 413w
Prisoners on remand, Prison population 736w
Recycling, Local authorities 246w
Somalia, Food aid 671w
Somalia, Overseas aid 802-3w, 809w
Somalia, Peace keeping operations 671-2w
South Glamorgan Health Authority, Directors 507w
Sunday trading 452w
Training allowances, Wales 607w
Training & enterprise councils, Finance 616w
Young offenders, Custodial treatment 552w
Young offenders, Prisoners on remand 478w, 658w

Michie, Mr Bill
Questions
Credit cards, Disclosure of information 769w
Health service staff, Pay 635w
Industrial accidents 221-2w
Maintenance, Absent parents 422w
Small businesses, Billing 252w
Supermarkets, Property development 692
War pensions, Social security benefits rules 422w

Michie, Mrs Ray
Debates etc.
Fisheries (09:12:92) 919
Questions
Dental health, Children 237w
Dental services, Children 237w
Dental services, Strathclyde 237w
Student numbers, Scotland 351-8w

Microwave Modules
249w

Mid Essex Health Authority
523w

Middle East
Exports 253w

Midland Metro
11w

Midwives
Manpower 640-1w

Milburn, Mr Alan
Debates etc.
Alcoholism, Residential care (11:12:92) 1177-9, 1181-4
Package Travel, Package Holidays & Package Tours Regulations 1992 (10:12:92) 1083-6
Unemployment (08:12:92) 767
Questions
Animal experiments 554w
Animal experiments, Genetic engineering 554w
Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 555w
Business questions 1008
Cars 697w
City action teams, Government grants 742-3w
City grants 710w
Council house sales 296-300w, 578w
Debts, Personal income 772w
Family credit, Earnings rules 66w
Family credit, Social security claims 66w

Milburn, Mr Alan—continued
Geriatric patients, Health services 683-4
Health hazards, Asbestos 688w
Home energy efficiency scheme 829-30w
Home energy efficiency scheme, Domestic energy conservation 829w
Home energy efficiency scheme, Expenditure 830w
House prices, Average earnings 771w
Income support, Social security benefits reductions 72w
Inner cities initiative, Expenditure 710-1w
Low pay, Prosecutions 54w
Mortgage relief 771-2w
Motorcycles 746w
Motorcycles, Engines 698w
Motorcycles, Exports 587w
Motorcycles, Road accidents 596w
National income 988
NHS trusts, Public appointments 688w
Noise control, Motorcycles 555w
Planning permission, Charities 148w
Small businesses, VAT registration 116w
Treasury, Economic forecasting 306w, 471w
Wages Inspectorate, Manpower 52-4w

Military aid
717w

Military aid to civil community
Industrial disputes 404-8w

Military aircraft
Bosnia-Herzegovina 2-3w, 213-4w, 241-2w
Defence procurement 721w

Military alliances
Chemical & biological warfare 160-3w
Defence research 160w

Milk Marketing Board
367w
Wales 28w

Miller, Mr Andrew
Debates etc.
Local Government (Overseas Assistance) Bill, 2R (11:12:92) 1145
Occupational Pensions Bill, Points of order (11:12:92) 1173, 1175, 1177
Small businesses, Bureaucracy (07:12:92) 664-7, 670
Unemployment (08:12:92) 743
Questions
Armed forces pay, Bosnia-Herzegovina 805w
Business questions 1008
Development areas, Cheshire 117w
Electricity supply industry 254-5
Geriatric patients, NHS finance 630w
Hazardous wastes 700-1w
Invalidity benefits 69w
Oil refineries 32w
Oil refineries, Cheshire 32w, 54w
Shell, Redundancy 54w
Training & enterprise councils, Ellesmere Port 54-5w
Transport of radioactive materials, EC action 288-9w

Milligan, Mr Stephen
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (01:12:92) 159, 223-4, (02:12:92) 303
Questions
Child Support Agency, Low incomes 4
EC Cohesion Fund 767w
Training & enterprise councils, Finance 128

Mills, Mr Iain
Questions
Car tax, Tax yields 102w

Mine accidents
174w

Mines
757-8w

Mining equipment
255-7
Balance of trade 590w

Ministerial duties
Attorney General 452w
Tourist industry 678w

Ministerial statements
593w
Arts finance (11:12:92) 1123-33
Bosnia-Herzegovina (30:11:92) 30-8
Competition (30:11:92) 21-9
One stop shop initiative (03:12:92) 414-24
Prince of Wales (09:12:92) 845-7
Public expenditure (02:12:92) 265-83

Ministers
Festivals & special occasions 803w
Legal costs 307w, 466w, 665w, 803w
Press releases 772w

Ministers' domestic visits
Northern Ireland 16w

Ministers' visits abroad
Japan 497w

Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food
511-3w
Chlorofluorocarbons 55-6w
Civil service dispersal 624w
Civil service manpower 370w
Contracts for services 711-2w
Departmental correspondence 157w
Disabled workers 753-4w
Operating costs 158w
Staff canteens 366w

Ministry of Defence
Chlorofluorocarbons 239-40w
Civil service dispersal 610w
Civil service manpower 541w
Contracts for services 720-1w
Dartmoor National Park 840
Departmental correspondence 165w
Operating costs 165-6w

Mink
Farms 385-6w
Transport of animals 386w

Mink (Keeping) Order 1987
Questions
385-6w

Mink Keeping Order 1992
Debates etc.
(08:12:92) 794-818

Minority groups
Languages 435w

Misleading advertising
Estate agents (08:12:92) 793

Misuse of Drugs (Anabolic Steroids) Bill 1992/93
Debates etc.
2R order read (04:12:92) 565

Mitchell, Mr Andrew
Questions
Mental Health Act Commission 231w
Social security benefits uprating 1-2
Training & enterprise councils, Finance 127

Mitchell, Mr Austin
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (01:12:92) 178-9, (02:12:92) 315
Fisheries (09:12:92) 881, 885, 888-94, 897, 927
Sea Fish (Conservation) Bill, Lords amendts (09:12:92) 944-5, 948, 956-7, 962-3
Questions
British Steel Corporation, Subsidies 447w
British Steel Corporation, Trade barriers 746w
Coal mine closures, Redundancy 672w
Coal mining 582-6w
Exchange rates, Labour costs 47-8w
Exchange rates, Manufactured exports 47w
Exchange rates, Sterling 47w
Fishing quotas 388
Manufactured goods, Overseas trade 47w

Mitchell, Mr Austin—continued
Mortgages, Investor protection 45-6w
Mortgages, Life insurance 46w

Mitchell, Sir David
Debates etc.
Testbourne School (02:12:92) 369-71

Moate, Mr Roger
Questions
Bypasses, Road construction 205w
Bypasses, Transport supplementary grants 205w

Mobility of disabled
Public transport 694-5w

Money supply
140-1

Monklands District Council
992, 998-9

Monmouth
Flood control 396-7

Monopolies
Computer software 676w
Video games 675w

Monopolies & Mergers Commission
(30:11:92) 21-9, 249w, 350w

Monro, Sir Hector, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Scottish Office
Debates etc.
Fisheries (09:12:92) 853-60
Fishing quotas, North Sea (01:12:92) 241-6
Questions
Beaches, Sea pollution 22w
Conifers, River pollution 787-8w
Employment level, Rural areas 361w
Environmental education, Information services 24w
Food hygiene, Inspections 350-2w
Forest protection 182w
Forest protection, UN Conference on Environment & Development 743w
Forestry Commission, Land acquisition 184-6w, 194w, 789-90w
Historic Scotland, Official visits 182w
Holyrood House, Fire prevention 21w
Marine animals, Fishing catches 360-1w
Nature conservation, Land acquisition 21w
Nature reserves, Expenditure 20-1w
Seals, Animal cruelty 23-4w
Sports, Departmental responsibilities 20w
White fish, Total allowable catches 360w
Wildlife incident investigation scheme, Finance 509w
Wildlife incident investigation scheme, Scotland 23w

Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Questions
Local government reform 702w
Wages councils 172w

Moonie, Dr Lewis
Questions
Higher education, Research finance 119w, 183-4w
Higher Education Funding Council for Wales, Research finance 132w
Industrial research 123-4w
Industrial research, Research finance 258-82w
Northern Ireland Dept of Education, Research finance 133w
Science & technology policy 122-3w
Science & technology research, Technology transfer 281-2w
Scottish health boards, Management consultants 509-10w

Morgan, Mr Rhodri
Debates etc.
Social Security Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & Means res (30:11:92) 112
Questions
Cardiff Bay barrage, Consultants 415w

Morgan, Mr Rhodri—continued
Cardiff Bay barrage, Contracts for services 29w
Cardiff Bay Development Corporation, Audit 305w
Cardiff Bay Development Corporation, Consultants 28-9w
Coal mine closures, Employment opportunities 305w
Companies Registration Office (England & Wales), Consultants 29w
Contracts for services, NHS 28w
Integrated pollution control 704w
Laganside Corporation, Audit 308-9w
Legal aid scheme 302-3w
Private detectives, Welsh Office 413-4w
Russia, Farms 427w
Russia, Know-how Fund 427w
Russia, Technical assistance 428w
Small businesses, Bankruptcy 770w
Trading standards departments, Wales 116w
Valleys initiative, Departmental publications 26-7w

Morley, Mr Elliot
Debates etc.
Fisheries (09:12:92) 924-30
Mink Keeping Order 1992 (08:12:92) 800-3, 812-3
Sea Fish (Conservation) Bill, Lords amendts (09:12:92) 949-50, 959, 962
Questions
Fish conservation 817-8w
Ministers, Legal costs 803w
Private prosecutions, Legal costs 796w
Set-aside schemes, Land use 387
Wood, Forest protection 811-2w

Morris, Rt Hon Alfred
Questions
Alcoholism, Residential care 521w
Bus services, Privatisation 286w
Business questions 405
Disability living allowance, Administrative delays 3
Handicapped, Personal social services 521w
Terrorism, Crime victims 555-6w
Tourism, May Day bank holiday 678w
Tourist boards, Government grants 677w
Tourist industry, Ministerial duties 678w
Tourist industry, National lottery 677-8w
War pensions 170w

Morris, Ms Estelle
Questions
Ambulance services, West Midlands 76w
Corporation tax, Occupational pensions 306w
Educational standards, Disclosure of information 36w
English education, Educational assessment 35w
Occupational pensions, Redundancy pay 582w
Redundancy, West Midlands 173w

Morris, Rt Hon John
Debates etc.
Judicial Pensions & Retirement Bill (HL), 2R (03:12:92) 433
Questions
Lamont, Norman, Legal costs 569w
Lamont, Norman, Tenant eviction 452w

Mortgage defaulters
Repossession orders 198w

Mortgage interest rates
Building societies 48-9w
Income support 581w

Mortgage relief
771-2w
Expenditure 198-9w

Mortgages
Investor protection 45-6w
Life insurance 46w

Moss, Mr Malcolm
Questions
Coal mine closures 250
Farmers, Rural planning 381-2
NHS finance 643w
Rented housing 838

Motor industry
Manpower 53-4w

Motor vehicle parts
Motorcycles 389w

Motor vehicle registration
205w, 990

Motor vehicle testing
784w, 823w
Exhaust emission controls 388w

Motor vehicle theft
Crime prevention 409-10w

Motor vehicles
Warning lamps 389-90w

Motorcycles
746w
Engines 698w
Exports 587w
Motor vehicle parts 389w
Noise control 555w
Road accidents 596w

Motorway service areas
693-4w

Motorways
A1 203w
Road works 782-3w
Telephones 202-3w

Mowlam, Ms Marjorie
Questions
Charterline 228w

Moyle, Jonathan
Death 690

Moynihan Committee
see Renewable Energy Advisory Group

Mudie, Mr George
Questions
Manufacturing industries, Unemployment 259
Urban programme 827

Mullin, Mr Chris
Questions
Astra Training Services, Training & enterprise councils 132
Domestic violence, Police 216w
Freemasonry, Public appointments 391
Guildford Four Inquiry 222w, 588
Guildford Four Inquiry, Costs 96w
Guildford Four Inquiry, Documents 283w
Guildford Four Inquiry, Evidence 95w, 218w
Guildford Four Inquiry, Immunity certificates 218w, 222w, 283w, 303w
Guildford Four Inquiry, Intelligence services 95w
Homicide, Married men 217w
Homicide, Married women 216w
Immunity certificates, Bombings 241w
Mass media, Ownership 584-5
Metropolitan Police, Damages 410w
Sunderland Health Authority, Office workers 777w

Multiflow arrangement
248

Multiple births
Child benefit 71w

Murdoch, Rupert
Ownership 584-5

Murphy, Mr Paul
Questions
"Choice & Diversity: A New Framework for Schools" 606w
Education Bill 1992/93 666-7w

Murphy, Mr Paul—continued
Local government reform, Wales 665-6w
Local government revenue, Council house sales 242w

Museums & galleries
Schools 605w
Wales 605w

Mushrooms
Agricultural subsidies 383

Music education
582-3
Finance 582

Narmada dam
Arrests 810w
Human rights 811w
UK companies abroad 810w
World Bank 811w

National Audit Office
805w

National Children's Home
992

National Farmers' Union
Sheep 368w

National Federation of Housing Associations
704w

National Girobank
see Girobank

National Health Service (Freedom of Speech) Bill 1992/93
Debates etc.
1R (10:12:92) 1011

National Home Building Council
Delyn 414w

National Identification Bureau
96w

National income
988
EC countries 758w

National Insurance Contributions Unit
see Social Security Contributions Agency

National Insurance Fund
Personal pensions 421-2w
Treasury grant 421w
Treasury supplement 421w
Unemployment 421w

National lottery
326-7w, 453-4w, 679w
Betting shops 43w
Charities 577-9
Football pools 325-7w, 547w
Premium bonds 326w
Scotland 547w
Tourist industry 677-8w
Voluntary organisations 578-9

National parks
Ballots 840-1
Northern Ireland 840
Privatisation 840

National parks authorities
832-3

National Rivers Authority
154w, 225w, 511w
Flood control (10:12:92) 1097-102

National savings
104w

National School Health Service Bill 1992/93
Debates etc.
2R order read (11:12:92) 1174

National Union of Mineworkers
448w

Nationalised industries
External financing limits 106w

Nationality
Eastern Health & Social Services Board 136w

NATO
Armed forces deployment 714w

Natural Resources Institute
Official visits 100w

Nature Conservancy Council for England
573-4w

Nature Conservancy Council for Scotland
20-1w

Nature conservation
Cetaceans 707w
Coastal protection 226-7w
Elephants 207-8w
Kyle of Lochalsh 622w
Land acquisition 21w
Rain forests 310w
Scotland 21w

Nature reserves
Expenditure 20-1w
Scotland 20-1w

Needham, Mr Richard, Minister for Trade
Questions
Balance of payments, Libyan Arab Republic 449-50w
Balance of trade, UK trade with EC 441w
EC internal trade 247w, 250-1w
EC internal trade, Departmental publications 591w
Export controls, Orders & regulations 745w
Export credit guarantees, Expenditure 586-7w
Export Credits Guarantee Department, Civil service dispersal 253
Export Credits Guarantee Department, Redundancy 590-1w
Export promotion 264
Export promotion, Wales 587w
Exports 254w
Exports, Middle East 253w
Imports, Child workers 831w
Manufactured exports 251w
Manufactured imports 115w
Manufacturing industries 110-2w
Motorcycles, Exports 587w
Overseas trade, Albania 116w
Overseas trade, Argentina 350w
Toys & games, China 832w
UK trade with EC, Balance of trade 448w
UK trade with EC, Market share 448-9w
Wood, Brazil 441w
Wood, Imports 591w
Wood, International trade 441w

Nelson, Mr Anthony, Economic Secretary to the Treasury
Debates etc.
Banking Coordination (Second Council Directive) Regulations 1992 (10:12:92) 1051-6, 1068-73
Questions
Bank of Credit & Commerce International, Price Waterhouse 105w
Bank of Credit & Commerce International Inquiry, Disclosure of information 105w
Bank services, Young people 770w
Building societies, Mortgage interest rates 48-9w
Civil service manpower 48w
Consumer credit, Debts 767w
Council tax, Costs 770w
Credit cards, Disclosure of information 769w
Debt rescheduling, Developing countries 49-50w
Debts 45w
Debts, Developing countries 51-2w
Debts, Personal income 772w
Debts written off, Developing countries 50-1w
Economic & monetary union 102w

Nelson, Mr Anthony—continued
Economic & monetary union, Treaty on European Union 102w
Economic policy 988
Economic policy, Developing countries 51-2w
Economic situation, Environment protection 569-70w
Exchange rates, Labour costs 47-8w
Exchange rates, Sterling 47w
Financial services, Investor protection 429w
Financial services, Self-regulating organisations 429w
Foreign investment in UK 988-9
Higher civil servants, Performance related pay 305-6w
House prices, Average earnings 771w
Housing Corporation, Government grants 306-7w
Imports 199w
Industrial production 199w
Industrial production, Surveys 46w
Interest rates, EC countries 768w
Investor protection 429w
Lamont, Norman, Legal costs 569w
Manufactured goods, Overseas trade 47w
Members' allowances 430w
Ministers, Press releases 772w
Mortgages, Investor protection 45-6w
Mortgages, Life insurance 46w
National income 988
National savings 104w
Pay settlements 768w
Premium bonds 103w, 979-80
Privatisation, Income 770w
Public sector debt 570-1w
Treasury, Civil service manpower 102-3w
Treasury, Economic forecasting 306w, 471w
Treasury, Operating costs 103w
UK trade with EC 51w
World economy 769w

Network SouthEast
Subsidies 818w

Neubert, Sir Michael
Debates etc.
Package Travel, Package Holidays & Package Tours Regulations 1992 (10:12:92) 1077
Questions
Building industry 709w
Exports 254w
St Bartholomew's Hospital, Hospital closures 521w

Neurology
Paediatrics 803-4w

"New Opportunities for the Railways White Paper"
596w

New towns development corporations
Public sector housing 361w

Newham
Social Fund 423-4w

Newry bypass
Road construction 683w

Newspaper press
Bank services 101-2w
Restrictive trade practices 249w

Newsprint
Recycling 185-6w

Newton, Rt Hon Tony, Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons
Questions
Bed & breakfast accommodation, Social security benefits 995
Bosnia-Hercegovina, Armed conflict 993, 995
Business 141-2
Business questions 403-12, 998-1009
Business statements 402-3, 997-8

Newton, Rt Hon Tony—continued
Civil service agencies 801w
Coal, Exports 137
Council of Europe, UK delegations 802w
Council of Ministers, Disclosure of information 801-2w
Council tax 138
Council tax, Greater London 138-9
Council tax, Valuation 996
EC Committee of the Regions, EC grants & loans 802w
EC institutions, Disclosure of information 802w
Economic policy 996
Economic situation 139-40
Edinburgh Summit 994
Educational assessment 995-6
Homelessness 138, 994-5
Homelessness, Unemployment 139
House of Commons questions, Costs 592w
Manufacturing industries, Stoke on Trent 142
Marriage guidance 992
Members' pay 693w
Members' pensions 339w, 508w
Members' travel, Bicycles 339w
Ministerial statements 593w
Ministers, Festivals & special occasions 803w
Ministers, Legal costs 803w
Money supply 140-1
Monklands District Council 992
Northern Ireland government, Anglo-Irish talks 141
Northern region, Official visits 140
Official visits, Philippines 592-3w
Parliamentary buildings, Crown immunity 592w
Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration 693w
Privy Council 339-40w
Privy Council, Appeals 339-41w
Privy Council, Public records 236w
Rangers Football Club 993
Religious discrimination, Violence 993-4
Somalia, Overseas aid 802-3w
Tarmac Construction, Contracts 140
Treaty on European Union 992-3
UK contributions to EC budget 138
Universities 236w
USA, Elections 994

Newtownabbey
Bombings 133-4w, 598w

Next steps initiative
Annual reports 228-9w

NHS
Contracts for services 28w, 323-4w, 763w
Dentists 74w, 529-38w
Leasing schemes 105w
Medical research 321w
Private investment 322w
Wales 28w, 763w

NHS administration
Wales 608w

NHS charges
Wigs 231w

NHS complaints
635w
Dental services 519w

NHS finance
513-8w, 643-50w, 683-4
Audit Commission for Local Authorities in England & Wales 635w
Geriatric patients 630w
Regional health authorities 632-4w
Scotland 619w

NHS internal market
76w, 321-2w, 608w
Wales 608w

NHS Management Executive
Annual reports 804w

NHS Supplies Authority
639-40w

NHS trusts
629w, 680
Advertising 505w
Ambulance services 687w
Capital investment 104w, 132w
Contracts of employment 606w
Orders & regulations 505w
Public appointments 606-7w, 635w, 688w
Public sector borrowing requirement 104w
Scotland 789w
Wales 132w, 505w, 606-7w

Nicholls, Mr Patrick
Debates etc.
Judicial Pensions & Retirement Bill (HL), 2R (03:12:92) 429, 433, 435, 445, 448-9, 451-6
One stop shop initiative (03:12:92) 423
Social Security Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & Means res (30:11:92) 60, 75-80, 82, 86, 92
Unemployment (08:12:92) 700, 704, 705-6
Questions
Business 141-2
Business questions 403-4
Railway freight transport, Fees & charges 779w
Slaughterhouses, EC law 366w
Social security benefits, Marginal tax rates 67w

Nicholson, Mr David
Questions
Community care 676-7
Energy review, Gas supply industry 348w
Esperanto 212w
Esperanto, Languages education 235w
Imports, Child workers 831w
Industrial health & safety, Sheep dipping 627-8w
London Underground 203w
London Underground, Citizen's Charter 204w
Manufactured exports 251w
Shipbuilding 108w
Slaughterhouses, Food hygiene 223-4w
Training, Unemployed 130
Travelling people, Caravan sites 703w, 834
VAT zero rated goods, EC law 569w

Nicholson, Miss Emma
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (01:12:92) 152
United Nations (04:12:92) 525, 546-50
Questions
National Parks, Ballots 840-1
Religious discrimination, Violence 993-4

Nigeria
Extradition 219w

Nimrod aircraft
721w

Noise control
Motorcycles 555w

Noise insulation grants
719-20w

Non-contributory invalidity pension
343w

Non-departmental public bodies
833

Non-domestic rates
577-9w, 739-40w
Appeals 15-6w
Rate rebates 739w
Salford 15-6w
Wales 827w

Non-Domestic Rating Contributions (England) Regulations 1992
Questions
739-40w

Non-fossil fuel obligation
107-8w, 256-7w, 347w
Treaty of Rome 587w

Non-governmental organisations
491w
International Tropical Timber Agreement
426w

Non-ionizing radiation
Cancer hazards 73w

Non-teaching staff
Pay 234-5w

Norris, Mr Steve, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of Transport
Questions
Air transport, Insurance 89-90w
Airports, South East region 783-4w
Catamarans, Shipping safety 285-6w
Citizen's Charter 201w
Dept of Transport, Civil service dispersal 387-8w
Dept of Transport, Civil service manpower 203w
Dept of Transport, Contracts for services 694w
Dept of Transport, Departmental correspondence 90w
Dept of Transport, Legislation 9w
Dept of Transport, Operating costs 90-1w
London Buses, Privatisation 390-1w
London Underground 203w
London Underground, Citizen's Charter 204w
Merchant seamen, Manpower 695w
Offshore supply vessels, Overseas workers 693w
Priority routes, Expenditure 91w
Priority routes, Road accidents 783w
Registrar General of Shipping 463w
River Thames, Bridges 389w
Shipbuilding, Safety standards 784w
Taxis, Greater London 784-5w
Transport of radioactive materials 462w
Transport of radioactive materials, Accidents 780w
Transport of radioactive materials, Air safety 780w
Transport of radioactive materials, Dounreay 462w
Transport of radioactive materials, Plutonium 781w
Transport of radioactive materials, Ports 781w
Underground railways, Fire prevention 461-2w

North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
see NATO

North East Essex Health Authority
523w

North East region
Foreign investment in UK 30w
Health & Safety Executive 724-6w

North East Thames Regional Health Authority
District health authorities 523w
Finance 686-7

North East Wales Training & Enterprise Council
29w

North Sea
624-6w
Fishing quotas (01:12:92) 238-46

North Wales
Ambulance services 763w
Cancer 246w
Offshore drilling 586w
Radiation 605-6w

North West region
54w, 631w, 991
Foreign investment in UK 442w
Health & Safety Executive 723-4w
Prisons 555w

North Yorkshire
Forestry Commission 184-6w

Northamptonshire
Rent arrears 150w

Northern Ireland
Aircraft noise 719-20w
Cereals 134w, 228w
Coastal erosion 400-1w
Coastal protection 399-401w, 403w
EC grants & loans 599w
Elderly 136w
Empty housing 737-8w
European Agricultural Guidance & Guarantee Fund 601-2w
European Regional Development Fund 599-600w
Gamblers Anonymous 683-4w
Housing insulation 402w
Immunity certificates 17w
Legal aid 592w
Legal aid scheme 387w
Local government constituencies 739w
Ministers' domestic visits 16w
National parks 840
NOW initiative 602-3w
Nursing homes 135-6w
Prisoners 480w
Private roads (30:11:92) 117
Public expenditure 598-9w
Residential care 136w
School administration 500w
School discipline 501w
Terrorism 308w
UK contributions to EC budget 600-1w
UK repayments from EC budget 600-1w
Water meters 500-1w
Water supply 500-1w
Wildlife incident investigation scheme 308w

Northern Ireland Court Service
Costs 592w
Manpower 592w

Northern Ireland Dept of Economic Development
Consultants 738w

Northern Ireland Dept of Education
Research finance 135w

Northern Ireland government
Anglo-Irish talks 141

Northern Ireland Housing Executive
597-8w

Northern Ireland Office
Chlorofluorocarbons 133w
Civil service manpower 308w
Contracts for services 684w
Departmental correspondence 134-5w
Operating costs 135w

Northern Ireland Training & Employment Agency
Official visits 134w

Northern region
Employment level 129-30
Foreign investment in UK 140
Manufacturing industries 249w
Official visits 140
Ozone layer 702w

Northumberland
Domestic violence 216-7w
Local government functions 705w

Northumberland County Council
705w

Norway
Whales 19w

Nottingham
Independent Living Fund 170w

Nottingham Hospital
Day care units 143-4w

NOW initiative
617w
Northern Ireland 602-3w

Nuclear accidents
Emergency planning 614-5w
Radiation protection 556w

Nuclear Electric
107-8w, 258w

Nuclear fuel reprocessing
Sellafield 473w

Nuclear fuels
Theft 436w

Nuclear non proliferation
EC action 651w
Treaties 435w

Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty
434-5w
Commonwealth of Independent States
435w

Nuclear power
254, 703w, 832w
Energy policy 588w
West Cumbria 129-30

Nuclear power stations
Construction 111w
Decommissioning 258w
Electrical safety 114w
Fossil fuel levy 107-8w

Nuclear reactors
Nuclear submarines 792-3w

Nuclear safeguards
498w
Expenditure 496w
Inspections 586w
Nuclear weapons 651w
Overseas trade 585w

Nuclear safety
Nuclear weapons 719w

Nuclear shelters
4w
Property transfer 553w

Nuclear submarines
Decommissioning 364w
Nuclear reactors 792-3w

Nuclear Supplier's Group
China 436w

Nuclear weapons
Iran 435w
Iraq 307w
Israel 435w
Nuclear safeguards 651w
Nuclear safety 719w

Nuclear weapons deployment
Inspections 436w

Nuclear Weapons Safety Working Group
719w

Nuclear weapons tests
Exservicemen 64-5w
South East Asia 437w

Numeracy
Young people 559w

Nurses
Greater London 73-4w
Health & Safety Executive 416w
Manpower 73-4w, 640-1w
Sunderland Health Authority 777w

Nursing homes
Council tax 13w
Northern Ireland 135-6w
Repossession orders 669w
Wales 669w

Nursing Staff & Professions Allied to Medicine Review Body
507w

Nutrition & health
629w
Catering 642-3w
Pensioners 70w
School meals 235w

Nutrition Task Force
642w

Objects in lieu of tax
325w

O'Brien, Mr Mike
Debates etc.
Judicial Pensions & Retirement Bill (HL), 2R (03:12:92) 456-61
Questions
Arms trade, Iraq 247w
Business questions 1009
Coal mine closures, Redundancy 672w, 832w
Legal aid scheme, Personal income 85w
Matrix Churchill, Immunity certificates 195w
Oil seed rape, Agricultural subsidies 370w
School buildings, Repairs & maintenance 234w
Television licences, Sheltered housing 801w

O'Brien, Mr William
Debates etc.
Clarke Foods, Knowsley (07:12:92) 643
Small businesses, Bureaucracy (07:12:92) 652, 654-7, 661, 669, 671, 672
Unemployment (08:12:92) 775-6
Questions
National lottery, Charities 577-8
Residential care, Northern Ireland 136w
Water meters, Northern Ireland 500-1w
Water supply, Northern Ireland 500-1w

Obscene Publications (Amendment) Bill 1992/93
Debates etc.
2R order read (04:12:92) 565

Occupational health
200-1w
Health hazards 729w

Occupational pensions
British Rail 11w
Corporation tax 306w
EC law 750w
Equal opportunities 750w
Redundancy pay 582w

Occupational Pensions Bill 1992/93
Debates etc.
2R order read (11:12:92) 1173

Occupational therapy
Wales 506w

OECD countries
Educational finance 559w
Further education 558-9w
Higher education admission 560-1w

Offal
Import controls 755w

Offensive weapons
Right of search 6w

OFFER
see Office of Electricity Regulation

Office for Standards in Education
235-6w
Manpower 235w
Offices 235w

Office of Electricity Regulation
115w

Office of Gas Supply
115w

Office of Public Service & Science
Civil service manpower 465w

Office of Telecommunications
115w, 673-4w, 687

Office of Water Services
154w

Office workers
Sunderland Health Authority 777w

Offices
HM Inspectorate of Schools 235w
Inland Revenue 106-7w

Offices—continued
Office for Standards in Education 235w

Official engagements
122w, 307w
Dept of the Environment 831w

Official Report
CD-ROM 201w

Official visits
Defence Research Agency 240w
Forensic Science Service 218-9w
Government Chemist 252-3w
Historic Scotland 182w
Information Technology Services Agency 169w
Intervention Board 386w
Land Registry Office 196w
Meteorological Office 240-1w
Natural Resources Institute 100w
Northern Ireland Training & Employment Agency 134w
Northern region 140
Philippines 592-3w
Radiocommunications Agency 253w
RAF Support Command Maintenance Group 241w
Veterinary Medicines Directorate 160w
Western Sahara 567w

Offset arrangements
AWACS 365w

Offshore drilling
Environment protection 495w, 586w
North Wales 586w
Wales 495-6w

Offshore Safety Division
Health & Safety Executive 179w

Offshore structures
Decommissioning 31-2w

Offshore supply vessels
Overseas workers 693w

OFGAS
see Office of Gas Supply

OFSTED
see Office for Standards in Education

OFTEL
see Office of Telecommunications

OFWAT
see Office of Water Services

O'Hara, Mr Edward
Questions
Grant maintained schools, Ballots 751w
National lottery 453w
Sudan, Human rights 566-7w
Thomas Becket School Knowsley 751w

Oil refineries
32w
Cheshire 32w, 54w
Manpower 54w

Oil revenues
770w

Oil seed rape
Agricultural subsidies 159w, 224w, 370w

Older workers
Employment opportunities 131

Olner, Mr Bill
Debates etc.
Handicapped, Public petitions (08:12:92) 818-9
Unfair competition (30:11:92) 28
Questions
Industrial training, Redundancy 130

One stop shop initiative
Ministerial statements (03:12:92) 414-24

O'Neill, Mr Martin
Questions
Coal mine closures 250-1

Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Questions
Inland Revenue, Inspections 430w

Open University
University finance 313w, 476w

Opencast mining
Planning appeals 301-2w

Opening hours
Betting shops 550w, 808w

Operating costs
Dept for Education 118w
Dept of Employment 180-1w
Dept of Health 689-90w
Dept of Social Security 171w
Dept of the Environment 152w
Dept of Trade & Industry 110w
Dept of Transport 90-1w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office 88w
Home Office 96-8w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 158w
Ministry of Defence 165-6w
Northern Ireland Office 135w
Scottish Office 183w
Treasury 103w
Welsh Office 131w

Oppenheim, Mr Phillip
Debates etc.
Unemployment (08:12:92) 700-4
Questions
Business questions 1005
EC economic policy 985
Iron & steel industry 258

Opposition days
Unemployment (08:12:92) 699-793

Optical charges
Eye tests 318w

Orchestras
Arts Council grants 455w
Young people 582

Orders & regulations
Environmental health 291-2w
Export controls 745w
NHS trusts 505w
Waste management 571-2w
Wastes 395w

Orimulsion
Imports 34w

Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Questions
Manufacturing industries 259-60

Osteopathy
Training 320w, 631-2w

Ottaway, Mr Richard
Debates etc.
Local Government (Overseas Assistance) Bill, 2R (11:12:92) 1114-6
Questions
Commercial court, Administrative delays 16-7
Trade unions, Government grants 791-2w

Out-patients
Hospital waiting lists 628w

Overseas Companies & Credit & Financial Institutions (Branch Disclosure) Regulations 1992
Debates etc.
(30:11:92) 44, (07:12:92) 636

Overseas aid
482-3w, 591
Africa 591-2
Agriculture 591-2
Bangladesh 309w
Bosnia-Herzegovina 589
Cameroon 427w
Developing countries 590-1, 670w
Expenditure 671w

Overseas aid—continued
Kurds 490-2w
Local authorities (11:12:92) 1105-22, 1134-59
Malawi 309w
Peru 482w
Somalia 482w, 802-3w, 809w
Southern Africa 592
Tropical forestry action plan 492w
Yugoslavia 428-9w

Overseas investment
EC countries 441-2w

Overseas trade
Albania 116w
Argentina 350w
Manufactured goods 47w
Nuclear safeguards 585w
USA 262-3

Overseas Trade Service
603-4w

Overseas workers
Offshore supply vessels 693w

Overtime
London Ambulance Service 73w

Oxburgh Committee
see Nuclear Weapons Safety Working Group

Ozone layer
702w
Northern region 702w

PA Consulting Group
Expenditure 728-9w

Package holidays
EC law 673w

Package Travel, Package Holidays & Package Tours Regulations 1992
Debates etc.
(10:12:92) 1074-96

Paediatrics
Neurology 803-4w
West Midlands Regional Health Authority 803-4w

Page, Mr Richard
Debates etc.
Package Travel, Package Holidays & Package Tours Regulations 1992 (10:12:92) 1086-8
Rolls-Royce, Public petitions (03:12:92) 488
Rolls-Royce, Redundancy (04:12:92) 568-70, 571-2
Questions
Members' pay 693w

Paice, Mr James
Questions
Next steps initiative, Annual reports 228-9w

Paintings
Thatcher, RtHonBaroness 682w

Paisley
Industrial production 191-2w

Paisley, Rev Ian
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Cons (01:12:92) 195, (02:12:92) 291, 293, 296, 353
Fisheries (09:12:92) 855, 873-7
Prince of Wales (09:12:92) 846
Questions
Eastern Health & Social Services Board, Nationality 136w
EC grants & loans, Northern Ireland 599w
Elderly, EC grants & loans 136w
European Agricultural Guidance & Guarantee Fund, Northern Ireland 601-2w
European Regional Development Fund, Northern Ireland 599-600w

Paisley, Rev Ian—continued
Imports 199w
Industrial production 199w
Nursing homes, Northern Ireland 135-6w
UK contributions to EC budget, Northern Ireland 600-1w
UK trade with EC, Balance of trade 448w
UK trade with EC, Market share 448-9w

Pakistan
Capital punishment 85w
Homicide 566w

Palace of Westminster
997-8
Energy conservation 799w
Fire prevention 362-3w
Industrial health & safety 200-1w

Paracetamol
Liver diseases 522w
Safety measures 521-2w
Suicide 522w

Parcelforce
Pension funds 674w
Privatisation 282w, 674w

Parking
Local authority powers 129-30w
Wales 129-30w

Parking offences
London boroughs 697w

Parliamentary Boundary Commission for England
see Boundary Commission for England

Parliamentary buildings
Crown immunity 592w

Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration
693w

Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration Select Committee
(02:12:92) 368

Parliamentary constituencies
Local government reform 16w

Parliamentary Contributory Pension Fund
508w

Parliamentary furnishings
Speaker's rulings & statements (30:11:92) 44

Parliamentary privilege
Speaker's rulings & statements (08:12:92) 693-4

Parliamentary sovereignty & European Community
314w

Parole
Life imprisonment 410w

Parole Board
410w

Parry, Mr Robert
Questions
Educational standards, Disclosure of information 561w
Low birthweight babies 634w

Partnerships
Company accounts 30-1w

Part-time employment
Unfair dismissal 127

Passports
EC countries 3w

Patients
Dentists 74w

Patient's Charter
77w, 323w, 635w, 678, 685
Alternative medicine 685

Patient's Charter—continued
Hospital waiting lists 628w
Medical records 143w
Performance standards 684-5
Scotland 788w

Patten, Rt Hon John, Secretary of State for Education
Questions
EC Education Council 476-7w
Grant maintained schools 692-3w
School Curriculum & Assessment Authority 395-6w

Pawsey, Mr James
Questions
British Waterways Board 302w
British Waterways Board, Water supply industry 151w
Business questions 1001
EC Education Council 476-7w
Engineering education, Curriculum 40w
Engineering education, Higher education 38w
Engineering education, Student numbers 40-2w
Engineering education, Students 38-9w, 41w
Engineering education, Technical education 397w
Engineers, Employment opportunities 799w
Higher education teachers, Engineers 397w
M1, Road works 202w
Manufacturing industries 766w
Road humps 202w
Road traffic control 93-4w
Sewage, Water treatment 150w
Shortage subjects, Teacher training 396w
Social security recipients, Water charges 70w
Teachers, Engineers 396-7w
Technical education 397-8w
Technical education, Engineers 397w
Water & sewerage companies 287w
Water pollution, EC law 703w
Water supply 151w
Water supply industry, Government grants 391w

Pay
Dentists 146-8w
Family doctors 319w
Health service staff 142w, 635w, 679
Higher education teachers 234-5w
HM Inspectorate of Schools 235w
Local government staff 836-7
Non-teaching staff 234-5w

Pay beds
322-3w

Pay review bodies
507w
Health service staff 76w, 523w, 679

Pay settlements
768w
Health service staff 788w

Peace keeping operations
Bosnia-Herzegovina 611w, 672w
Iraq 566w
Somalia 671-2w
United Nations 654-6w
Yugoslavia 166w

Peace negotiations
Angola 567-8w

Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Questions
Business questions 1000
Coal mine closures 249

Peak District National Park
832-3

Peak Park Joint Planning Board
Ballots 832-3

Pendry, Mr Tom
Questions
National lottery, Voluntary organisations 578-9

Penguins
Falkland Islands 757-8w

Pension funds
Maxwell companies 8-9
Parcelforce 674w

Pension Law Review Committee
472-3w

Pension rights
Church of England 13

Pensioners
12
Citizen's Charter 11-2
Nutrition & health 70w
Standing charges 11-2
Television licences 583-4

Pensions
Clergy 12w
Tax yields 471w

Pensions Ombudsman
749w

Performance related pay
Higher civil servants 305-6w

PERIFRA programme
111-2w

Personal income
504w
Debts 772w
Legal aid scheme 85w

Personal injury compensation
Scotland (11:12:92) 1175-6

Personal pensions
(30:11:92) 45-117, (07:12:92) 595-636
National Insurance Fund 421-2w

Personal social services
Citizen's Charter 82-4w
Handicapped 521w
Standard spending assessments 154w, 537-42w

Personal taxation
Queen 220w

Peru
Overseas aid 482w

Pest control
Badgers 56-8w
Birds 827-8w

Pesticides
Industrial health & safety 175w

Petroleum Engineering Directorate
Civil service dispersal 745w

Petroleum exploration licences
117w
Cardigan Bay 832-3w

Petroleum production
Bureaucracy 257w

Philippines
Official visits 592-3w

Pickles, Mr Eric
Questions
Business questions 1005

Pickthall, Mr Colin
Questions
Civil service, Contracts for services 547w
Generic prescribing 641w
NHS complaints 635w
Overseas aid, Expenditure 671w
Standard spending assessments 709w

Pike, Mr Peter L
Debates etc.
Unfair competition (30:11:92) 28
Questions
Developing countries, Chlorofluorocarbons 302w

Pike, Mr Peter L—continued
Economic policy, Housing 393-4
Set-aside schemes 386
Southern Africa, Overseas aid 592
Textile industry, EC grants & loans 31w
Travelling people, Caravan sites 834

Plain English
Contracts (08:12:92) 696-8

Plain Language Bill 1992/93
Debates etc.
1R (08:12:92) 696-8

Planning appeals
Opencast mining 301-2w

Planning authorities
Town & country planning 292w

Planning permission
Agricultural land 382
Charities 148w
Farm buildings 382

Play facilities
Children 325w

Playing fields
Land acquisition 234w

Plutonium
345-6w
Exports 34w, 108w, 345w
Imports 34w
Radiation hazards 587w
Transport of radioactive materials 781w

Point of Ayr colliery
34w

Police
Courts 359w
Domestic violence 216w
Scotland 190w, 359w

Police cautions
24w

Police firearms
Greater London 807w
Road blocks 807w
Stop & search 735w

Police pensions
477-8w

Police powers
Terrorism 552w

Political activities
Student unions 120w

Political prisoners
Cameroon 311w

Political refugees
Immigration applications 410w, 662w
Yugoslavia 411-2w

Pollution control
EC law 293w
Industry 293-4w
Manufacturing industries 293w

Pollution monitoring
Air pollution control 291w
Water pollution 296w

Pope, Mr Greg
Questions
Arthritis 773-4w
Community care, Local government finance 686w
Employment training, Hyndburn 727-8w
Hard core unemployed, Accrington 730w
Local government revenue, Council house sales 706w
Railway network, Capital investment 594w
Vocational guidance 174w

Population
Forest protection 425w

Pornography
Telephone services 251w

Porter, Mr Barry
Debates etc.
Cammell Laird, Points of order (02:12:92) 285
Fishing quotas, North Sea (01:12:92) 243
Judicial Pensions & Retirement Bill (HL), 2R (03:12:92) 446, 448
Public expenditure, Scotland (02:12:92) 282
Questions
Magistrates' courts 16

Porter, Mr David
Questions
A12, Dual carriageways 94w
Child benefit, Multiple births 71w
Dept of Health, Research facilities 230w
Fishing quotas 58w
Flood control, Early warning systems 99w
Offshore structures, Decommissioning 31-2w
Public expenditure 470w
School transport, Road safety 463-4w
Standard spending assessments 711w

Portillo, Rt Hon Michael, Chief Secretary to the Treasury
Questions
Autumn statement 772w
Autumn statement, Business 990-1
Balance of payments, Treaty on European Union 989
Capital investment 991-2
Economic policy 983
Economic situation 469w, 768w, 983
Engineering Employers' Federation, Economic policy 991
Housing finance 766w
Industrial investment 982-3
Interest rates, Banks 983-4
Lamont, Norman, Tenant eviction 306w
Leasing schemes, NHS 105w
Local government revenue, Capital investment 570w
Local government revenue, Council house sales 700w
Manufacturing industries 766w, 984
NHS trusts, Capital investment 104w
Private investment 767w
Public expenditure 199-200w, 470w
Public expenditure, Treaty on European Union 989
Public sector borrowing requirement, NHS trusts 104w
Public sector borrowing requirement, Private health services 104w
Small businesses 767w
Treasury, Contracts for services 814w
Treaty on European Union 989-90

Ports
Tanzania 557w
Transport of radioactive materials 781w

Portsmouth City Council
(03:12:92) 488

Portsmouth Dockyard
(03:12:92) 488

Post Office
744w
External financing limits 834w
Finance 745w
Redundancy 389-90

Post Office Counters
677w

Postal services
744w
Armed forces deployment 60-1w

Potato Marketing Board
712-3w

Potato marketing scheme
367w, 712-3w

Poultry
Agricultural production 368-9w
Animal welfare 754w

Powell, Mr Ray
Questions
Business questions 408-9
Floods, Wales 400
Members' pensions 339w
Palace of Westminster, Energy conservation 799w
Palace of Westminster, Fire prevention 362-3w
Thatcher, RtHonBaroness, Paintings 682w

Powell, Mr William
Questions
Rent arrears, Northamptonshire 150w

Power industry
Malawi 557w

PowerGen
572w
Flue gas desulphurisation 674-5w

Pregnant women
Drug abuse 603w

Premium bonds
103w, 979-80
National lottery 326w

Prentice, Mr Gordon
Questions
BBC External Services 652w
BBC External Services, Cost effectiveness 652w
Bridges, Lancashire 203w
Challenge to jury 198w
Church Commissioners, Investment 363w
Church Commissioners, Sportagrounds 363w
Council tax, Costs 770w
Drug crimes, Lancashire 661w
Economic & monetary union 102w
Eye tests, Optical charges 318w
Higher education, Citizen's Charter 119w
Land ownership & tenure, Scotland 189w
Local government revenue, Property transfer 205-6w
Manufacturing industries 110-2w
Metropolitan Police, Public appointments 733w
Pakistan, Homicide 566w
Royal residences, Art works 43w
School meals, Nutrition & health 235w
Social security benefits 301-2w
Social security recipients, Travelling expenses 424w
Succession 431w
Walking, Lancashire 43w
Youth training, Lancashire 505w

Prescribed industrial diseases
681w

Prescription charges
142w, 630w

Prescription drugs
Braille 318w
Drug abuse 21-2w

Prescriptions
Budgeting 81w, 689w
Calcium 139-41w
Homeopathy 803w

Press
Prisoners (09:12:92) 972-8

Press freedom
Kashmir 459w

Press releases
Ministers 772w

Price Waterhouse
228w
Bank of Credit & Commerce International 105w

Prices
Exchange rates 47-8w

Primarolo, Ms Dawn
Questions
AIDS, Government grants 142-3w
Family doctors, Budgeting 683
Family planning clinics 319w

Primarolo, Ms Dawn—continued
Hospitals 686w
Hospitals, Scotland 815w
Hospitals, Wales 763w
London's Health Service Medical Education & Research Inquiry, Hospital consultants 689w
London's Health Service Medical Education & Research Inquiry, Public expenditure 689w
Prescription drugs, Braille 318w
Prescriptions, Budgeting 689w
Surgery, Private health services 804w

Primary education
Class sizes 29w, 36-8w
Kent 750w
Wales 29w

Primates
215-6w

Prime Minister
EC internal relations 664-5w

Prince of Wales
Ministerial statements (09:12:92) 845-7

Princess of Wales
(09:12:92) 845-7

Priority routes
Expenditure 91w
Greater London 783w
Road accidents 783w

Prison education services
97-8w
Contracts for services 98w, 553-4w

Prison population
413w
Drug crimes 480w
Immigrant detainees 660-2w
Prisoners on remand 736w

Prison Service
Public appointments 478w

Prison staff
Public sector housing sales 733w
Scotland 621w

Prisoners
Drug crimes 8-10w
Northern Ireland 480w
Press (09:12:92) 972-8
Terrorism 480w
Women 8-10w

Prisoners on remand
Prison population 736w
Young offenders 411w, 478w, 658w
Youth custody 217w

Prisoners' release
Probation & aftercare 100w

Prisons
Drug abuse 480-1w
North West region 555w
Scotland 620-1w

Private detectives
Dept of Trade & Industry 107w
Welsh Office 413-4w

Private health services
Public sector borrowing requirement 104w
Surgery 804w

Private investment
767-8w
NHS 322w

Private Members' motions
United Nations (04:12:92) 499-564

Private prosecutions
Legal costs 796w

Private rented housing
835

Private roads
Northern Ireland (30:11:92) 117

Private sector
Ambulance services 320-1w, 432w, 775w
Higher education 798w
Water supply 829w

Private Security (Registration) Bill 1992/93
Debates etc.
2R order read (11:12:92) 1175

Private social services
642w

Private Streets (Amendment) (Northern Ireland) Order 1992
Debates etc.
(30:11:92) 117

Privatisation
Advisory Conciliation & Arbitration Service 132-3
British Coal Corporation 745w
British Rail 11w, 91-2w, (30:11:92) 118, 283-4w, 667w, 779w
Bus services 286w
European Passenger Services 818w
Girobank 117w
Income 49w, 770w
London Buses 390-1w
National Parks 840
Parcelforce 282w, 674w
PSA Projects 149-50w, 392w
Public transport companies 286w
Red Star 393-4w, 674w

Privatisation of Gipsy Sites Bill 1992/93
Debates etc.
2R order read (11:12:92) 1174

Privy Council
339-40w
Appeals 339-41w
General Medical Council 340-1w
Public records 236w
Scotland 340w

Probation & aftercare
Prisoners' release 100w

Procedure Select Committee
(04:12:92) 565-6, 998

Proceeds of crime
Channel Islands 987
Drug crimes 806w

Procurators fiscal
360w

Procurement
Rolling stock 284w

Professional misconduct
775-6w

Professional qualifications
Teachers 41w

Property development
Supermarkets 692

Property Holdings
106-7w

Property transfer
Armed forces housing 168w
Local government revenue 205-6w, 210w
Nuclear shelters 553w
RAF Elvington 402w

Prosecutions
586
Alternatives to prison 586
Low pay 54w, 616-7w
Unfair trading practices 117w

Protective clothing
EC law 673w
Small businesses 673w

PSA International
Falkland Islands 152w

PSA Projects
475w
Privatisation 149-50w, 392w

Public access
Windsor Castle 100w

Public appointments
Advisory Committee on NHS Drugs 78w
Advisory Group on Older Workers 418-9w
District health authorities 132w
Food from Britain 513w
Freemasonry 391
London Residuary Body 295w, 741w
Metropolitan Police 733w
NHS trusts 606-7w, 635w, 688w
Prison Service 478w

Public buildings
Bombings 733w
Fires 156w
Security 733w

Public contracts
EC countries 214w

Public executions
567w

Public expenditure
199-200w, 470w
London's Health Service Medical Education & Research Inquiry 689w
Ministerial statements (02:12:92) 265-83
Northern Ireland 598-9w
Scotland (02:12:92) 265-83
Treaty on European Union 989
Windsor Castle 579-80

Public holidays
136

Public inquiries
Stockport bypass 819-20w

Public interest
Coal mine closures 448w

Public lavatories
Scotland 359w

Public libraries
454w
Greater Manchester 455w

Public Order Act 1986
Questions
Racial incitement 587

Public petitions
Brotton & Skelton bypass (08:12:92) 819
Fleet Maintenance & Repair Organisation (03:12:92) 488
Forest protection (11:12:92) 1103
Handicapped (08:12:92) 818-9, (11:12:92) 1104
Railway transport (30:11:92) 118
Rolls-Royce (03:12:92) 488
Water supply industry (08:12:92) 819

Public Record Office
236w

Public records
197w
Privy Council 236w

Public sector
Citizen's Charter 465w

Public sector borrowing requirement
NHS trusts 104w
Private health services 104w
Taxation 986

Public sector debt
570-1w

Public sector earnings
67w

Public sector housing
Housing construction 740w
New towns development corporations 361w
Scotland 361w

Public sector housing sales
Development Board for Rural Wales 132w
Prison staff 733w

Public service broadcasting
576

Public transport
Mobility of disabled 694-5w
Publicity 94w

Public transport companies
Privatisation 286w

Public Works Contracts Regulations 1991
Questions
214w

Publications
British National Party 587

Publicity
Child Support Agency 68w, 680w
Disability living allowance 800w
Disability working allowance 800w
Drinking & driving 823-4w
Public transport 94w
Road safety 94w
Vaccination 636w

Punishment
Taking & driving away 661w

Purchase, Mr Ken
Debates etc.
Unfair competition (30:11:92) 24-5
Questions
Aerospace industry 252w

Pyramid selling
117w

Quality control
Construction materials 819-20w

Queen
Personal taxation 220w

Quin, Ms Joyce
Debates etc.
Unemployment (08:12:92) 734, 759, 779-84
Questions
Advisory Group on Older Workers, Public appointments 418-9w
EC Energy Council 588-9w
EC Labour & Social Affairs Council 178w, 619w
NHS trusts 629w
Premium bonds 979
Unfair dismissal, Part-time employment 127
Wages councils 790w
Women clergy, Equal opportunities 13-4

Quota of disabled workers
Local authorities 327w

Racial attacks
588
Crimes of violence 556w, (09:12:92) 850-2

Racial discrimination
EC action 808w

Racial incitement
British National Party 587
Public Order Act 1986 587

Racial Violence Bill 1992/93
Debates etc.
1R (09:12:92) 850-2

Radiation
North Wales 605-6w

Radiation hazards
Disclosure of information 108w
Industrial health & safety 614w
Plutonium 587w

Radiation protection
Departmental responsibilities 465-6w
Nuclear accidents 556w

Radice, Mr Giles
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (02:12:92) 317

Radioactive materials
Kent 587w

Radioactive wastes
AWE Aldermaston 717-8w

Radiocommunications Agency
Official visits 253w

RAF Chivenor
805w

RAF Elvington
Property transfer 402w

RAF Regiment
164-5w

RAF Support Command Maintenance Group
239w
Official visits 241w

Rail Freight Group
285w

Railway freight transport
284-5w, 466-7w
Channel tunnel 11w
Fees & charges 779w
Government grants 93w, 130w
Railway track 11w
Wales 130w

Railway industry
Capital investment 463w

Railway network
Blackburn 594w
Capital investment 283w, 594w
EC law 595w
Scotland 695-6w

Railway safety
Transport of radioactive materials 780w

Railway signals
820w

Railway track
Railway freight transport 11w

Railway transport
93w, 820w
Capital investment 820w
Crimes of violence 130w
Public petitions (30:11:92) 118

Railway travel
11w
Channel tunnel 818w
Franchising 201w, 697w

Rain forests
Forest protection 424-6w
Nature conservation 310w
Wood 317w

Randall, Mr Stuart
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (02:12:92) 310
Handicapped, Public petitions (11:12:92) 1104

Rangers Football Club
993

Rapid reaction corps
62w

Rate rebates
Non-domestic rates 739w
Sports facilities 453w

Rathbone, Mr Tim
Debates etc.
Alcoholism, Residential care (11:12:92) 1179-80, 1184
Arts finance (11:12:92) 1128
Local Government (Overseas Assistance) Bill, 2R (11:12:92) 1116-8
Questions
Family doctors, Budgeting 682-3

Raynsford, Mr Nick
Questions
Board & lodging charges 69w
Educational standards, Greenwich 690-1
Export credit guarantees, South America 251-2

Reynsford, Mr Nick—continued
Greenwich Hospital 715-6w
Legal aid 17-8
Low incomes, Marginal tax rates 10
Rented housing 838-9
Squatting, Law reform 808w

RECHAR
30w

Recognition of states
Macedonia 3w, (30:11:92) 119-24, 567w

Record offices
Local government reform 197-8w

Recruitment
Factory Inspectorate 222w, 229w

Recycling
Local authorities 246w
Newsprint 185-6w
Textiles 185-6w
Wales 246w
Waste disposal 828w

Red Cross
see International Red Cross

Red Star
Privatisation 593-4w, 674w

Redmond, Mr Martin
Questions
Armed forces housing, Property transfer 168w
British Rail, Performance standards 824w
Cold weather payments, Statistics 232w
De Klerk, FW, Disclosure of information 748w
Driver & Vehicle Licensing Agency, Manpower 783w
Driving Standards Agency, Manpower 822w
Government car service, Contracts for services 211w
Information Technology Services Agency, Official visits 169w
Loan sharks 108w
Natural Resources Institute, Official visits 100w
NHS finance 513-8w
Northern Ireland Training & Employment Agency, Official visits 134w
Official visits, Defence Research Agency 240w
Official visits, Forensic Science Service 218-9w
Official visits, Government Chemist 252-3w
Official visits, Historic Scotland 182w
Official visits, Intervention Board 986w
Official visits, Land Registry Office 196w
Official visits, Meteorological Office 240-1w
Official visits, Radiocommunications Agency 253w
Official visits, RAF Support Command Maintenance Group 241w
Official visits, Veterinary Medicines Directorate 160w
Privy Council, Public records 236w
Public records 197w
Record offices, Local government reform 197-8w
Regional health authorities 687w
Thatcher, RtHonBaroness, Paintings 682w
Vehicle Inspectorate, Manpower 820-2w

Redundancy
Coal mine closures 350w, 672w, 832w
Export Credits Guarantee Department 590-1w
Fleet Maintenance & Repair Organisation (03:12:92) 488
Industrial training 130
Manufacturing industries 392
Post Office 389-90
Rolls-Royce (03:12:92) 488, (04:12:92) 568-74
Shell 54w
West Midlands 173w

Redundancy pay
799w
Coal mine closures 495w

Redundancy pay—continued
Occupational pensions 582w

Redwood, Mr John, Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities
Questions
Council tax 701w
Council tax, Valuation 701w, 841-2
Council tax capping 841-2
Dept of the Environment, Contracts for services 741-2w
EC Cohesion Fund 827-8
Local government finance 702w
Local government reform 702w
Non-domestic rates 577-9w, 739-40w
Non-domestic rates, Rate rebates 739w
PSA International, Falkland Islands 152w
PSA Projects, Privatisation 149-50w, 392w
Tarmac Construction, Hewell Grange Prison 475w
Urban areas, Government grants 703w
Urban programme 827-8

Re-employment
Certification Officer 229w
Health & Safety Executive 229w

Reform of the House of Lords Bill 1992/93
Debates etc.
2R order read (11:12:92) 1174

Refugee Council
(30:11:92) 30-8

Refugees
Bosnia-Herzegovina (30:11:92) 30-8
Work permits 219w

Refuse derived fuel
256-7w, 289-90w
Electricity generation 256w

Reg(EEC)3924/91
46w

Regional aid
Dairy Crest 27w
Greater London 247
South Wales 765w
Wirral 834-6w

Regional arts boards
(11:12:92) 1123-33

Regional enterprise grants
765w
Wales 670w

Regional health authorities
687w
NHS finance 632-4w

Registrar General of Shipping
463w

Regulatory system
Water supply industry 154w

Reid, Dr John
Debates etc.
Public expenditure, Scotland (02:12:92) 280
Questions
Army, Defence equipment 544w
Defence expenditure 544w

Relate
334w, 992

Religious discrimination
Violence 993-4

Relocation of employees
RNSD Eaglescliffe 793-4w

Renewable Energy Advisory Group
255w

Rent a room scheme
835

Rent arrears
Council house rents 294-5w
Landlord & tenant 383-4w
London boroughs 294-5w

Rent arrears—continued
Northamptonshire 150w

Rented housing
838-9
Housing associations 842

Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Questions
Domicil, Law reform 798w
Generic prescribing 688w

Representation orders
796w
Mortgage defaulters 198w
Nursing homes 669w

Republic of Ireland
135w, 308w
Cereals 225w
Extradition 451w

Research
Coastal erosion 400-1w
Environmental policy 288w
Government Communications Headquarters 86-7w
Hearing aids 231w
Industrial health & safety 178w
Road salting & gritting 782w

Research facilities
Dept of Health 230w

Research finance
Energy research 112-3w
Higher education 119w, 183-4w
Higher Education Funding Council for Wales 132w
Industrial research 258-82w
Northern Ireland Dept of Education 135w

Residential care
147w
Alcoholism 521w, (11:12:92) 1177-84
Council tax 472w
Drug abuse 521w
Income support 71-2w
Inspections 142w
Northern Ireland 136w

Residential care of children
Boarding schools 230w
Hertfordshire 637w

Resignations
Clergy 12w

Restrictive covenants
457-8w

Restrictive trade practices
Newspaper press 249w

Retex
31w

Retirement pensions
12
Married women 682w

Richards, Mr Rod
Questions
Breast cancer, Screening 128-9w
Community care grants, Clwyd 129w
Drug abuse, Death 604-5w
Drug abuse, Pregnant women 603w
Drug abuse, Prisons 480-1w
Drug crimes, Prison population 480w
Drug crimes, Wales 550-1w
Drug seizures 430w, 551w
Drug seizures, Crack 551w
Drug seizures, Wales 430w
European Regional Development Fund, Wales 605w
Foreign investment in UK, Wales 604w
GCE A level, Student numbers 603w
Hospitals, Construction 242-3w
Hospitals, Wales 127-8w
Non-domestic rates, Wales 827w
Offshore drilling, Environment protection 586w
Radiation, North Wales 603-4w

Richards, Mr Rod—continued
Regional enterprise grants, Wales 670w
Salmon, Fisheries 128w
Salmon, Fishing 128w
Salmon, Manpower 128w
Small businesses, EC internal trade 603-4w
Social security benefits, Low incomes 67w
Taking & driving away, Casualties 7w

Riddick, Mr Graham
Debates etc.
Mink Keeping Order 1992 (08:12:92) 799
Unemployment (08:12:92) 731, 756-60, 783
Questions
Advisory Conciliation & Arbitration Service, Privatisation 132-3
Manufacturing industries 260

Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm, Secretary of State for Defence
Questions
Ministry of Defence, Departmental correspondence 165w

Right of search
Offensive weapons 6w

Right to buy
707-8w
Defective housing 708w

Riot control weapons
Arms control 459-60w

River Humber (Upper Bursum Cooling Works) Bill (HL) 1991/92
Debates etc.
(10:12:92) 979

River pollution
Conifers 506-7w, 787-8w
Wales 506-7w, 608w

River Severn
819-20w

River Thames
Bridges 389w

RNSD Eaglescliffe
1004, 1058
Relocation of employees 793-4w

Road accidents
Motorcycles 596w
Priority routes 783w

Road blocks
Police firearms 807w

Road closures
389w

Road construction
203-4w
A27 91-2w
Bypasses 205w
Expenditure 92w
Falkland Islands 152w
M66 204w
Newry bypass 683w
Sites of special scientific interest 694w

Road humps
202w

Road safety
Clwyd 244w
Expenditure 10w
Government grants to local authorities 821-2w
Publicity 94w
School transport 443-4w
Schools 244w
Transport of radioactive materials 781w

Road salting & gritting
Research 782w
Road works 782-3w

Road tax
Disabled passengers' scheme 464w

Road tolls
Severn bridge 783w

Road traffic
286w
A34 (08:12:92) 820-6
A494 761w
Caernarfon 827w
Hypermarkets 93w

Road traffic control
93-4w
Rutland County 698w
Wales 129w

Road Traffic (Driving Instruction by Disabled Persons) Bill 1992/93
Debates etc.
2R (11:12:92) 1160-72

Road works
M1 202w
M25 284w
Motorways 782-3w
Road salting & gritting 782-3w
Sefton Borough Council 209w
Severn bridge 785w

Robathan, Mr Andrew
Questions
Food hygiene, Meat 754w
Training & enterprise councils, Young people 134

Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn, Minister of State for Wales
Questions
A487, Bypasses 245w
A494, Road traffic 761w
British Rail, Privatisation 667w
Broadleaved woodlands, Government grants 608w
Bus lanes, Wales 130w
Car ownership, Wales 243-4w
Children, Deaf 415w
"Choice & Diversity: A New Framework for Schools" 606w
Class sizes, Primary education 29w
Companies, Transport 130w
Conifers, River pollution 506-7w
Crimes of violence, Railway transport 130w
Deaf, Special education 606w, 669w
Disabled workers, Training 667-8w
Dolphins, Cardigan Bay 667w
Education Bill 1992/93 666-7w
Employment schemes, Wales 606w
Foreign tourists, Expenditure 668w
Further education, Curriculum 130w
GCE A level, Student numbers 603w
Local government reform, Wales 665-6w
Lorries, Axle weights 244-5w
Marine nature reserves, Bardsey Island 131w
Parking, Local authority powers 129-30w
Railway freight transport, Government grants 130w
Road safety, Schools 244w
Road traffic, Caernarfon 827w
Road traffic control, Wales 129w
Salmon, Fishing 128w
Schools, Museums & galleries 605w
Small businesses, EC internal trade 603-4w
Special education, Wales 126w
Special training needs, Training & enterprise councils 824w
Teachers, Disciplinary proceedings 307w
Tourism, Income 609w
Tourist industry, Government grants 505-6w
Training, Waiting lists 27w
Training, Wales 245w
Training allowances, Wales 607w
Training & enterprise councils, Disabled workers 763w
Training & enterprise councils, Performance standards 667w
Travel, Wales 245-6w
Vocational guidance, Wales 760w
Welsh language 759w
Youth training, Per capita costs 824-5w
Youth training, South Glamorgan 304w
Youth training, Wales 666w, 760-1w
Youth unemployment, Blaenau Gwent 668w

Robertson, Mr George
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (01:12:92) 170, 175, 196-204, (02:12:92) 294, 350-1
Questions
Albania, Arms trade 4w
Kosovo, Arms trade 2w
Matrix Churchill, Arms exports 20w

Robertson, Mr Raymond S
Debates etc.
Fisheries (09:12:92) 865-9, 897-8
Members' attendance, Points of order (02:12:92) 285
Public expenditure, Scotland (02:12:92) 274
Questions
Civil service dispersal, Dept for Education 233w
Civil service dispersal, Dept of Employment 417w
Civil service dispersal, Dept of Health 520w
Civil service dispersal, Dept of Social Security 503w
Civil service dispersal, Dept of the Environment 472w
Civil service dispersal, Dept of Trade & Industry 496w
Civil service dispersal, Dept of Transport 387-8w
Civil service dispersal, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 436w
Civil service dispersal, Home Office 551-2w
Civil service dispersal, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 624w
Civil service dispersal, Ministry of Defence 610w
Civil service dispersal, Treasury 468-9w
Civil service manpower, Dept for Education 234w
Civil service manpower, Dept of Employment 417w
Civil service manpower, Dept of Health 230w
Civil service manpower, Dept of National Heritage 547w
Civil service manpower, Dept of Social Security 341w
Civil service manpower, Dept of the Environment 207w
Civil service manpower, Dept of Trade & Industry 258w
Civil service manpower, Dept of Transport 203w
Civil service manpower, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 212w
Civil service manpower, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 370w
Civil service manpower, Ministry of Defence 541w
Civil service manpower, Northern Ireland Office 308w
Civil service manpower, Office of Public Service & Science 465w
Civil service manpower, Scottish Office 620w
Civil service manpower, Treasury 102-3w
Civil service manpower, Welsh Office 414w
Scottish courts, Closed circuit television 191w
Scottish courts, Repairs & maintenance 191w

Rochdale
Urban programme 208-9w, 288w

Roche, Mrs Barbara
Debates etc.
Immigration applications, Points of order (08:12:92) 694
Questions
Business questions 1004-5
Environmental policy, Research 288w

Ross, Mrs Marion
Questions
Health service staff, Pay 679
Housing improvement, Council tenants 394-5w

Roe, Mrs Marion—continued
Wines, Composition labelling 55w

Rogers, Mr Allan
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (01:12:92) 210, 213-4
United Nations (04:12:92) 501, 503, 525-6, 528, 531, 536, 553-8, 560
Questions
Floods, Wales 399

Rolling stock
Procurement 284w

Rolls-Royce
Public petitions (03:12:92) 488
Redundancy (03:12:92) 488, (04:12:92) 568-74

Roman Catholic Church
Church administration 747-8w

Rooker, Mr Jeff
Questions
Higher education, Student numbers 475w
Hospital consultants, West Midlands Regional Health Authority 638w
Open University, University finance 476w
Student grants, Administrative delays 475w
Students, Sponsorship 475-6w

Rooney, Mr Terry
Debates etc.
Social Security Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & Means res (30:11:92) 108, 113
Social Security Bill, Com (07:12:92) 599-601, 615
Questions
Disability living allowance 9
Kurds, Overseas aid 491-2w
Local government revenue, Council house sales 700w
Sports facilities, Rate rebates 453w
Trade barriers, USA 262

Ross, Mr Ernie
Debates etc.
United Nations (04:12:92) 506-15, 538, 539, 543
Questions
Restrictive trade practices, Newspaper prices 249w
Tarmac Construction, Contracts 140

Ross, Mr William
Debates etc.
Mink Keeping Order 1992 (08:12:92) 797-8, 803-5, 809
Prince of Wales (09:12:92) 846
Questions
Coastal erosion, Research 400-1w
Coastal protection, Expenditure 403w
Coastal protection, Northern Ireland 399-401w
Local government constituencies, Northern Ireland 739w
Prisoners, Terrorism 480w
Public expenditure, Northern Ireland 598-9w
VAT 986
Welsh language 739w

Rowe, Mr Andrew
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (02:12:92) 300, 321, 322
House of Commons Chamber, Points of order (30:11:92) 41
Refugees, Bosnia-Herzegovina (30:11:92) 35
Questions
Hazardous wastes, Imports 836
Public libraries 454w

Rowlands, Mr Ted
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (01:12:92) 164, 186-8, (02:12:92) 316, 348
Questions
Floods, Wales 399

Rowlands, Mr Ted—continued
Treaty on European Union 212w

Royal British Legion
170w
Tidworth 168w

Royal Engineers
60w

Royal family
Central Office of Information 795w

Royal family finance
467-8w

Royal Free NHS Trust
675-6

Royal Holloway & Bedford New College
Architectural conservation 798w

Royal Mail
409-10

Royal Ordnance
611w
Defence contracts 611w

Royal residences
Art works 43w, 548w
Expenditure 457w
Fire prevention 101w, 457w

Royal Signals
60w

Royal Ulster Constabulary
222w

RU486
789w
Abortion 126w

Ruddock, Ms Joan
Questions
Community care grants, Expenditure 749-50w
Disability living allowance, Administrative delays 800-1w
Extradition, Nigeria 219w
Harmondsworth Detention Centre, Death 734w
Harmondsworth Detention Centre, Immigrant detainees 734w
Harmondsworth Detention Centre, Suicide 733-4w
Life imprisonment 480w
Prisoners, Women 8-10w

Rugby
454-5w

Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Questions
Trials 795-6w

Rural areas
Employment level 224w, 361w
Hospitals 628w
School closures 477w
Youth training 133-4

Rural planning
Farmers 381-2

Russia
Farms 427w
Know-how Fund 427w
Technical assistance 427-8w

Rutland County
Road traffic control 698w

S4C
BBC 584

Sabbatical leave
Student unions 121w

Sackville, Mr Tom, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of Health
Questions
Accident & emergency departments 324w

Sackville, Mr Tom—continued
AIDS 82w, 520w
Alternative medicine 632w
Alternative medicine, Drugs 520-1w
Ambulance services 323w
Ambulance services, Private sector 320-1w, 432w, 775w
Ambulance services, West Midlands 76w
Arthritis 773-4w
Audit Commission for Local Authorities in England & Wales, NHS finance 635w
Bereavement counselling, Government grants 75w
Cancer hazards, Non-ionizing radiation 73w
Cervical cancer, Screening 75w
Codex Alimentarius Commission 639w
Dept of Health, Chlorofluorocarbons 74w
Dept of Health, Civil service dispersal 522w
Dept of Health, Civil service manpower 230w
Dept of Health, Contracts for services 144w, 688w
Dept of Health, Departmental correspondence 143w
Dept of Health, Disabled workers 774w
Dept of Health, Operating costs 689-90w
Family doctors, Alternative medicine 685w
Family doctors, Budgeting 629w
Family planning clinics 318w
Fertility, Medical treatments 431-2w
Health education, Alternative medicine 685w
Health education, Urban programme 320w
Health hazards, Asbestos 688w
Hip replacements, Hospital waiting lists 678
Homeopathy, Prescriptions 803w
Hospital patients 631w
Hospital waiting lists 432w, 628-9w, 678
Hospital waiting lists, Patient's Charter 628w
Hospitals 686w
Hospitals, Construction 519w
Hospitals, Rural areas 628w
Infant mortality 76w, 519w
Kidney patients, Hospital waiting lists 77w
London Ambulance Service, Overtime 73w
Low birthweight babies 634w
Medical records, Patient's Charter 143w
Medical treatments, Divers 523w
Members' correspondence 75w
Meningitis, Vaccination 635-7w
NHS, Contracts for services 323-4w
NHS, Private investment 322w
NHS complaints 635w
NHS finance 513-8w, 643-50w
NHS finance, Regional health authorities 633-4w
NHS internal market 321-2w
North East Thames Regional Health Authority, District health authorities 523w
Nottingham Hospital, Day care units 143-4w
Nurses, Manpower 73-4w, 640-1w
Nutrition & health, Catering 642-3w
Osteopathy, Training 320w, 631-2w
Out-patients, Hospital waiting lists 628w
Paracetamol, Liver diseases 522w
Paracetamol, Suicide 522w
Patient's Charter 685
Patient's Charter, Alternative medicine 685
Patient's Charter, Performance standards 684-5
Pay beds 322-3w
Regional health authorities 687w
Stoke Mandeville Hospital 678-9
Surgery 638w, 643w
Surgery, Private health services 804w
Teenage pregnancy 519-20w
Tomography, Medical equipment 686w
Tomography, West Midlands Regional Health Authority 632w
Vaccination, Children 317-8w

Safety measures
Paracetamol 521-2w

Safety standards
Shipbuilding 784w
Transport of radioactive materials 463w

Sailing boats
VAT 104-5w

Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim, Minister for Industry
Questions
Aerospace industry 252w
Assisted areas 111w, 260-2
Assisted areas, Brighton 587w
Assisted areas, Coal mine closures 261
British Steel Corporation, Subsidies 447w
British Steel Corporation, Trade barriers 746w
Business, East Sussex 743-4w
Development areas, Cheshire 117w
Foreign investment in UK, North East region 30w
Government assistance to industry 448w
Industrial investment 252w, 675w
Industrial production 498w
Iron & steel, Production 257-8
Iron & steel industry 258-9
Iron & steel industry, Italy 258
Manufacturing industries 249-50w
Manufacturing industries, Greater London 247-8
Manufacturing industries, Northern region 249w
Microwave Modules 249w
Motorcycles 746w
North West region, Foreign investment in UK 442w
Overseas investment, EC countries 441-2w
PERIFRA programme 111-2w
RECHAR 30w
Regional aid, Greater London 247
Regional aid, Wirral 834-6w
Shipbuilding 108w
Textile industry, EC grants & loans 31w

St Bartholomew's Hospital
1000
Hospital closures 521w

St Thomas' Hospital
630w

Sales promotions
Consumer protection 745-6w
Hoover 745-6w

Salford
Non-domestic rates 15-6w

Salmon
Fish conservation 57w
Fisheries 128w
Fishing 128w
Manpower 128w
Wales 128w

Salmond, Mr Alex
Debates etc.
Common fisheries policy, Points of order (09:12:92) 849
Fisheries (09:12:92) 853, 856-7, 866, 882, 897-902, 914, 927-8, 934
Fishing quotas, North Sea (01:12:92) 238-40, 243-4
Sea Fish (Conservation) Bill, Lords amendts (09:12:92) 943-6, 951, 952, 957-8, 960, 963-4, 969
Questions
Business questions 410-1
Dept of Energy, Leave 589w
Fishing quotas 389
Lead free petrol, Health hazards 391-2w
Privy Council 339-40w
Privy Council, Appeals 339-41w
White fish, Total allowable catches 360w

Sanctions
Company disclosure of information (09:12:92) 849

Sandar Sarovar dam
World Bank 811w

Schizophrenia
Wales 826w

School administration
Northern Ireland 500w

School buildings
Repairs & maintenance 234w

School choice
560w

School closures
Rural areas 477w

School Curriculum & Assessment Authority
395-6w

School discipline
Northern Ireland 501w

School meals
Contracts for services 560w
Nutrition & health 235w

School population
Thamesmead 477w

School transport
Grant maintained schools 560w
Road safety 463-4w

Schools
Air force bases 363w
Educational standards 36w
Inspections 785w
Museums & galleries 605w
Road safety 244w
Scotland 785w

Science & technology
Cultural heritage 584

Science & technology policy
122-3w, 464w

Science & technology research
Alternative medicine 795w
Technology transfer 281-2w

Scope of debate
Speaker's rulings & statements (01:12:92) 144

Scotland
Abortion 789w
Agricultural Inspectorate 179w
Arrests 508-9w
Beaches 22w
Carpet industry 192w
Charities 690w
Community care 185-6w, 192w
Community charge 192w
Conifers 787-8w
Council tax 237-8w, 508w
Defence industries 622w
Devolution 19w, 193-4w
Drug abuse 21-2w
Drug crimes 24w
Employment level 361w
Environmental education 24w, 238w
European Communities (Amendment) Bill 1992/93 (01:12:92) 144
Factory Inspectorate 179w
Fishing quotas 683w
Food industry 350-2w
Government grants to voluntary organisations 361-2w
Handicapped 189-90w
Health & Safety Executive 416w
Health education 788w
Health service staff 788w
Health services 788w
Higher education 183-4w
Hospices 186-7w
Hospital beds 23w, 188-90w, 788-9w
Hospitals 186w, 815w
Industrial policy 193-4w
Inland Revenue 107w
Land ownership & tenure 189w
Licensing laws 191w
Local government finance 786w
Marine animals 360-1w
National lottery 547w
Nature conservation 21w
Nature reserves 20-1w

Scotland—continued
NHS finance 619w
NHS trusts 789w
Patient's Charter 788w
Personal injury compensation (11:12:92) 1175-6
Police 190w, 359w
Prison staff 621w
Prisons 620-1w
Privy Council 340w
Public expenditure (02:12:92) 265-83
Public lavatories 359w
Public sector housing 361w
Railway network 695-6w
Schools 785w
Seals 23-4w
Small businesses 357-8w
Sports 20w
Student numbers 351-8w
Teachers 620w
Tourist industry 509w
Training for work 815-6w
Water supply industry (08:12:92) 819
White fish 360w
Wildlife incident investigation scheme 23w, 509w
Women's employment 617w
Youth training 815-6w

Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas, Minister for Social Security and Disabled People
Debates etc.
Social Security Bill, Com (07:12:92) 621-3, 627-8, 633-5
Questions
Attendance allowance, Social security recipients 232w
Cold weather payments, Statistics 232w
Crisis loans, Floods 232-3w
Disability living allowance 7-9
Disability living allowance, Administrative delays 7-8, 67w, 800-1w
Disability living allowance, Publicity 800w
Disability living allowance, Social security claims 580-1w
Disability living allowance, Social security recipients 67w
Disability living allowance, Stoke on Trent 345w
Handicap benefits 9, 68w
Independent Living Fund 169-70w, 233w
Independent Living Fund, Nottingham 170w
Invalid care allowances, Earnings rules 68w
Invalidity benefits 69w
Invalidity benefits, Medical examinations 11
Invalidity benefits, Surveys 581-2w
Non-contributory invalidity pension 343w
Prescribed industrial diseases 681w
Social Fund, Social security benefits rules 343-4w, 423-4w
Social security benefits 501-2w
Social security claims, Administrative delays 344-5w

Scott Inquiry
see Arms to Iraq Inquiry

Scottish courts
Closed circuit television 191w
Criminal proceedings 359-60w
Repairs & maintenance 191w

Scottish Enterprise
622w, 815-6w

Scottish Grand Committee
(08:12:92) 695

Scottish health boards
Management consultants 509-10w

Scottish Higher Education Funding Council
183-4w

Scottish Homes
Housing & handicapped 359w

Scottish Natural Heritage
20-1w

Scottish Office
20w
Chlorofluorocarbons 619-20w

Scottish Office—continued
Civil service manpower 620w
Contracts for services 690w
Departmental correspondence 183w
Halons 619-20w
Operating costs 183w

Scottish Police Federation
190w

Scraple
Agricultural research 622-3w, 713w

Screening
Breast cancer 128-9w
Cervical cancer 75w

Sea Fish (Conservation) Bill 1992/93
Debates etc.
Lords amendts (09:12:92) 941-71

Sea Fish Licence Tribunal
(09:12:92) 941-71

Sea pollution
Beaches 22w

Sea transport
Transport of radioactive materials 596-7w

Seals
Animal cruelty 23-4w
Scotland 23-4w

Seas & oceans
Ammunition 543w

Seating
Sportsgrounds 306w

Secondary education
Grant maintained schools 40w

Secondhand goods
VAT (07:12:92) 636

Secretarial staff
Hospital consultants 665w

Secure accommodation
Costs 318w
Young offenders 217w, 318w, 760w

Security
Public buildings 733w
Shropshire Regimental Museum 806w

Security Service Commissioner
122w

Sedgemore, Mr Brian
Questions
Business questions 1000

Selby Borough Council
Road works 209w

Segregation of prisoners
Wolds Remand Prison 98w

Selby
Unemployment 615w

Select committee reports
Speaker's rulings & statements (08:12:92) 693-4

Self-sacrifice
Young offenders 556w

Self-regulating organisations
Financial services 429w

Sellafield
470w
Nuclear fuel reprocessing 473w

Sentencing
587

Separate taxation of wifes earnings
Tax administration 200w

Serious Fraud Office
452w

Set-aside schemes
380-1, 386-7
Agricultural land 382-3

Set-aside schemes—continued
Flood control 714w
GATT 25w, 381, 510w, 755-6w
Land use 387
Landlord & tenant 386-7

Severe disability premium
6-7
Blind 5-6
Social security benefits rules 5-6

Severn bridge
British Steel Corporation 499w
Road tolls 785w
Road works 785w

Sewage
Water treatment 150w

Sexual harassment
130w

Sexual Offences (Amendment) Bill 1992/93
Debates etc.
2R order read (11:12:92) 1174

Shamrock Farms
Animal welfare 215-6w

Shareholders
470w

Shaw, Mr David
Debates etc.
Public expenditure, Scotland (02:12:92) 275
Social Security Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & Means res (30:11:92) 57
Questions
Business questions 1004
Food from Britain, Public appointments 513w
Palace of Westminster, Industrial health & safety 200-1w

Shaw, Sir Giles
Questions
Science & technology policy 464w

Sheep
Marginal land 713w
National Farmers' Union 368w

Sheep dipping
Health hazards 627-8w
Industrial health & safety 627-8w

Sheep premiums
57w

Sheffield Forgemasters
255

Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Questions
Arts finance 582

Shell
Redundancy 54w

Sheltered housing
211w
Housing revenue accounts 152w, 304w
Television licences 801w

Sheltered housing wardens
152w, 211w
Wales 304w

Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian, Secretary of State for Employment
Debates etc.
Unemployment (08:12:92) 711-23
Questions
EC Labour & Social Affairs Council 618-9w
Employment level, EC countries 130-1
Employment opportunities 131
Employment opportunities, Autumn statement 133
Employment opportunities, Industry 135-6
Employment opportunities, Jubilee line 135
Hard core unemployed 135
Industrial training, Redundancy 130
Older workers, Employment opportunities 131

Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian—continued
Trade unions, Government grants 791-2w
Training, Unemployed 130
Training & enterprise councils 129, 174w
Training & enterprise councils, Finance 127-8
Training & enterprise councils, Youth training 129
Wages councils 172w
Youth training 129
Youth training, Finance 128-9

Shepherd, Mr Colin
Debates etc.
Local Government (Overseas Assistance) Bill, 2R (11:12:92) 1140-1
Questions
Cosmetics, Animal experiments 114w
Flood control, Hereford 397

Shepherd, Mr Richard
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (01:12:92) 161, 175, 206, (02:12:92) 303, 314, 328, 349, 361

Shersby, Mr Michael
Questions
Civil service manpower 48w
Overseas trade, Argentina 350w
PSA International, Falkland Islands 152w
South Atlantic, Fish conservation 314w
South Atlantic, Marine animals 315w

Ship chartering
Merchant ships 542w

Shipbuilding
108w
Defence contracts 59-60w
Safety standards 784w

Shipbuilding Intervention Fund
746w

Shipping accidents
Transport of radioactive materials 597w

Shipping safety
Catamarans 285-6w

Shipyard closures
(02:12:92) 284

Shops Act 1950
Questions
99w

Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (01:12:92) 213, (02:12:92) 297-309, 314-5, 351

Short, Ms Clare
Questions
Contaminated land registers 830-1
Employment Service Agency, Performance standards 729w
Further education, Educational finance 565w
Jobclubs 730-2w
Nature conservation, Land acquisition 21w
Nature reserves, Expenditure 20-1w
Training & enterprise councils, Finance 615-6w
Wages councils 172w

Shortage subjects
Teacher training 396w

Shotton
Youth unemployment 666w

Shrewsbury & Atcham borough council
743w

Shrewsbury Castle
Bombings 743w

Shropshire Regimental Museum
Security 806w

Sikhs
Industrial health & safety 418w

Simpson, Mr Alan
Questions
Independent Living Fund, Nottingham 170w
Nottingham Hospital, Day care units 143-4w

Sims, Mr Roger
Questions
"Health of the Nation White Paper" 681

"Single Market"
591w

Single people
Council tax 14w

Sites of special scientific interest
Road construction 694w
Thorne Moors 573-4w

Sixth form colleges
Local government expenditure 561-3w

Skeet, Sir Trevor
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (02:12:92) 298, 306

Skilled workers
Employment opportunities 27-8w

Skinner, Mr Dennis
Debates etc.
Arts finance (11:12:92) 1131-3
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (01:12:92) 153-4, 157, 166, 169, 171, (02:12:92) 296
Members' interests, Points of order (07:12:92) 594
Ministerial statements, Points of order (10:12:92) 1011
Mink Keeping Order 1992 (08:12:92) 794
One stop shop initiative (03:12:92) 418
Oral question time intervention (08:12:92) 676
Plain Language Bill, 1R (08:12:92) 696
Prince of Wales (09:12:92) 847
Standing Order No 20 applications, Points of order (30:11:92) 41
Unfair competition (30:11:92) 27-8
Questions
Bank services, Young people 770w
Business questions 1006-7
Coal mining 251w
Common agricultural policy, Fraud 378
Economic policy 983
Maxwell companies, Pension funds 8-9
Parliamentary buildings, Crown immunity 592w
Pensioners, Citizen's Charter 11-2
Serious Fraud Office 452w
Unemployment 173w
Vaccination, Children 317-8w
Windsor Castle, Fires 579-80

Skye bridge
621-2w

Slaughterhouses
626w, 689-90
EC law 366w, 625-7w
Food hygiene 223-4w, 227-8w, 818w
Inspections 754w
Veterinary services 713-4w

Sleeping rough
Greater London 573w

Small businesses
767w
Bankruptcy 770w
Billing 252w
Bureaucracy (07:12:92) 651-74
Company liquidations 357-8w
Debts 113-4w, 257w
EC internal trade 603-4w
Government assistance 114-5w, 248-9w
Protective clothing 673w
Scotland 357-8w
VAT registration 116w, 767w
Wales 603-4w

SMART awards
258-82w
South East region 248w

Smith, Mr Andrew
Questions
Economic policy 988
VAT registration 699-700w

Smith, Mr Chris
Debates etc.
Coastal protection (10:12:92) 1041-5
Questions
Air pollution control, Government grants to local authorities 288w
Armed forces training, Brecon Beacons National Park 62w
Bank of Credit & Commerce International, Price Waterhouse 105w
Chlorofluorocarbons, Scottish Office 619-20w
Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species, Wood 207w
Developing countries, Chlorofluorocarbons 395w
EC environmental policy 832
Forest protection 182w
Independent Living Fund 169-70w
Rain forests, Nature conservation 310w
Rain forests, Wood 317w
Wood, Imports 287w

Smith, Rt Hon John
Debates etc.
Prince of Wales (09:12:92) 845
Questions
Edinburgh Summit 688-9
Post Office, Redundancy 389-90

Smith, Mr Llew
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (02:12:92) 308
Unemployment (08:12:92) 744
Questions
Arms trade, Iraq 63-4w, 665w, 816w
Defence equipment, Iraq 168w
Defence land, Wales 415w
Developing countries, Death rate 557w
EC Committee of the Regions, EC grants & loans 802w
EC Energy Council 747w
EC institutions, Disclosure of information 802w
Exchange rate mechanism 747w
Iraq, Uranium 1w
NHS, Contracts for services 763w
Nuclear non proliferation, EC action 651w
Nuclear power 832w
Nuclear submarines, Nuclear reactors 792-3w
Plutonium 345-6w
Plutonium, Exports 34w, 345w
Plutonium, Radiation hazards 587w
Prime Minister, EC internal relations 664-5w
Radiation protection, Departmental responsibilities 465-6w
Radioactive materials, Kent 587w
Space Research Corporation 169w
Technology transfer, Iraq 168w
Treaty on European Union 466w
Treaty on European Union, Departmental publications 566w

Smith, Mr Tim
Debates etc.
Unemployment (08:12:92) 699, 725, 742-6, 781, 782

Smoke alarms
Council housing 125w
Wales 125w

Smoking
Children 565w
Death 628w

Smuggling
Tobacco 812-3w

Smyth, Rev Martin
Questions
Business questions 406-7, 1000
Dentists 524w
Drugs, Expenditure 686-7w
School discipline, Northern Ireland 501w
Teachers, Disciplinary proceedings 476w, 507w, 620w

Soames, Mr Nicholas, Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture
Debates etc.
Floods, Warrengate Road (10:12:92) 1100-2
Mink Keeping Order 1992 (08:12:92) 794-800, 806, 813-5
Questions
Agricultural land, Planning permission 382
Agricultural Training Board 379-80
Agricultural Training Board, Finance 379
Aujeszky's disease 511w
Badgers, Pest control 56-8w
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy 225-6w
Canthaxanthin, Food additives 623w
Cattle, Export of live animals 385w
Dietary supplements, EC action 753w
Eggs, Agricultural production 368-9w
Farm buildings, Planning permission 382
Farmers, Rural planning 381-2
Fertilisers, Ammonium nitrate 737w
Food hygiene, Meat 754w
Food industry, Inspections 370-84w
GATT, Food standards 367w
Horses, Export of live animals 159w, 226w
Horses, Transport of animals 386w
Livestock, Waste disposal 384-5w
Meat, Food inspection 511w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food, Staff canteens 366w
Mink, Farms 385-6w
Mink, Transport of animals 386w
Poultry, Animal welfare 754w
Scrapie, Agricultural research 622-3w, 713w
Slaughterhouses 626w
Slaughterhouses, EC law 366w, 625-7w
Slaughterhouses, Food hygiene 227-8w, 818w
Slaughterhouses, Veterinary services 713-4w
Transport of animals 367w
Wildlife incident investigation scheme 383-4w
Wildlife incident investigation scheme, Finance 383w
Wines, Composition labelling 55w

Social Fund
Belfast 499-500w
Dept of Social Security local offices 499-500w
Newham 423-4w
Social security benefits rules 343-4w, 423-4w

Social security abuse
580w

Social Security Benefit (Amendment) Regulations 1992
Questions
Earnings rules 503-4w

Social security benefits
501-2w
Bed & breakfast accommodation 995
Low incomes 67w
Marginal tax rates 67w

Social Security Benefits Agency
2-3

Social security benefits disqualification
800w

Social security benefits rates
2, 419w
Income support 420w, 680w

Social security benefits reductions
Income support 72w, 343w

Social security benefits rules
Housing benefits 502-3w
Maintenance 170-2w

Social security benefits rules—continued
Severe disability premium 5-6
Social Fund 343-4w, 423-4w
Travelling people 68w
War pensions 422w
Young people 503w

Social security benefits uprating
1-2
Child benefit 343w
Local government finance 318-9w

Social Security Bill 1992/93
Debates etc.
2R, Money res* & Ways & Means res* (30:11:92) 45-117
Rem stages (07:12:92) 595-636

Social security claims
Administrative delays 2-3, 344-5w
Child Support Agency 342w
Disability living allowance 580-1w
Exservicemen 800w
Family credit 66w
Women 70-1w

Social Security Contributions Agency
Performance targets 170w

Social security finance
66w

Social security payments
580w

Social security recipients
4
Attendance allowance 232w
Disability living allowance 67w
Disability working allowance 67w
Income support 342-3w
Members' correspondence 682w
Travelling expenses 424w
Water charges 70w

Social Security Select Committee
(30:11:92) 117

Solar power
Government buildings 206w

Soley, Mr Clive
Questions
Loucas, Kypros 804w
Manufacturing industries 269w
Manufacturing industries, Greater London 247-8
Mass media, Ownership 585
Private rented housing 835
Severe disability premium, Blind 5-6

Solvent abuse
142w

Somalia
Bomb disposal 809w
Food aid 671w
Overseas aid 482w, 802-3w, 809w
Peace keeping operations 671-2w

Somerset County Council
676-7

South America
Export credit guarantees 251-2

South Atlantic
Fish conservation 314w
Marine animals 315w

South East Asia
Nuclear weapons tests 437w

South East region
Airports 783-4w
Hard core unemployed 730w
SMART awards 248w

South Glamorgan
Youth training 304w

South Glamorgan Health Authority
304-5w
Directors 507w

South Glamorgan Health Authority—continued
Hospital consultants 665w

South Wales
Further education 130w
Regional aid 765w
Unemployment 764-5w
Young offenders 760w

South West Water
Capital investment 702w

South Yorkshire
Armed forces housing 168w

Southern Africa
Overseas aid 592

Southern Health & Social Services Board
Home helps 132-3w

Space Research Corporation
169w

Spain
Fascism 88w

Speaker and deputies, For rulings & statements see separate heading Speaker's rulings & statements
Debates etc.
Addressing the Chair (02:12:92) 296, (03:12:92) 431, (08:12:92) 693, 755
Adjournment debates (02:12:92) 286
Amendments & new clauses (08:12:92) 699, (09:12:92) 853, 956, 961, 968
Business questions (03:12:92) 403, (10:12:92) 1008
Calling of Members (02:12:92) 273, 274, 275, 276, 282, (03:12:92) 412, (08:12:92) 767
Calls to order (30:11:92) 38, 40, (02:12:92) 273, (03:12:92) 394, 395, 398, (08:12:92) 690, 693, 704, (09:12:92) 843, 847, 950
Forms of address (08:12:92) 724, 755
Government departments (07:12:92) 593-4
House of Commons accommodation (02:12:92) 286
Leave to speak (01:12:92) 240-1, 243, (02:12:92) 371, (03:12:92) 481
Members' conduct (30:11:92) 46
Members' interests (07:12:92) 594
Members' interventions (30:11:92) 110, (03:12:92) 432, 439, 448, (08:12:92) 706, 709, 713, 766, (09:12:92) 852, 866, 951
Members' speeches (30:11:92) 100, (03:12:92) 473, (08:12:92) 698, 771, 808
Members' speeches, Quotations (03:12:92) 464, (04:12:92) 527, 528-9
Ministerial statements (30:11:92) 25, (02:12:92) 270, 273, 275, (10:12:92) 1010-1
Orders & regulations motions (30:11:92) 44
Points of order (30:11:92) 41-4, 60, (01:12:92) 143-4, (02:12:92) 285-6, 368, (03:12:92) 394, (04:12:92) 567, (07:12:92) 593-4, (08:12:92) 693-5, 703, 704, 707, (09:12:92) 848-9, (10:12:92) 1010-1
Prime Minister's questions (08:12:92) 692, 695
Private Members' bills (11:12:92) 1173, 1176, 1177
Private Members' bills, 2R order read (11:12:92) 1174
Royal Assent (03:12:92) 424
Scope of debate (30:11:92) 102, (03:12:92) 461, (04:12:92) 522, 525, (07:12:92) 661, (08:12:92) 805, (09:12:92) 893, 968
Standing Order No 20 applications (01:12:92) 143, (02:12:92) 285
Standing Order No 20 applications, Cammell Laird (02:12:92) 284
Standing Order No 20 applications, Legal costs (30:11:92) 40
Supplementary questions (30:11:92) 11, 12, (01:12:92) 132

Speaker's rulings & statements
Consolidated Fund debates (03:12:92) 413
House of Commons debates (10:12:92) 1009
Parliamentary furnishings (30:11:92) 44

Speaker's rulings & statements—continued
Parliamentary privilege (08:12:92) 693-4
Scope of debate (01:12:92) 144
Select committee reports (08:12:92) 693-4
Unparliamentary expressions (30:11:92) 110, (10:12:92) 1099

Spearing, Mr Nigel
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (01:12:92) 147-8, 167, 194, 197, 232, (02:12:92) 296-7, 305, 331, 342-3, 349-50
Questions
Emergency calls 673-4w
London Ambulance Service, Overtime 73w
Oil seed rape, Agricultural subsidies 159w, 224w
Set-aside schemes, Flood control 714w
Treaty on European Union 89w, 757w

Special education
Deaf 606w, 669w
Wales 126w, 415w

Special schools
38w

Special training needs
790-1w
Training & enterprise councils 790w, 824w
Wales 824w

Speed, Sir Keith
Questions
British Rail, Privatisation 91-2w

Speed limits
94-5w
Hertfordshire 595w

Spellar, Mr John
Debates etc.
Unfair competition (30:11:92) 27
Questions
Business questions 999

Spencer, Sir Derek, Solicitor-General
Questions
British National Party, Publications 587
Crown Prosecution Service, Vacancies 452w
Guildford Four Inquiry 588
Public Order Act 1986, Racial incitement 587
Racial attacks 588
Serious Fraud Office 452w

Spicer, Sir Jim
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (02:12:92) 299

Spink, Dr Robert
Debates etc.
United Nations (04:12:92) 547
Questions
Helicopter carriers, Defence procurement 364w
Industrial accidents, Building industry 612w
Playing fields, Land acquisition 234w
VAT, Civil service dispersal 49w

Sponsorship
Students 475-6w

Sporting Events (Control of Alcohol Etc) (Amendment) Bill (HL) 1992/93
Debates etc.
Royal Assent (03:12:92) 424

Sports
Departmental responsibilities 20w
Scotland 20w

Sports facilities
Rate rebates 453w

Sportsgrounds
Church Commissioners 363w
Fulham Football Club 363w
Seating 306w

Spring, Mr Richard
Debates etc.
One stop shop initiative (03:12:92) 421-2
Questions
Arts finance 454w, 581-2

Spring, Mr Richard—continued
Low incomes, Marginal tax rates 10

Sproat, Mr Iain
Debates etc.
Coastal protection (10:12:92) 1034-6
Questions
Agriculture, EC law 511-3w
Departmental correspondence, Dept for Education 118w
Departmental correspondence, Dept of Employment 180w
Departmental correspondence, Dept of Health 143w
Departmental correspondence, Dept of National Heritage 101w
Departmental correspondence, Dept of Social Security 171w
Departmental correspondence, Dept of the Environment 210w
Departmental correspondence, Dept of Transport 90w
Departmental correspondence, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 88w
Departmental correspondence, Home Office 96w
Departmental correspondence, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 157w
Departmental correspondence, Ministry of Defence 165w
Departmental correspondence, Northern Ireland Office 134-5w
Departmental correspondence, Scottish Office 183w
Departmental correspondence, Treasury 103w
Departmental correspondence, Welsh Office 131w
Fishing quotas 388
Foreign tourists 454w
Legislation, Dept of Trade & Industry 109-10w
Legislation, Dept of Transport 9w
Legislation, Welsh Office 25w
Meat, Food inspection 511w
Operating costs, Dept for Education 118w
Operating costs, Dept of Employment 180-1w
Operating costs, Dept of Health 689-90w
Operating costs, Dept of Social Security 171w
Operating costs, Dept of the Environment 152w
Operating costs, Dept of Trade & Industry 110w
Operating costs, Dept of Transport 90-1w
Operating costs, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 88w
Operating costs, Home Office 96-8w
Operating costs, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 158w
Operating costs, Ministry of Defence 165-6w
Operating costs, Northern Ireland Office 135w
Operating costs, Scottish Office 183w
Operating costs, Treasury 103w
Operating costs, Welsh Office 131w

Squatting
Law reform 5w, 808w

Squire, Ms Rachel
Questions
Trading standards departments, Manpower 248w

Squire, Mr Robin, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of the Environment
Debates etc.
Local Government (Overseas Assistance) Bill, 2R (11:12:92) 1142, 1151-9
Urban programme (03:12:92) 493-7
Questions
Archives, Local government reform 709w
City action teams, Government grants 742-3w
City challenge 393w
City grants 710w

Squire, Mr Robin—continued
City grants, Expenditure 392-3w
Civil defence, Expenditure 299-301w
Community charge, Non-payment 295w
Council tax 13-4w
Council tax, Appeals 13w
Council tax, Discounts 156-8w
Council tax, Nursing homes 13w
Council tax, Residential care 472w
Council tax, Single people 14w
Council tax, Students 843
Council tax, Transitional relief 701w
Council tax, Valuation 12-3w
Councillors, Travelling expenses 295w
Derelict land grants 574-6w
Derelict land grants, Wirral Borough Council 473-4w
Direct labour departments 209-10w
Fire services, Local government expenditure 301w
Inner cities initiative, Expenditure 710-1w
Local government finance 206-7w
Local government functions, Northumberland 705w
Local government pensions 472-3w
Local government reform, Metropolitan districts 16w
Local government reform, Parliamentary constituencies 16w
Local government revenue 206w, 706w
Local government revenue, Capital investment 155w
Local government revenue, Durham County Council 150w
Local government revenue, Property transfer 205-6w, 210w
London Residuary Body 295w
London Residuary Body, Public appointments 295w, 741w
Non-domestic rates, Appeals 15-6w
Personal social services, Standard spending assessments 154w
Sefton Borough Council, Road works 209w
Standard spending assessments 709w, 711w
Standard spending assessments, Greenwich 290-1w
Standard spending assessments, Inner London boroughs 289-90w
Urban development corporations 208w
Urban programme 14-5w
Urban programme, Employment opportunities 14w, 209w
Urban programme, Expenditure 208w
Urban programme, Leicester 14w
Urban programme, Rochdale 208w, 288w

Staff canteens
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 366w

Staffordshire
Traffic Commissioners 464w

Standard spending assessments
155w, 709w, 711w
Greenwich 290-1w
Inner London boroughs 289-90w
Personal social services 154w, 537-42w
Wandsworth 291w

Standing Advisory Committee on Future Medical Manpower
776-7w

Standing charges
Pensioners 11-2

Standing Order No 143
(02:12:92) 354-7

Standing Order No 20 applications
Cammell Laird (02:12:92) 284
Legal costs (30:11:92) 39-40

Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Questions
Channel tunnel, Railway travel 818w
European Passenger Services, Privatisation 818w
Network SouthEast, Subsidies 818w

State Veterinary Service
754w

Statistics
Cold weather payments 232w

Statutory Instruments Joint Select Committee
(04:12:92) 566

Staythorpe
Gas fired power stations 32-3w

Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Questions
Overseas aid 482w
Overseas aid, Developing countries 590-1
Western Sahara, Official visits 567w
Yugoslavia, Overseas aid 428-9w

Steen, Mr Anthony
Questions
A38, Surveys 204w
Agricultural land, Land use 380
Disability living allowance, Social security claims 580-1w
Drug crimes, Proceeds of crime 806w
EC countries, Public contracts 214w
EC internal trade, Departmental publications 591w
HMS Drake, Costs 546w
Medical treatments, Divers 523w
Meningitis, Vaccination 635-7w
National parks, Privatisation 840
Sheep premiums 57w
Slaughterhouses, Food hygiene 227-8w
Social security recipients, Members' correspondence 682w

Steinberg, Mr Gerry
Questions
Class sizes 37w
Educational publications, Cost per pupil 39w
Student loans 40w
Teachers, Professional qualifications 41w

Steiner Schools Foundation
565w

Stephen, Mr Michael
Debates etc.
Coastal protection (10:12:92) 1040-1
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (02:12:92) 322
Questions
Business questions 404

Sterling
Exchange rates 47w

Stern, Mr Michael
Debates etc.
Macedonia, Recognition of states (30:11:92) 119-20

Stevenson, Mr George
Questions
Agricultural Training Board 379-80
Iron & steel, Production 257-8

Stewart, Mr Allan, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Scottish Office
Questions
Abortion, Scotland 789w
Carpet industry, Scotland 192w
Community care, Scotland 185-6w, 192w
Council tax, Transitional relief 815w
Council tax, Valuation 508w
Defence industries, Diversification 622w
Dental health, Children 237w
Dental services, Children 237w
Dental services, Strathclyde 237w
Devolution, Scotland 193-4w
Government grants to voluntary organisations, Scotland 362w
Handicapped, Scotland 189-90w
Health education, Expenditure 788w
Health service staff, Pay settlements 788w
Health services, Expenditure 788w
Health services, Government grants to voluntary organisations 361-2w
Hospices, Children 186-7w
Hospital beds, Scotland 23w, 188-90w, 788-9w

Stewart, Mr Allan—continued
Hospitals, Land values 186w
Hospitals, Scotland 815w
Industrial production, Paisley 191-2w
New towns development corporations, Public sector housing 361w
NHS finance, Scotland 619w
NHS trusts, Scotland 789w
Patient's Charter, Scotland 788w
Prescription drugs, Drug abuse 21-2w
Recycling, Newsprint 185-6w
Scottish health boards, Management consultants 509-10w
Skye bridge 621w
Small businesses, Company liquidations 357-8w

Stockport bypass
Public inquiries 819-20w

Stoke Mandeville Hospital
408, 678-9

Stoke on Trent
Attendance allowance 345w
Disability living allowance 345w, 680w
Manufacturing industries 142

Stop & search
Police firearms 735w

Stott, Mr Roger
Questions
Parcelforce, Privatisation 674w

Strathcarron Hospital
186w

Strang, Dr Gavin
Debates etc.
Fisheries (09:12:92) 860-5
Questions
Agricultural machinery, Capital investment 158w
Environmentally sensitive areas, Common agricultural policy 817w
Environmentally sensitive areas, Wales 826w
Fishing quotas 624-6w
GATT, Agricultural production 383-4

Strategic nuclear weapons
Defence expenditure 364w

Stratford
Dept of Social Security local offices 501w

Strathclyde
Community policing 191w
Dental health 237w
Dental services 237w

Straw, Mr Jack
Questions
Estate agents, Unfair trading practices 705w
Public expenditure 199-200w
Standard spending assessments 155w

Street lighting
Armagh 597w

Streeter, Mr Gary
Debates etc.
Judicial Pensions & Retirement Bill (HL), 2R (03:12:92) 431, 439, 460, 469-73
One stop shop initiative (03:12:92) 423
Unfair competition (30:11:92) 26-7
Questions
Contracts for services, Competition 393
Family credit, Take-up 10-1

Student accommodation
Housing associations 607w
Wales 607w

Student grants
Administrative delays 475w

Student loans
40w

Student numbers
Engineering education 40-2w
GCE A level 477w, 603w

Student numbers—continued
Higher education 475w
Scotland 351-8w

Student unions
120-1w
Audit 120w
Finance 120-1w
Political activities 120w
Sabbatical leave 121w

Students
Council tax 843
Engineering education 38-9w, 41w
Sponsorship 475-6w
Women 40w

Submarines
Fishing vessels 403-4w

Subsidiarity
EC environmental policy 831-2

Succession
431w

Suckler cow premiums
751-2w

Sudan
Human rights 566-7w

Suicide
Harmondsworth Detention Centre 733-4w
Paracetamol 522w

Sulphur dioxide
288w

Sumberg, Mr David
Debates etc.
Standing Order No 20 applications, Points of order (01:12:92) 143
Questions
Business questions 405
Crime prevention, Greater Manchester 807w

Summertime
7w

Sunday trading
99w, 452w

Sunderland Health Authority
Nurses 777w
Office workers 777w

Supermarkets
Property development 692

"Supply Estimates 1992/93, Supplementary Estimates"
(10:12:92) 1096

"Supply Estimates 1993/94, Votes on Account"
(10:12:92) 1012-50, 1096

Support for products under research scheme
258-82w

Surgery
638w, 643w
Private health services 804w

Surrey
Training & enterprise councils 174w

Sustainable development
Agricultural policy 754w
Agri-environment action plan 712w

Sweeney, Mr Walter
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (01:12:92) 193
Judicial Pensions & Retirement Bill (HL), 2R (03:12:92) 430-1, 437, 441, 450, 477-8
Questions
Economic & monetary union 691-2
Hazardous wastes, Transport of hazardous materials 844
Youth training 129

Switzerland
European Economic Area 589w

Swn Dwr Farm Northop
Land acquisition 131w

Sykes, Mr John
Debates etc.
Unemployment (08:12:92) 703
Questions
Interest rates, EC countries 981
Slaughterhouses, Veterinary services 713-4w
Trade Union Reform & Employment Rights Bill 1992/93 127

Taking & driving away
Casualties 7w
Punishment 661w

Tamazula
Ports 557w

Tapsell, Sir Peter
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (01:12:92) 164
Questions
Official engagements 122w, 307w

Tarmac Construction
150w, 392w, 544w
Contracts 140
Hewell Grange Prison 475w

Tax administration
Separate taxation of wife's earnings 200w

Tax allowances
Bank loans 469-70w
Inheritance tax 431w
London International Financial Futures & Options Exchange 431w
Manufacturing industries 980

Tax rates & bands
VAT 985-6

Tax yields
812-3w
Betting & gaming duties 769w
Car tax 102w
Inheritance tax 812w
Invalidity benefits 812w
Pensions 471w
Whisky 980

Taxation
986
Audio recordings 497w
Company cars 102w
Public sector borrowing requirement 986

Taxis
Greater London 784-5w

Taylor, Mr Ian
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (01:12:92) 153, 158-9, 209, (02:12:92) 292-3, 295-6, 341, 350
Questions
Foreign investment in UK 988-9
Housing Corporation, Government grants 843
Training & enterprise councils, Surrey 174w

Taylor, Rt Hon John David
Debates etc.
Arts finance (11:12:92) 1130-1
Fisheries (09:12:92) 906-7, 912-5
Questions
Bombings, Compensation 598w
Bombings, Newtownbreda 133-4w
Cereals, Agricultural production 134w
Cereals, Northern Ireland 228w
Cereals, Republic of Ireland 225w
EC Committee of the Regions 2w
Empty housing, House purchase 737-8w
GATT, Animal feed 383
Ministers' domestic visits, Northern Ireland 16w
Street lighting, Armagh 597w
White fish, Fishing quotas 683w

Taylor, Mr John M, Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Dept
Debates etc.
Judicial Pensions & Retirement Bill (HL), 2R (03:12:92) 425-33, 437, 439-40, 442, 445, 447-8, 457, 460-3, 472, 476, 481-6
Questions
Commercial court, Administrative delays 16-7
Commercial court, Judges 751w
Divorce law, Law reform 18w, 387w
Domestic violence 796-7w
Domicil, Law reform 798w
Drug crimes, Proceeds of crime 806w
Family conciliation services 18-9w
Guildford Four Inquiry, Immunity certificates 303w
Judges, Performance standards 18w
Judiciary, Training 195w
Judiciary, Women 451w
Land Registry Office, Official visits 196w
Landlord & tenant, Law reform 303w, 451w
Landlord & tenant, Rent arrears 303-4w
Legal aid 14-5, 17-20
Legal aid, Certification 19w
Legal aid, Expenditure 19w
Legal aid, Northern Ireland 592w
Legal aid scheme 302-3w, 797-8w
Legal aid scheme, Housing 302w
Legal aid scheme, Northern Ireland 387w
Legal aid scheme, Personal income 85w
Legal profession, Vocational training 18w
Lord Chancellor's Dept, Chlorofluorocarbons 196w
Lord Chancellor's Dept, Contracts for services 657-8w
Magistrates' courts 16
Magistrates' courts, Administration of justice 15-6
Magistrates' courts, Wales 18w
Mortgage defaulters, Repossession orders 198w
Northern Ireland Court Service, Costs 592w
Northern Ireland Court Service, Manpower 592w
Private prosecutions, Legal costs 796w
Public records 197w
Record offices, Local government reform 197-8w
Repossession orders 796w
Trials 795-6w
York Crown Court, Administrative delays 17

Taylor, Mr Matthew
Debates etc.
Sea Fish (Conservation) Bill, Lords amendts (09:12:92) 951-2

Taylor, Sir Teddy
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (01:12:92) 149, 160, 162, 177, 183, 217, 226, 228, 233, 236, (02:12:92) 293, 302, 317-26
Fisheries (09:12:92) 886, 902-4

Taylor Inquiry
see Hillsborough Stadium Inquiry

Teacher training
Environmental education 238w
Shortage subjects 396w

Teachers
Disciplinary proceedings 476w, 507w, 620w
Engineers 396-7w
Professional qualifications 41w
Scotland 620w

Technical assistance
Russia 427-8w

Technical education
397-8w
Engineering education 397w
Engineers 397w

Technical links scheme
(11:12:92) 1105-22, 1134-59

Technology transfer
Iraq 168w
Science & technology research 281-2w

Teenage pregnancy
519-20w

Telephone services
Children in care 25w
Emergency calls 687
Family credit 66w
Pornography 251w

Telephones
Motorways 202-3w

Television licences
BBC 583
Fees & charges 679w
Pensioners 583-4
Sheltered housing 801w

Temporary immigrants
Visas 458w

Tenant eviction
Lamont, Norman 306w, 452w

Tenant farmers
368w

Tenant's Charter
Languages 571w

Tenants' incentive scheme
473-4w

Termination of employment
HM Inspectorate of Schools 235-6w

Terrorism
Broadcasting controls 45w, 576-7
Crime victims 555-6w
Death 308w
Northern Ireland 308w
Police powers 552w
Prisoners 480w

Testbourne School
(02:12:92) 369-76

Textile industry
East Midlands 615w
EC grants & loans 31w
Manpower 615w

Textiles
Recycling 185-6w

Thamesmead
School population 477w

Thatcher, RtHonBaroness
Paintings 682w

Theatres
Greater Manchester 455w
Repairs & maintenance 548-9w

Theft
Nuclear fuels 436w

Thelwall viaduct
819-20w

Thomas Becket School Knowsley
751w

Thomason, Mr Roy
Debates etc.
United Nations (04:12:92) 529-33, 536-7
Questions
Contaminated land registers 830
Monklands District Council 992
Private investment 767w

Thompson, Mr Jack
Debates etc.
Coastal protection (10:12:92) 1032-4
Unemployment (08:12:92) 780

Thompson, Mr Patrick
Questions
Local government reform, Parliamentary constituencies 16w

Thorne Moors
Sites of special scientific interest 573-4w

THORP
470w, 473w

Thurnham, Mr Peter
Debates etc.
Unemployment (08:12:92) 741, 776-9
Questions
BBC, Television licences 583
Employment opportunities 180w
GATT 367w

Tibet
Human rights 670-1w

Tidworth
Royal British Legion 168w

Time limits
(09:12:92) 941-71

Tipping, Mr Paddy
Debates etc.
Unemployment (08:12:92) 766, 774
Questions
Coal mine closures 249
Energy review, Consultants 585w
Energy review, Disclosure of information 442-6w
Further education, Local government expenditure 561-3w
Gas fired power stations, Staythorpe 32-3w
Local government finance 206-7w
Local government revenue, Property transfer 210w
Non-fossil fuel obligation, Treaty of Rome 587w
Planning appeals, Opencast mining 301-2w

Tipping of waste
Licensing 572w

Tobacco
Health warnings 777w
Smuggling 812-3w

Tomlinson Inquiry
see London's Health Service Medical Education & Research Inquiry

Tomography
Medical equipment 686w
West Midlands Regional Health Authority 632w

Total allowable catches
White fish 360w

Tourism
Government grants 457w
Income 609w
May Day bank holiday 678w
Wales 609w, 668w

Tourist boards
456w
Government grants 677w

Tourist industry
Government grants 505-6w, 509w
Ministerial duties 678w
National lottery 677-8w
Scotland 509w
Wales 505-6w

Town & country planning
151w
Planning authorities 292w

Townend, Mr John
Questions
Interest rates, USA 982

Townsend, Mr Cyril D
Debates etc.
United Nations (04:12:92) 499-506, 534

Toys & games
China 832w

Tracey, Mr Richard
Debates etc.
One stop shop initiative (03:12:92) 418-9

Trade barriers
British Steel Corporation 746w
USA 262, 746w

Trade Boycotts Bill 1992/93
Debates etc.
1R (09:12:92) 849

Trade missions
Iraq 255

Trade Union Reform & Employment Rights Bill 1992/93
Questions
127

Trade unions
Government grants 791-2w

Trading standards departments
Manpower 248w
Wales 116w

Traffic Commissioners
Bus services 695w
Staffordshire 464w

Training
Clinical psychologists 141w
Disabled workers 667-8w, 790-1w
Judiciary 195w
Osteopathy 320w, 631-2w
Unemployed 130
Waiting lists 27w
Wales 27w, 245w
Young people 132

Training allowances
Wales 607w
Youth training 175w

Training & enterprise councils
125-6, 129, 131-3, 174w, 305w, 607w, 667-8w
Astra Training Services 132
Codes of practice 728w
Disabled workers 616w, 763w
Ellesmere Port 54-5w
Finance 127-8, 615-6w, 791w
Performance standards 667w
Special training needs 790w, 824w
Surrey 174w
Wales 26w, 667w, 760-1w, 763w
Young people 134
Youth training 129

Training for work
130
Scotland 815-6w

Trans European mobility scheme for university students
476-7w

Transitional arrangements
VAT 814w

Transitional relief
Council tax 237-8w, 701w, 815w

Transport
Companies 130w

Transport of animals
367w
Animal welfare 756-7w
EC law 756-7w
Horses 386w
Mink 386w

Transport of hazardous materials
Hazardous wastes 844

Transport of radioactive materials
462-3w, 465w, 596-7w, 780-1w
Accidents 780w
Air safety 780w
Channel tunnel 697w
Dounreay 462w
EC action 288-9w, 697w
EC countries 781w
Health & Safety Executive 781-2w
International Maritime Organisation 462w, 597w

Transport of radioactive materials—continued
Plutonium 781w
Ports 781w
Railway safety 780w
Road safety 781w
Safety standards 463w
Sea transport 596-7w
Shipping accidents 597w

Transport Select Committee
(07:12:92) 637

Transport supplementary grants
Bypasses 205w

Transport users' consultative committees
695-6w

Travel
Wales 245-6w

Travelling expenses
Councillors 295w
Social security recipients 424w

Travelling people
Belfast 17-8w
Caravan sites 703w, 763-4w, 833-4
Social security benefits rules 68w

Treasury
(30:11:92) 39-40
Chlorofluorocarbons 48w
Civil service dispersal 468-9w
Civil service manpower 102-3w
Contracts for services 814w
Departmental correspondence 103w
Economic forecasting 306w, 471w
Environment protection 812w
Operating costs 103w

Treasury grant
(30:11:92) 45-117, 421w; (07:12:92) 595-636
National Insurance Fund 421w

Treasury supplement
National Insurance Fund 421w

Treaties
Environment protection 149w
Nuclear non proliferation 435w
UN Conference on Environment & Development 578w

Treaty of Rome
989
Non-fossil fuel obligation 587w

Treaty on European Union
89w, 137, 140, (01:12:92) 147-237, 211-2w, 215w, (02:12:92) 289-368, 314w, 466w, 757w, 802w, 989-90, 992-3
Balance of payments 989
Departmental publications 566w
EC external relations 212-3w
Economic & monetary union 102w
Public expenditure 989
UK repayments from EC budget 392

Tredinnick, Mr David
Questions
Alternative medicine 632w
Alternative medicine, Drugs 520-1w
Alternative medicine, Medical education 692w
Drugs, Labeling 632w
Family doctors, Alternative medicine 685w
Health education, Alternative medicine 685w
Homeopathy, Prescriptions 803w
Osteopathy, Training 631-2w
Patient's Charter, Alternative medicine 685
Science & technology research, Alternative medicine 795w

Tree felling
Apples 623-4w

Trend, Mr Michael
Questions
EC Foreign Affairs Council 758-9w
Royal Holloway & Bedford New College, Architectural conservation 798w

Trentham colliery
499w

Trevi Group
334-5w, 479w, 662w

Trials
795-6w
Fraud 198w

Trimble, Mr David
Debates etc.
House of Commons Chamber, Points of order (08:12:92) 694
Questions
EC internal trade 247w
Fertilisers, Ammonium nitrate 737w
National parks, Northern Ireland 840
VAT, Exports 766w

Tropical forestry action plan
Overseas aid 492w

Trotter, Mr Neville
Questions
EH101 helicopters 60w
Harrier aircraft, Army strength 60w
Shipbuilding, Defence contracts 59-60w

Turner, Mr Dennis
Debates etc.
Unemployment (08:12:92) 713
Questions
Government assistance to industry 448w
Hard core unemployed, Wolverhampton 181w
Patient's Charter 685

Twin towns
(11:12:92) 1105-22, 1134-59

Twinn, Dr Ian
Questions
Wild animals, EC internal trade 153-4w

Tyler, Mr Paul
Debates etc.
Coastal protection (10:12:92) 1026-9, 1048
Mink Keeping Order 1992 (08:12:92) 809-10
One stop shop initiative (03:12:92) 417
Sea Fish (Conservation) bill, Lords amendts (09:12:92) 952-3
Questions
Apples, Tree felling 623-4w
Devon & Cornwall Police, Manpower 478-9w
Group marketing grant, Expenditure 385
Mortgage relief, Expenditure 198-9w

Tyres
Waste disposal 792w

UK companies abroad
Narmada dam 810w

UK contributions
Global environmental facility 309w
International Atomic Energy Agency 496w
International Tropical Timber Organisation 424-5w
UN Special Commission on Iraq 64w, 89w, 461w
United Nations 312-4w
World Bank 809w
World Decade for Cultural Development 654w

UK contributions to EC budget
138
Northern Ireland 600-1w

UK delegations
Council of Europe 802w
Western European Union 802w

UK Detention Services
337-8w

UK membership of EC
429-30w

UK repayments from EC budget
687-8
Northern Ireland 600-1w

UK repayments from EC budget—continued
Treaty on European Union 392

UK trade with EC
51w
Balance of trade 441w, 448w
Market share 448-9w

UN
see United Nations

UN Conference on Environment & Development
149w, 569-70w
Forest protection 743w
Treaties 578w

UN Educational Scientific & Cultural Organisation
see UNESCO

UN High Commissioner for Refugees
(30:11:92) 30-8, 166w, 428-9w, 611w

UN Protection Force
166w, 213-4w, 611w

UN Security Council
(04:12:92) 499-564

UN Special Commission on Iraq
UK contributions 64w, 89w, 461w

Unadopted Roads Bill 1992/93
Debates etc.
2R order read (11:12:92) 1174

Underground railways
Fire prevention 461-2w

Underwater Test & Evaluation Centre
545-6w

Unemployed
Training 130

Unemployment
173w, 689
Barrow in Furness 131-2
Clwyd 665w
EC countries 173w
Economic policy 389-90
Homelessness 139
Manufacturing industries 259, 980-1
National Insurance Fund 421w
Opposition days (08:12:92) 699-793
Selby 615w
South Wales 764-5w
Wales 126w, 243w, 665w, 765w

UNESCO
43-4w, 458w, (04:12:92) 499-564

Unfair dismissal
Employment protection 126-7
Greater Manchester Ambulance Service 419w
Part-time employment 127

Unfair trading practices
Estate agents 705w
Prosecutions 117w

United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority
587w

United Nations
491w, 589, 671-2w
Armed forces deployment 652-4w
Bosnia-Herzegovina 672w
Kosovo 2w
Peace keeping operations 654-6w
Private Members' motions (04:12:92) 499-564
UK contributions 312-4w

Universities
236w

University finance
Open University 313w, 476w

Unpaid taxes
VAT 769-70w

Unparliamentary expressions
Speaker's rulings & statements (30:11:92) 110, (10:12:92) 1099

Uranium
346w
Iraq 1w

Urban areas
Government grants 703w

Urban development corporations
208w

Urban Partnership Fund
15w, 152-3w

Urban programme
14-5w, 827-8
Alyn & Deeside 762w
Employment opportunities 14w, 209w
Expenditure 152-3w, 208w
Finance (03:12:92) 489-98
Health education 320w
Leicester 14w
Rochdale 208-9w, 288w
Wales 669w
Wrexham Maelor 762w

US bases
Menwith Hill 714w

US National Security Agency
437w

USA
Elections 994
Interest rates 982
Overseas trade 262-3
Trade barriers 262, 746w

Vacancies
Birmingham 416-7w
British Rail 285w
Crown Prosecution Service 452w

Vaccination
Children 317-8w
Devon 636-7w
Meningitis 317-8w, 635-7w
Publicity 636w

Valleys initiative
764-5w
Departmental publications 26-7w

Valuation
Council tax 12-3w, 508w, 701w, 841-2, 996

VAT
769w, 986
Charities 102w
Civil service dispersal 49w
Default surcharge 698-9w
EC internal trade 698w
Exports 698w, 766w
Farmers 813-4w
Horses 768w
Magazine press 699w
Sailing boats 104-5w
Secondhand goods (07:12:92) 636
Tax rates & bands 985-6
Transitional arrangements 814w
Unpaid taxes 769-70w

VAT exempted goods
767w

VAT registration
699-700w
Small businesses 116w, 767w

VAT returns
769-70w

VAT zero rated goods
EC law 569w, 766w

Vaz, Mr Keith
Questions
Urban programme 14-5w, 828
Urban programme, Employment opportunities 14w
Urban programme, Leicester 14w

Vehicle Inspectorate
784w, 823w
Manpower 820-2w

Veterinary Medicines Directorate
Official visits 160w

Veterinary services
Slaughterhouses 713-4w

Victim support schemes
Glasgow 182w

Video games
Monopolies 675w

Violence
Religious discrimination 993-4

Visas
EC immigration 215w
Temporary immigrants 458w

Visual arts
456w

Vocational guidance
174w
Wales 760w

Vocational training
728w
Legal profession 18w

Voluntary organisations
British residents abroad 482w
Homelessness 829
National lottery 578-9

Wages councils
52w, 172w, 222w, 616w, 750w, 790w

Wages Inspectorate
Manpower 52-4w

Waldegrave, Rt Hon William, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster
Questions
Central Office of Information, Royal family 795w
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Contracts for services 657w
Charterline 228w
Citizen's Charter, Annual reports 395w
Citizen's Charter, Public sector 465w
Civil servants, Medical records 123w
Civil service, Contracts for services 547w
Industrial research 123-4w
Next steps initiative, Annual reports 228-9w
Office of Public Service & Science, Civil service manpower 465w
Science & technology policy 122-3w, 464w

Wales
Agricultural Development & Advisory Service 26w
Agricultural land 607-8w
Assisted areas 132w, 666w
Bellwin scheme 825-6w
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy 246-8w
Breast cancer 128-9w
British Rail 667w
Broadleaved woodlands 608w
Bus lanes 130w
Car ownership 243-4w
Caravan sites 763-4w
Children in care 25w
Coal mine closures 305w
Community care grants 129w
Community care plans 761w
Council housing management 26w, 125w
Crime prevention 762w
Crimes of violence 130w
Dairy Crest 27w, 765w
Dairy products 28w
Deaf 506w, 669w
Defence land 415w
Dentists 125w
Disabled workers 667-8w
Drug abuse 603-5w
Drug crimes 480w, 550-1w
Drug seizures 430w
Educational standards 609w
Employment level 825w
Employment opportunities 27-8w, 245w
Employment schemes 606w

Wales—continued
Environment protection 125w
Environmentally sensitive areas 26w, 826w
European Regional Development Fund 605w
Export promotion 587w
Floods 395-401, 825-6w
Foreign investment in UK 604w
GATT 125w
Handicapped pupils 606w
Hill farming 28w
Hill livestock allowances 27w
Hospital beds 608-9w
Hospitals 127-8w, 242-3w, 763w
Housing construction 760w
Hypermarkets 129w
Legal aid 19w
Local government reform 606w, 665-6w
Local government revenue 242w
Lorries 244-5w
Magistrates' courts 18w
Manufacturing industries 414w
Milk Marketing Board 28w
Museums & galleries 605w
NHS 28w, 763w
NHS administration 608w
NHS internal market 608w
NHS trusts 132w, 505w, 606-7w
Non-domestic rates 827w
Nursing homes 669w
Occupational therapy 506w
Offshore drilling 495-6w
Parking 129-30w
Primary education 29w
Railway freight transport 130w
Recycling 246w
Regional enterprise grants 670w
River pollution 506-7w, 608w
Road traffic control 129w
Salmon 128w
Schizophrenia 826w
Sheltered housing wardens 304w
Small businesses 603-4w
Smoke alarms 125w
Special education 126w, 415w
Special training needs 824w
Student accommodation 607w
Tourism 609w, 668w
Tourist industry 505-6w
Trading standards departments 116w
Training 27w, 245w
Training allowances 607w
Training & enterprise councils 26w, 667w, 760-1w, 763w
Travel 245-6w
Unemployment 126w, 243w, 665w, 765w
Urban programme 669w
Vocational guidance 760w
Wind power 744w
Youth training 666w, 760-1w, 824-5w

Walker, Mr Bill
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (01:12:92) 157, 160, 162, 205, 222, (02:12:92) 339, 351
Fisheries (09:12:92) 921
Public expenditure, Scotland (02:12:92) 272
Scotland, Points of order (01:12:92) 144
Questions
Business questions 998-9
Tax yields, Whisky 980

Walker, Mr A Cecil
Questions
Housing insulation, Northern Ireland 402w
Legal aid, Northern Ireland 592w
Northern Ireland Court Service, Costs 592w
Northern Ireland Court Service, Manpower 592w

Walking
Lancashire 43w

Wallace, Mr James
Debates etc.
Fisheries (09:12:92) 854, 857-9, 864, 877-83, 889-90
Public expenditure, Scotland (02:12:92) 272

Wallace, Mr James—continued
Sea Fish (Conservation) Bill, Lords amendts (09:12:92) 948-9, 960-2
Questions
Common fisheries policy 368w
Youth training, Finance 128-9

Waller, Mr Gary
Questions
Ilkley bypass 695w
Official Report, CD-ROM 201w

Walley, Ms Joan
Debates etc.
Road Traffic (Driving Instruction by Disabled Persons) Bill, 2R (11:12:92) 1168-70
Questions
Archives, Local government reform 709w
Attendance allowance, Social security recipients 232w
Catalytic converters 388-9w
Catamarans, Shipping safety 285-6w
Channel tunnel, Transport of radioactive materials 697w
Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Materials 498w
Disability living allowance, Administrative delays 680w
Disability living allowance, Stoke on Trent 345w
El Alamein, Festivals & special occasions 65w
Exhaust emission controls, Motor vehicle testing 388w
"Fair Assessment Consultation Paper" 225w
Fish conservation, Water Resources Act 1991 370w
Fishing, Fees & charges 511w
Health & Safety Executive, Transport of radioactive materials 781-2w
Homelessness 472w
Housing & elderly, Heating 573w
Housing benefits, Social security benefits rules 502-3w
International Maritime Organisation, Transport of radioactive materials 462w, 597w
Local government revenue, Capital investment 570w
Manufacturing industries, Stoke on Trent 142
Ministers' visits abroad, Japan 497w
Nuclear safeguards 498w
Paediatrics, Neurology 803-4w
Royal Ordnance 611w
Royal Ordnance, Defence contracts 611w
Sheltered housing 211w
Sheltered housing, Housing revenue accounts 152w
Social security benefits rules, Young people 503w
Taking & driving away, Punishment 661w
Tomography, Medical equipment 686w
Tomography, West Midlands Regional Health Authority 632w
Traffic Commissioners, Bus services 695w
Traffic Commissioners, Staffordshire 464w
Transport of radioactive materials 462-3w, 465w, 596-7w, 780-1w
Transport of radioactive materials, Accidents 780w
Transport of radioactive materials, Air safety 780w
Transport of radioactive materials, Dounreay 462w
Transport of radioactive materials, EC action 697w
Transport of radioactive materials, EC countries 781w
Transport of radioactive materials, Plutonium 781w
Transport of radioactive materials, Ports 781w
Transport of radioactive materials, Railway safety 780w
Transport of radioactive materials, Road safety 781w

Walley, Ms Joan—continued
Transport of radioactive materials, Safety standards 463w
Transport of radioactive materials, Sea transport 596-7w
Transport of radioactive materials, Shipping accidents 597w
Trentham colliery 499w
Victim support schemes, Glasgow 182w
Water pollution, Coal mine closures 706-7w
Water pollution, Fines 431w

Wandsworth
Standard spending assessments 291w

War crimes
Channel Islands 7-8w, 611w, 735w, 793w

War pensions
170w
Social security benefits rules 422w

Ward, Mr John
Questions
Economic situation 983

Wardell, Mr Gareth
Debates etc.
Coastal protection (10:12:92) 1018-21
Questions
Bivalve molluscs, Irradiated food 378-9
Coal mine closures 250w
Coal mining, Land pollution 125w
Dentists, Wales 125w
Floods, Wales 399
Hospital patients, Clwyd Health Authority 244w

Wardle, Mr Charles, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Home Office
Debates etc.
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Ministerial statements (30:11:92) 30-8
Questions
Animal experiments 554w
Animal experiments, Genetic engineering 554w
Animal experiments, Marine animals 336w
Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 555w
Asylum & Immigration Appeals Bill 1992/93 555w
Car boot sales, Burglary 95-6w
Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 349-50w
Devon & Cornwall Police, Manpower 478-9w
Domestic violence, Police 216w
EC immigration, Immigration controls 334-5w
Extradition, Nigeria 219w
Forensic Science Service, Official visits 218-9w
Harmondsworth Detention Centre, Death 734w
Harmondsworth Detention Centre, Immigrant detainees 734w
Harmondsworth Detention Centre, Suicide 733-4w
HM Inspectorate of Constabulary, Disclosure of information 5w
Illegal immigrants, Greater London 734w
Lawrence, Tess, Burglary 334w
Metropolitan Police, Damages 410w
Metropolitan Police, Public appointments 733w
National Identification Bureau 96w
Offensive weapons, Right of search 6w
Police firearms, Stop & search 735w
Police pensions 477-8w
Political refugees, Immigration applications 410w, 662w
Political refugees, Yugoslavia 411-2w
Refugees, Work permits 219w
Shamrock Farms, Animal welfare 215-6w

Warning, Mr Robert N
Debates etc.
Cunard Laird, Points of order (02:12:92) 285
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (02:12:92) 317

Waring, Mr Robert N—continued
Questions
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Peace keeping operations 672w
Coordinating Committee on Export Controls 461w
Industrial investment 252w
Merseyside Training & Enterprise Council, Finance 125
Overseas trade, Albania 116w
Shipbuilding Intervention Fund 746w
Tax allowances, Manufacturing industries 980

Warner Committee
see Children's Homes Staff Selection Inquiry

Warning lamps
Motor vehicles 389-90w

Warships
Amphibious forces 62w
Repairs & maintenance 365w

Waste disposal
Ammunition 542-3w
Armed forces deployment 792w
Chlorofluorocarbons 573w
Domestic wastes 287w
Livestock 384-5w
Recycling 828w
Tyres 792w

Waste management
Orders & regulations 571-2w

Waste Management Industry Training & Advisory Board
571-2w

Wastes
Imports 828w
Orders & regulations 395w

Water & sewerage companies
287w

Water charges
Income support 70w, 419-21w
Social security recipients 70w

Water meters
707w
Northern Ireland 500-1w

Water pollution
Coal mine closures 706-7w
EC law 703w
Fines 431w
Pollution monitoring 296w

Water Resources Act 1991
Questions
707w
Fish conservation 370w

Water supply
151w
Northern Ireland 500-1w
Private sector 829w

Water supply disconnections
391w, 709-10w

Water supply industry
British Waterways Board 151w
Government grants 391w
Public petitions (08:12:92) 819
Regulatory system 154w
Scotland (08:12:92) 819

Water treatment
Sewage 150w

Waterson, Mr Nigel
Questions
Employment opportunities 181w
Tourism, Government grants 457w
Tourist industry, Government grants 505-6w, 509w

Watson, Diane
(09:12:92) 972-8

Watson, Mr Mike
Questions
Conditions of employment, EC countries 137

Watts, Mr John
Questions
Treaty on European Union, UK repayments from EC budget 392

Wear Valley District Council
150w

Weir Group
Defence contracts 610w

Wells, Mr Bowen
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (01:12:92) 157-8, 222, (02:12:92) 301
Questions
Rented housing 838

Welsh, Mr Andrew
Debates etc.
Fishing quotas, North Sea (01:12:92) 239
Public expenditure, Scotland (02:12:92) 277
Questions
Beaches, Sea pollution 22w
Drug abuse, Community care 77w
Hospital beds, Scotland 23w, 188-90w
Hospitals, Land values 186w
Post Office 744w
Postal services 744w
Scottish Homes, Housing & handicapped 359w

Welsh Development Agency
603-4w

Welsh language
759w

Welsh Office
Chlorofluorocarbons 126w
Civil service manpower 414w
Contracts for services 669-70w
Departmental correspondence 131w
Disabled workers 764w
Legislation 25w
Operating costs 131w
Private detectives 413-4w

Wessex Regional Health Authority
433w

West coast railway line
283w

West Cumbria
Nuclear power 129-30

West Midlands
Ambulance services 76w
Redundancy 173w

West Midlands Regional Health Authority
Financial Information Project Systems 81w, 803w
Hospital consultants 638w
Paediatrics 803-4w
Tomography 632w

Western European Union
UK delegations 802w

Western Sahara
Official visits 567w

Westminster Hall
362-3w

Whales
EC law 150w
Norway 19w

Wheat
Food exports 368w

Wheeler, Sir John
Debates etc.
Lamont, Norman, Points of order (30:11:92) 43
Refugees, Bosnia-Herzegovina (30:11:92) 32

Wheeler, Sir John—continued
Questions
Animal experiments, Marine animals 336w
Blakenhurst Prison, Contracts for services 337-8w
Criminal Justice Act 1991, Curfews 808w
Fire Precautions (Places of Work) Regulations 1992 99w
Guildford Four Inquiry 335-6w
Leasehold housing, Advisory services 207w
London Buses, Privatisation 390-1w
Partnerships, Company accounts 30-1w
Political refugees, Immigration applications 410w
Security Service Commissioner 122w
Shamrock Farms, Animal welfare 215-6w
Trevi Group 479w
Underground railways, Fire prevention 461-2w
Windsor Castle, Building repairs 580

Whisky
Tax yields 980

White fish
Fishing quotas 683w
Scotland 360w
Total allowable catches 360w

Whitney, Mr Ray
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (02:12:92) 307
Treaty on European Union, Points of order (02:12:92) 286

Wicks, Mr Malcolm
Debates etc.
Social Security Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & Means res (30:11:92) 63-7, 78, 80, 115
Social Security Bill, Com (07:12:92) 621-2, 626-7, 631
Questions
Child Support Act 1991 4

Widdecombe, Miss Ann, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of Social Security
Debates etc.
Social Security Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & Means res (30:11:92) 52, 105-16
Social Security Bill, Com (07:12:92) 597-9, 601, 604-7, 615-9, 624
Questions
Christmas bonus 232w, 681w
Dept of Social Security, Chlorofluorocarbons 341w
Dept of Social Security, Contracts for services 681-2w
Dept of Social Security, Departmental correspondence 171w
Dept of Social Security, Operating costs 171w
Disability living allowance, Administrative delays 3
Earnings rules, Social Security Benefit (Amendment) Regulations 1992 503-4w
Income support 3
Information Technology Services Agency, Official visits 169w
Maxwell companies, Pension funds 8-9
Members' correspondence, Administrative delays 341-2w
Nutrition & health, Pensioners 70w
Occupational pensions, EC law 750w
Pensioners 12
Pensioners, Citizen's Charter 11-2
Pensions Ombudsman 749w
Public sector earnings 67w
Retirement pensions 12
Retirement pensions, Married women 682w
Social security abuse 580w
Social security claims, Administrative delays 2-3
Social security claims, Exservicemen 800w
Social Security Contributions Agency, Performance targets 170w
Social security payments 580w
Social security recipients, Members' correspondence 682w

Widdecombe, Miss Ann—continued
War pensions 170w

Wigley, Mr Dafydd
Questions
A487, Bypasses 245w
Abortion, RU486 126w
Council of Ministers, Disclosure of information 801-2w
Dental services 679-80
EC Agriculture Council 827w
EC Environment Council 826-7w
Further education, Long stay patients 39w
Iraq, Diplomatic relations 566w
Iraq, Peace keeping operations 566w
Kurds, EC aid 491w
Kurds, Overseas aid 490-1w
Manufacturing industries 249-50w
Road traffic, Caernarfon 827w
Special education, Wales 126w
Special schools 38w

Wigs
Child patients 231w
NHS charges 231w

Wild animals
EC internal trade 153-4w

Wildlife incident investigation scheme
383-4w
Finance 383w, 509w
Northern Ireland 308w
Scotland 23w, 509w

Wilkinson, Mr John
Questions
EC environmental policy, Subsidiarity 832

Willetts, Mr David
Debates etc.
Social Security Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & Means res (30:11:92) 50, 54, 65, 67-72, 83, 106, 112
Social Security Bill, Com (07:12:92) 630
Questions
Assisted areas 260-1
Income support 3
Social security payments 580w

Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Questions
Central Office of Information, Royal family 795w
Civil list 220w, 748w
Civil list, Consolidated Fund 748w
Floods, Wales 399-400
Royal family finance 467-8w

Williams, Mr Alan W
Questions
EC environmental policy, Subsidiarity 831
Milk Marketing Board 367w
Set-aside schemes 386
Wages councils 172w

Wilshire, Mr David
Questions
Contracts for services, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster 657w
Contracts for services, Dept for Education 690-1w
Contracts for services, Dept of Employment 731-2w
Contracts for services, Dept of Health 688w
Contracts for services, Dept of National Heritage 678w
Contracts for services, Dept of Social Security 681-2w
Contracts for services, Dept of the Environment 741-2w
Contracts for services, Dept of Trade & Industry 676w
Contracts for services, Dept of Transport 694w
Contracts for services, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 655w
Contracts for services, Lord Chancellor's Dept 657-8w
Contracts for services, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 711-2w

Wilshire, Mr David—continued
Contracts for services, Ministry of Defence 720-1w
Contracts for services, Northern Ireland Office 684w
Contracts for services, Scottish Office 690w
Contracts for services, Treasury 814w
Contracts for services, Welsh Office 669-70w
M25, Road works 284w

Wilson, Mr Brian
Debates etc.
Mink Keeping Order 1992 (08:12:92) 796, 799, 811
Questions
Local government finance, Cunninghame District Council 786w
Milk Marketing Board 367w
Motor vehicle registration 205w

Wind power
Electricity generation 497w
Wales 744w

Windsor
Fire services 4-6w

Windsor Castle
43-4w
Armed forces deployment 716w
Building repairs 44w, 580-1
Fire prevention 44w, 95w, 101w
Fire regulations 100w, 413w
Fire services 747w
Fires 409w, 456w, 549w, 579-81, 716w
Historic Buildings & Monuments Commission for England 679-80w
Insurance 101w
Public access 100w
Public expenditure 579-80

Wines
Composition labelling 55w

Winnick, Mr David
Debates etc.
Departmental records, Points of order (07:12:92) 593
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (01:12:92) 152, 232, 234, (02:12:92) 291, 298, 341, 345-8, 351
Lamont, Norman, Points of order (30:11:92) 42-3
Racial Violence Bill, 1R (09:12:92) 850-2
Refugees, Bosnia-Herzegovina (30:11:92) 38
Unemployment (08:12:92) 716
Questions
Arms to Iraq Inquiry 31w
Brunner, Alois, Extradition 749w
Business questions 411-2, 1006
Clinton, Bill 735w
Clinton, Bill, British citizenship 806-7w
Economic situation 139-40
Immunity certificates 477w
Members' correspondence, Administrative delays 341-2w
Members' correspondence, British residents abroad 748-9w
Pensioners 12
Queen, Personal taxation 220w
Racial attacks, Crimes of violence 556w
War crimes, Channel Islands 7-8w, 611w

Winterton, Mrs Ann
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (02:12:92) 338
Questions
Cox, Nigel, Contracts of employment 433w
Euthanasia, Medical ethics 434w
Limited list prescribing 77-8w
Limited list prescribing, Cost effectiveness 79w
Limited list prescribing, Disclosure of information 79w
Limited list prescribing, Drug industry 78w

Winterton, Mr Nicholas
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (02:12:92) 321, 340, 341, 343-5, 353
Questions
Building regulations, Fees & charges 393-4w
Generic prescribing 144-5w, 641w
Housing investment programmes, Macclesfield Borough Council 844
Industrial investment 982-3
NHS trusts, Public appointments 635w

Wirral
City grants 392-3w
Regional aid 834-6w

Wirral Borough Council
Derelict land grants 473-4w

Wise, Mrs Audrey
Debates etc.
Health Select Committee, Points of order (08:12:92) 693
Questions
Dentists, NHS 74w
Dietary supplements, EC action 753w

Wolds Remand Prison
Segregation of prisoners 98w

Wolfson, Mr Mark
Questions
Art works, Insurance 324-5w
Children, Play facilities 325w
Objects in lieu of tax 325w
Osteopathy, Training 320w

Wolverhampton
Hard core unemployed 181w

Women
Administration of justice 4w
Career structure 177-8w
Church Commissioners 12w
Judiciary 451w
Prisoners 8-10w
Social security claims 70-1w
Students 40w

Women clergy
12w, 13-4
Equal opportunities 13-4

Women's employment
EC grants & loans 617w
Scotland 617w

Wood
Brazil 441w, 494w, 591w
Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species 207w
Developing countries 426-8w
Forest protection 811-2w
Imports 198w, 207w, 287w, 591w, 705w
International trade 441w, 467w
Labelling 287w
Rain forests 317w

Woodgrange Park Cemetery Bill (HL) 1990/91
Debates etc.
2R order read (03:12:92) 377, (10:12:92) 979

Woodlands Orthopaedic Hospital
777w

Wootton Creek
Archaeological sites 453w

Work permits
Refugees 219w

Working hours
Commuters 175w

Working mothers
Income tax 766w

World Bank
51-2w, 810w
Loans 483-90w, 557-8w
Manpower 311w, 489w

World Bank—continued
Narmada dam 811w
Sardar Sarovar dam 811w
UK contributions 809w

World Decade for Cultural Development
UK contributions 654w

World economy
769w

World Food Programme
491w

World Health Organisation
291w

World in Action
774w

World Summit for Children
571w

Werthington, Mr Tony
Questions
Cameroon, Elections 440w
Cameroon, Human rights 316-7w
Cameroon, Overseas aid 427w
Cameroon, Political prisoners 311w
Commonwealth 310-1w
International Development Association 809w
Narmada dam, Arrests 810w
Narmada dam, Human rights 811w
Narmada dam, UK companies abroad 810w
Sardar Sarovar dam, World Bank 811w
World Bank 810w
World Bank, Narmada dam 811w
World Bank, UK contributions 809w

Wray, Mr Jimmy
Debates etc.
Public expenditure, Scotland (02:12:92) 273

Wrexham Maelor
Urban programme 762w

Wright, Dr Tony
Questions
Bronchitis, Industrial injuries 591w
Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration 693w
Personal social services, Standard spending assessments 154w
Residential care, Inspections 142w
Summertime 7w

Written Constitution Bill 1992/93
Debates etc.
2R order read (11:12:92) 1174

Wye Fiddle bypass
595w

Yeo, Mr Tim, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of Health
Debates etc.
Alcoholism, Residential care (11:12:92) 1180-4
Questions
Accident & emergency departments, Access to buildings 690w

Yeo, Mr Tim—continued
Alcoholism, Residential care 521w
Ashworth Hospital 637-8w
Carers, Citizen's Charter 82-4w
Children in care 75w, 774w
Children in care, Local government social services 677
Children's Homes Staff Selection Inquiry 524w
Community care 676-8
Community care, Adult education 641-2w
Community care, Council tax 81w
Community care, Finance 77w, 82w, 147-8w
Community care, Local government expenditure 642w
Community care, Local government finance 432w, 685-6w
Community care, Local government social services 775w
Day care of children 774-5w
Drug abuse, Community care 77w
Geriatric patients 684
Geriatric patients, Health services 683-4
Geriatric patients, NHS finance 630w
Handicapped, Personal social services 521w
Hearing aids, Research 231w
Home helps, Manpower 432w
Homelessness 145-6w
Homelessness, Greater London 146w
Hospitals 518w
Local government social services, Fees & charges 775w
Loucas, Kypros 775-6w, 804w
Mental Health Act Commission 231w
Mentally disturbed offenders 321w
Mentally ill, Death 434w
Mentally ill, Homelessness 433w
Personal social services, Standard spending assessments 537-42w
Residential care 147w
Residential care, Inspections 142w
Residential care of children, Boarding schools 230w
Residential care of children, Hertfordshire 637w
Secure accommodation, Costs 318w
Secure accommodation, Young offenders 318w
Social security benefits uprating, Local government finance 318-9w
Social security recipients, Travelling expenses 424w
World in Action 774w
Young offenders, Alternatives to prison 230w

York Crown Court
Administrative delays 17

Yorkshire & Humberside
Health & Safety Executive 724-6w

Young, Mr David
Questions
Economic situation 469w

Young, Sir George, Minister for Housing and Planning
Questions
Building industry 709w
Council house rents 704w
Council house sales 701w
Empty housing, House purchase 474w
Flats over shops initiative 706w
Homelessness, Greater London 828-9
Homelessness, Voluntary organisations 829
Leasehold housing, Advisory services 207w
Local government revenue, Council house sales 706w
London Forum 703w
National Federation of Housing Associations 704w
Private rented housing 835
Right to buy 707-8w
Right to buy, Defective housing 708w

Young Men's Christian Association
139

Young offenders
Alternatives to prison 230w, 662-4w
Cardiff Prison 759-60w
Convictions 412w
Custodial treatment 480w, 552w
Dyslexia 218w
Prisoners on remand 411w, 478w, 658w
Secure accommodation 217w, 318w, 760w
Self-mutilation 556w
South Wales 760w

Young people
Bank services 770w
Employment schemes 417-8w
Literacy 559w
Numeracy 559w
Orchestras 582
Social security benefits rules 503w
Training 132
Training & enterprise councils 134

Youth custody
Prisoners on remand 217w

Youth employment
Carlisle 615w

Youth training
27w, 129, 131-4, 221w, 327w
Finance 127-9
Lancashire 505w
Per capita costs 824-5w
Rural areas 133-4
Scotland 815-6w
South Glamorgan 304w
Training allowances 175w
Training & enterprise councils 129
Wales 666w, 760-1w, 824-5w

Youth unemployment
Carlisle 173w
Shotton 666w

Yugoslavia
Armed forces deployment 63w, 543w
Chemical weapons 164w
Overseas aid 428-9w
Peace keeping operations 166w
Political refugees 411-2w

Zangger Committee
568w